FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The U.S. government is split into three branches: Executive, Legislative and Judicial. Each is assigned a different task to separate power. The table below illustrates each branches main functions and key players.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH



- Makes laws
- Approves presidential appointments
- Two senators from each state
- The number of House of Representatives is based on population

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Headed by the President



- Signs laws
- Vetos laws
- Pardons people
- Appoints federal judges
- elected every 4 years, maximum of two terms (8 years).

JUDICIAL BRANCH

Supreme Court Judges



- Decides if laws are constitutional
- Are appointed by the president
- There are 9 justices
- Can overturn rulings by other judges

FEDERAL LEGISLATURE

Each state sends two Senators to represent their state in the U.S. Senate. In the House of Representatives, a state's representation is based on its population. For example, smaller states like Vermont have one representative while large states like California have 53 representatives.

DISTRICTS

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives each represent a portion of their state known as a Congressional District, which averages 700,000 people. Senators however, represent the entire state.

TERM LIMITS

Members of the House of Representatives serve two-year terms and are considered for reelection every even year. Senators serve six-year terms and elections are staggered over even years, so only about 1/3 of the Senate is up for reelection during any election. There are no term limits for members of congress.

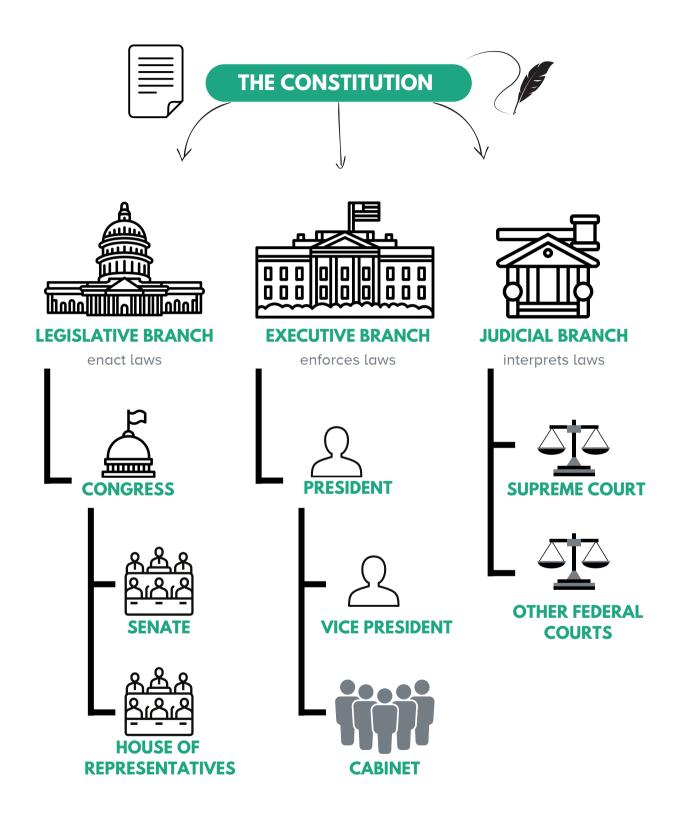
ELECTIONS

Congressional elections happen every two years. Midterm elections take place halfway between presidential elections. All U.S. House of Representatives are elected every midterm and presidential election year because they serve 2 years. Since Senators serve 6 year years One-third of senators get elected during each midterm and each presidential election year.

SESSION

Every two years the Senate convenes a new "congress," a two-year period of legislative business. Typically, a congress is divided into two annual sessions of the Senate, convened in early January and adjourned in December. On any given day, however, the Senate may meet in a variety of designated sessions to fulfill its legislative, executive, and constitutional duties.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE



HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW IN THE US

HOUSE

Bill is introduced in the House.

Only Representatives can introduce bill in the House.

HOUSE COMMITTEE WORK

Bill referred to committee (and possibly subcommittee), which holds hearings and reports bill to the House.

RULES COMMITTEE

It issues a rule to govern debate on the floor.

HOUSE FLOOR DEBATE

Debates the bill and may amend it. IF the bill is passed, it them goes to the Senate.



An idea is introduced by a citizen, member of congress, or the President.

SENATE

Bill is introduced in Senate.
Only Senators can introduce
bills in the Senate.

SENATE COMMITTEE WORK

Bill is referred to committee (and possible subcommittee) which holds hearings and reports the bill to the Senate.

SENATE FLOOR DEBATE

Debates the bill and may amend it. If the bill is passed, it then goes to the House.

Measures must pass both the House and Senate in identical form before being presented to the President. If different versions are passed, the bill must go to a conference committee.

One chamber agrees to the other chamber's version.

Senators and Representatives meet to reconcile differences between bills in the CONFERENCE COMMITTEE. When agreement is reached, a compromise bill is sent to Full Senate.

Legislation is presented to the President.

OR

President signs bill

President does not sign bill into law within 10 days.

President vetos bill

Bill becomes law

If congress is in session, bill becomes law.

If congress is not in session bill does not become law.

Bill does not becomes law, unless both chambers override veto by 2/3 majority.