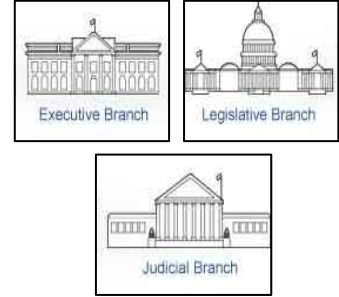


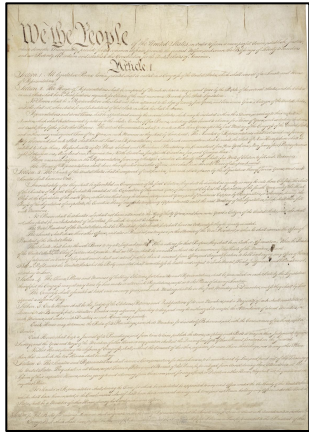
# We the People

## How is the U.S. Government Organized?

The U.S. Constitution establishes the structure of our government. It organizes the government into three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. Each of these branches has its own responsibilities. These responsibilities include creating and making sure rules and laws are followed.



Three branches of government



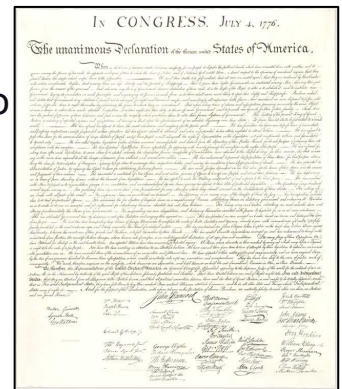
The United States Constitution

## Where Does the Government Gain Power?

The answer is very simple, and it might surprise you. You must look at the words in some important United States documents to find the answer. The first is the U.S. Constitution. It explains where the government gains its power. The Preamble to the Constitution begins with, “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union.” So where does the government get its power? That’s right! Government gains its power from the people of the United States.

## How Does the Government Gain Power?

The famous document, The Declaration of Independence, is the answer to this question. The Declaration states, “*Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.*” The **governed** refers to the citizens of our country. As citizens, we give our **consent** (or approval) to the government to make and enforce the rules and laws in our country, our state, and at our local level.



The Declaration of Independence

## How Do Citizens Give Consent to the Government?

Every two years, the United States holds elections to elect people to serve in various government offices. Citizens 18 years and older vote in elections to select their choice for which **representatives** (president, vice-president, senators, governors, etc.) will gain the power to make decisions and serve the people.



Voting

The importance of “We the People” giving consent to the government was best explained when Abraham Lincoln said, “Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”