The image shows the cover of a spiral-bound notebook. The cover is a light beige or tan color with a fine, woven texture. A silver metal spiral binding is visible along the left edge. The text is centered on the cover in a dark brown color. The main title is in a large, bold, sans-serif font, and the subtitle is in a smaller, regular serif font.

**GOVERNANCE  
AND  
CIVICS**

Government

Grade 4

Social Studies Online



# Blueprint Skills that will be addressed

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- Identify the 3 branches of federal and state governments.
- Using a chart showing checks and balances, explain how one branch of government can limit the power of others.
- Identify the rights outlined by the Bill of Rights (i.e., Amendments 1, 5, 6, and 8).

A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a white page. The spiral binding is on the left side. The text is centered on the page.

# The Three Branches of Government

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The Executive Branch

The Judicial Branch

The Legislative Branch

# The Executive Branch

The executive branch of Government makes sure that the laws of the United States are obeyed. The President of the United States is the head of the executive branch of government. This branch is very large so the President gets help from the Vice President, department heads (Cabinet members), and heads of independent agencies.

# The Executive Branch is made up of:

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- **President:** Leader of the country and commands the military.
- **Vice President:** President of the Senate and becomes President if the President can no longer do the job.
- **Departments:** Department heads advise the President on issues and help carry out policies. \
- **Independent Agencies:** Help carry out policy or provide special services.

# The Judicial Branch

The judicial branch of government is made up of the court system. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the land. Article III of the Constitution established this Court and all other Federal courts were created by Congress. Courts decide arguments about the meaning of laws, how they are applied, and whether they break the rules of the Constitution.

# The Legislative Branch

The legislative branch of government is made up of the Congress and government agencies, such as the Government Printing Office and Library of Congress, that provide assistance to and support services for the Congress. Article I of the Constitution established this branch and gave Congress the power to make laws. Congress has two parts, the House of Representatives and the Senate.

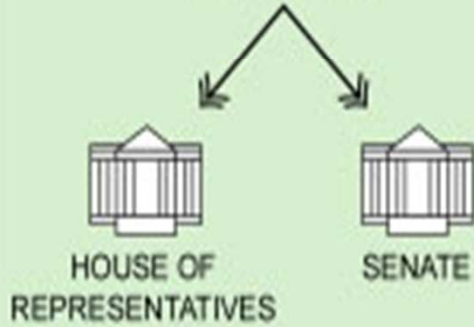
# CONSTITUTION



The U.S. Capitol

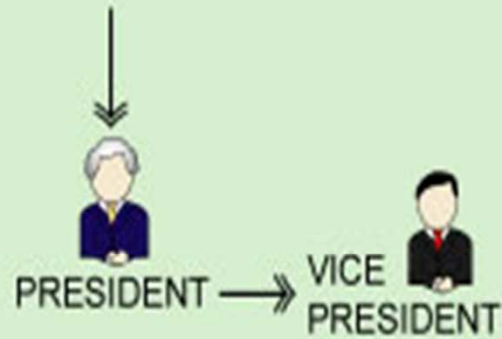
## LEGISLATIVE

↓  
CONGRESS



The White House

## EXECUTIVE



The Supreme Court

## JUDICIAL



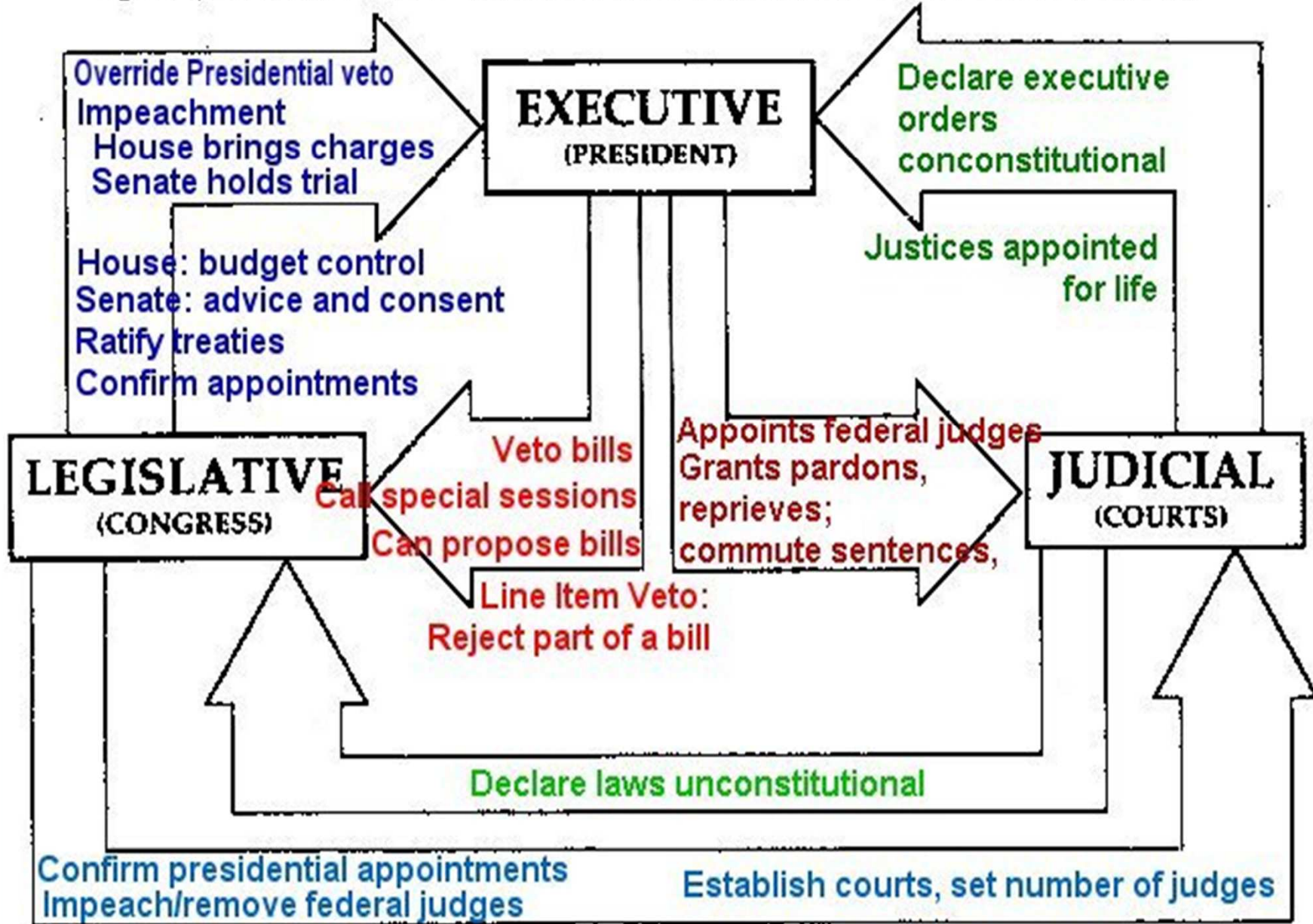
# Checks and Balances

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A system that gives each branch of government different powers so that each branch can check the authority of the others.



# SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES





## LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Congress  
House of Representatives;  
Senate.  
House and Senate can  
veto each other's bills.

Congress approves presidential nominations and controls the budget. It can pass laws over the president's veto and can impeach the president and remove him or her from office.



The president can veto congressional legislation.



## EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The President  
Executive office of the president;  
executive and cabinet departments;  
independent government agencies.

The Court can declare laws unconstitutional.

The Senate confirms the president's nominations. Congress can impeach judges and remove them from office.

The president nominates judges.

The Court can declare presidential acts unconstitutional.



## JUDICIAL BRANCH

The Courts  
Supreme Court;  
Courts of Appeal;  
District courts.

# Think about it

Which of the following positions would you like to hold: President of the United States, Speaker of the House of Representatives and/or Senate Majority Leader, or Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Explain why you chose the position you did.

Which is the most powerful?

# Bill of Rights

When the Constitution was ratified in 1789, many people were concerned that it did not protect certain freedoms. They thought that the Constitution should be changed or amended to protect these freedoms. On December 15, 1791, ten amendments were added to the Constitution. These amendments guarantee certain freedoms and rights, so they are known as the Bill of Rights.

# Important Amendments

- Amendment 1

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- Right to Basic Freedom

- The Constitution guarantees our give basic freedoms of expression. It provides for the freedoms of religion, speech, the press, peaceable assembly, and petition for redress of grievances.

# Important Amendments

## • Amendment 5

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### – Rights of Accused Persons

- If a person is accused of a crime that is punishable by death or of any other crime that is very serious, a grand jury must decide if there is enough evidence to hold a trial. People cannot be tried twice for the same crime, nor can they be forced to testify against themselves. No person shall be fined, jailed, or executed by the government unless the person has been given a fair trial. The government cannot take a person's property for public use unless fair payment is made.

# Important Amendments

- Amendment 6

- Right to a Fair Trial

- A person accused of a crime has the right to a public trial by an impartial jury, locally chosen. The trial must be held within a reasonable amount of time. The accused person must be told of all charges and has the right to see, hear, and question any witnesses. The federal government must provide a lawyer free of charge to a person who is accused of a serious crime and who is unable to pay for legal services.

# Important Amendments

- Amendment 8

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- Right to Bail and Punishment

- Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

# Resources

[Save the Bill of Rights](#)

[Bill of Rights Concentration Game](#)

[Checks and Balances Worksheet](#)

