

# **The National Government**

The United States Constitution separated the government into three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. The Framers of the Constitution wanted a separation of powers to prevent one branch from having too much power. A system of checks and balances was created, making sure each branch could check, or say no to, a decision made by another branch. The structure, function, and powers of each branch are outlined in Articles I, II, and III of the Constitution.

**Why does the Constitution establish three branches of government?**

## **Article I: The Legislative Branch**

The national legislative branch is called Congress and is made up of two houses, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Each state has two elected Senators and the number of Representatives each state has in the House is based on the state's population. Congress writes and passes bills, which go to the president for approval or denial. If approved, these bills become laws. Other powers of this branch include: borrowing money, collecting taxes, declaring war, and supporting the military.

**What is one power of the legislative branch?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What two houses make up Congress?** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Article II: The Executive Branch**

Article II outlines the structure of the executive branch, naming the president as the leader of the branch. The president has a vice-president and cabinet who support the work of the branch. If the president is unable to stay in office, or gets impeached, the vice-president takes over the duties. The executive branch enforces the laws and makes sure laws are being followed. The president has the power to approve or deny a bill passed by Congress. Other powers of the executive branch include: being Commander-in-Chief for the military, nominating Supreme Court justices, negotiating treaties, and pardoning, or excusing someone, of a crime.

**What are two powers of the executive branch?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who takes over if the president is removed from office?** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Article III: The Judicial Branch**

The judicial branch interprets the laws. The highest court is the Supreme Court, which is in charge of making sure laws are constitutional. Justices are appointed and hold office as long as they maintain good behavior. The national courts oversee cases and have the power to make legal decisions after hearing the case. National courts also hear impeachment trials, or public official misconduct cases.

**What is one power of the judicial branch?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What court is the highest in the land?** \_\_\_\_\_