

The national government is located in Washington, District of Columbia—a site chosen and surveyed by President George Washington in 1790.

1492

1789

2000

## THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (the Supreme Law of the Land)

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.



### LEGISLATIVE

#### CONGRESS

Makes laws

(meets in the Capitol)



Senate

Two senators from each state, regardless of population, are elected for 6-year terms.



House of Representatives

House members are elected from states in proportion to population for 2-year terms.

Senate Committees

House Committees

### EXECUTIVE

#### PRESIDENT

Executes laws

(lives and works at the White House)



Each state elects presidential electors, based on the number of its congressmen. The electors then elect the president.

Cabinet Departments  
(created by Congress)

### JUDICIAL

#### SUPREME COURT

Interprets and enforces laws

(meets in the Supreme Court Building)



The president appoints judges, with advice and consent of the Senate. The term of office for the nine justices (originally there were only six) is for life—during good behavior.


Lower Federal Courts

Agriculture 1889	Commerce 1913	Defense 1949 (Dept. of War 1789)	Education 1979	Energy 1977	Health & Human Services 1953	Housing & Urban Development 1965	Interior 1849	Justice 1870	Labor 1913	State 1789	Transportation 1966	Treasury 1789	Veterans' Affairs 1989
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**SEPARATION OF POWERS  
AND  
A SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES**

In addition to its own separate powers, each of the three branches of government is empowered to check the other two, in order to keep any branch from assuming too much power. This balance of national power allows for a strong central government, with safeguards to prevent its becoming tyrannical.


**EXECUTIVE BRANCH POWERS**



The President

1. Carries out the laws
2. Serves as commander in chief of the armed services
3. Appoints judges, ambassadors, and other officials
4. Makes treaties

**LEGISLATIVE BRANCH POWERS**




The Congress

Makes laws to:

1. Lay and collect taxes; pay the debts; provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States
2. Regulate interstate and foreign commerce
3. Declare war

(See page 88 for additional powers.)

**JUDICIAL BRANCH POWERS**



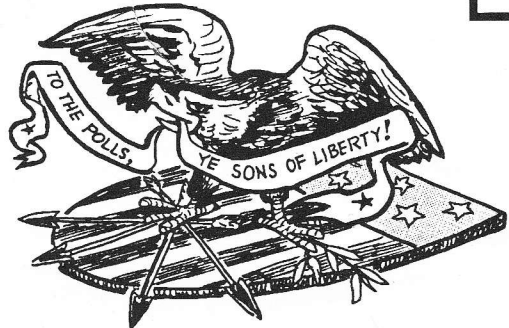
The Supreme Court

1. Interprets laws and treaties
2. Enforces laws

*President can veto a bill proposed by Congress.*  
*Congress can override veto with 2/3 vote of both houses.*

*Supreme Court can rule presidential actions unconstitutional.*  
*President appoints Supreme Court judges.*

*Congress determines number of judges on Supreme Court.*  
*Supreme Court can rule laws passed by Congress unconstitutional.*



**THE PEOPLE'S POWER**