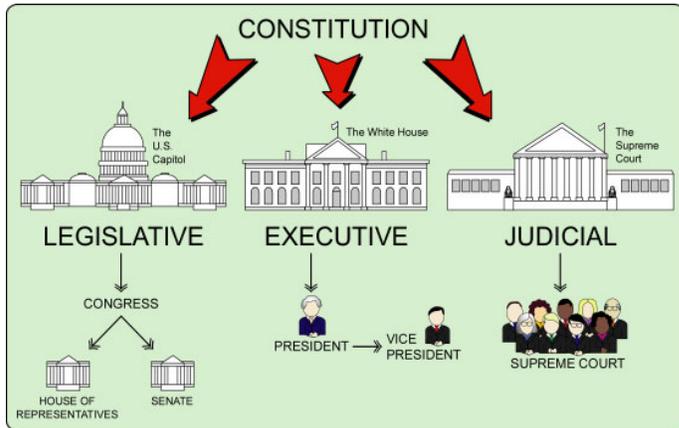


Civics and Economics

CE.6 Study Guide



STANDARD CE.6A -- NATIONAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

The structure and powers of the national government.

The Constitution of the United States defines the structure and powers of the national government.

The powers held by government are divided between the national government in Washington, D.C., and the governments of the 50 states.

Legislative, executive, and judicial powers of the national government are distributed among **three** distinct and independent **branches of government**.

The legislative branch

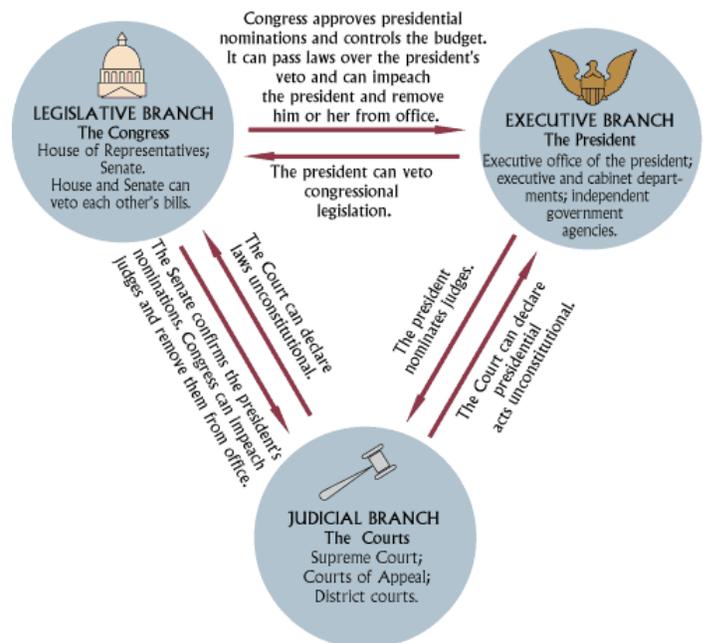
- Consists of the **Congress**, a **bicameral legislature** consisting of the
 - **House of Representatives** (435 members, based upon populations of the states) and
 - **Senate** (100 members—two per state)
- **Makes** the **laws** of the nation
- **Approves** the annual **budget**
- **Confirms** presidential **appointments**
- **Raises revenue** through taxes and other levies
- **Regulates** interstate and foreign **trade**
- **Declares war**

The executive branch

- Headed by the **president** of the United States, the chief executive officer of the nation
- **Executes the laws** of the land
- Prepares the **annual budget** for congressional action
- **Appoints** cabinet officers, ambassadors, and federal judges
- Oversees **executive agencies** and departments

The judicial branch

- Consists of the **federal courts**, including the **Supreme Court**, the highest court in the land
- The **Supreme Court** exercises the power of **judicial review**.
- The **federal courts** try cases involving **federal law** and questions involving **interpretation of the Constitution** of the United States.



STANDARD CE.6B -- SEPARATION OF POWERS

Separation of powers and the operation of checks and balances

The powers of the national government are separated among the three branches of the government to limit any one branch from abusing its power.

Separation of powers

The Constitution of the United States in **Articles I, II, and III** defines the powers of the **legislative, executive, and judicial** branches of the national government.

Checks and balances

Each of the three branches of the national government **limits** the exercise of **power** by the other two branches.

The legislative branch

- The **Congress checks the president** when legislators
 - **override** presidential **vetoes**
 - **impeach** and convict a president
 - approve the budget
 - approve presidential appointments.
- The **Congress checks the courts** when legislators
 - **confirm** or refuse to confirm federal judges/justices
 - **impeach** and convict judges/justices.

The executive branch

- The **president checks Congress** when the president
 - **proposes** legislation
 - prepares an annual **budget** for Congress to approve
 - call **special sessions** of Congress
 - **vetoes** legislation Congress has passed.
- The **president checks the courts** when the president
 - appoints judges/justices
 - grants pardons and reprieves

The judicial branch

- The **courts check Congress** when judges/justices declare acts of Congress to be **unconstitutional**.
- The **courts check the president** when judges/justices declare executive actions to be **unconstitutional**.

STANDARD CE.6C

-- LAWMAKING PROCESS

The lawmaking process (national level).

National laws are made by Congress.



Citizens learn the lawmaking process and influence public policy through direct participation and/or simulation.

The lawmaking process requires collaboration and compromise.

Legislative powers

- **Expressed:** Specifically **listed** in the **Constitution** of the United States
- **Implied:** Used to **carry out** expressed powers

The lawmaking process in Congress

- **Introducing a bill** in either house
- Working in **committees**
- **Debating** the bill on the floor
- **Voting** on the bill

- Sending the bill to the other house
- Repeating the process in the other house
- Sending the bill to the **president**

Elected officials in Congress write laws and take action in **response to problems or issues**.

Individuals and **interest groups** help shape legislation.

The formal **powers of Congress** are **limited** (denied powers) by the Constitution of the United States.

STANDARD CE.6D

-- EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The roles and powers of the executive branch (national level)

The **executive branch** plays a key role in the **policymaking process**.

Presidential power has grown in the years since the Constitution was ratified, but there are **limits on what the president can and cannot do.**

Ways the executive branch influences policymaking

- Delivering an annual speech to Congress (**State of the Union Address**)
- Proposing **legislation**
- **Approving or vetoing** legislation
- **Appointing** officials who help carry out the laws
- Issuing **executive acts/orders**
- Appealing directly through the **media** and **communications** with citizens



Cabinet departments, **agencies**, and **regulatory** groups **execute** the laws.

The president exercises power as

- **chief of state:** ceremonial head of the government
- **chief executive:** head of the executive branch of government
- **chief legislator:** proposer of the legislative agenda
- **commander-in-chief:** head of the nation's armed forces
- **chief diplomat:** American foreign policy leader
- **chief of party:** leader of the political party that controls the executive branch
- **chief citizen:** representative of all of the people.

