

## United States Government

When English settlers came to America, the king of England forced them to follow his rules. The **colonists** didn't like being told what to do and wanted to help make decisions about their government. When the **Founding Fathers** wrote the **Constitution** in 1787, they set up three branches of government so no one person or group had all of the power.

In the United States, the power is split between three branches of government. The **Executive** branch is made up of the President, Vice President, and Cabinet (the President's team of advisers). The President is in charge of the military and can **veto** a law if he doesn't like it.

The **Legislative** branch is our **Congress**, or the group that makes our laws. Congress is made of the Senate and House of Representatives.

Even if Congress passes a bill and the President signs it into a law, it could still be unfair. The **Supreme Court**, which is a special group of judges in the **Judicial** branch, can stop a law if they think it is not fair or right for the country. All three branches share power so no one group has it all!

To make sure that our government does not fall apart, power is carefully balanced between the branches of government. Each branch has a way to curb, or "check," the power of the other two branches of government. For example, imagine the President does not agree with a law passed by Congress. He can **veto** it so it never goes into effect. If the law passes, and takes away someone's rights, the **Supreme Court** can rule it is illegal. The **legislative, executive, and judicial branches** all check up on each other in different ways.

These two important principles are called "separation of power" and "**checks and balances.**" Together, they help make sure the government works properly and that no one government group, or government official, becomes too powerful.

## Vocabulary

**Colonists**

*Definition:* People who settle in a new country or region, particularly those who established communities in the Americas under European control.

**Constitution**

*Definition:* A formal document that outlines the fundamental principles and laws governing a nation, establishing the structure and functions of government.

**Branches**

*Definition:* Distinct parts of government that have specific roles and responsibilities; in the U.S., this refers to the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches.

**Executive**

*Definition:* The branch of government responsible for implementing and enforcing laws, led by the President.

**Legislative**

*Definition:* The branch of government tasked with making laws, typically consisting of a bicameral legislature such as Congress in the U.S.

**Supreme Court**

*Definition:* The highest judicial authority in the United States, which has the final say on legal interpretations and constitutional matters.

**Judicial**

*Definition:* The branch of government that interprets laws and administers justice, consisting of courts and judges.

**Veto**

*Definition:* The power of the President to reject a bill passed by Congress, preventing it from becoming law.

**Checks and Balances**

*Definition:* A system in government that ensures no single branch becomes too powerful by allowing each branch to limit the powers of the others.