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.