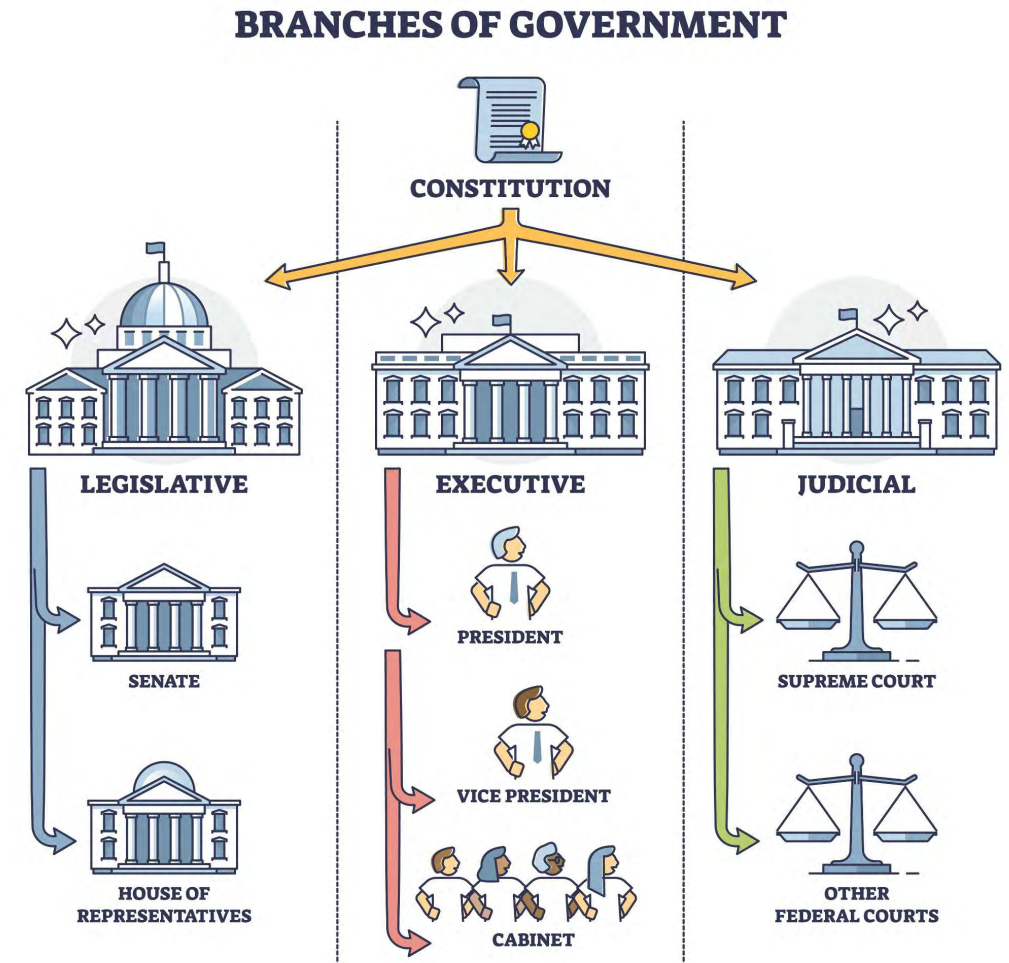


# The Three Branches of the U.S. Government and Checks on Their Power

## Introduction

The U.S. government is divided into three branches to prevent any single group from gaining too much power. Each branch has distinct roles, but sometimes one may overstep its authority. Understanding these branches and how to maintain balance is crucial for democracy.

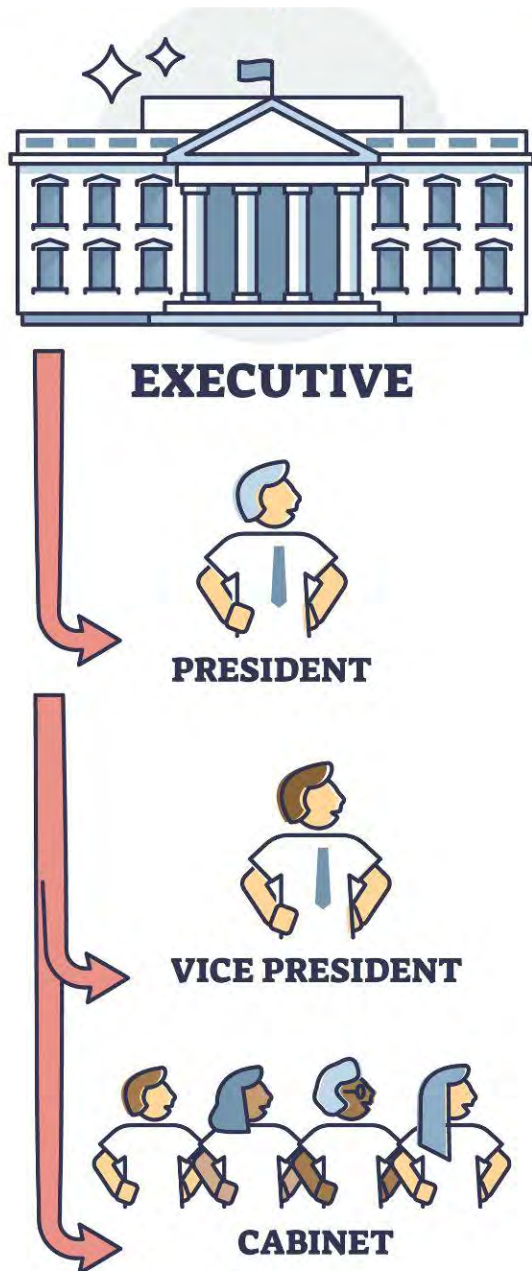


# Why Do We Have 3 Branches of Government?

- To keep one group from having too much power.
- It's called “checks and balances.”
- Each branch has its own job.
- They are supposed to work together and follow the Constitution.



# #1 The Executive Branch makes sure that laws are followed and things get done



They run the day-to-day work of the country.

It includes the President, the Vice President, and many departments like the Department of Education, Health, and Transportation.

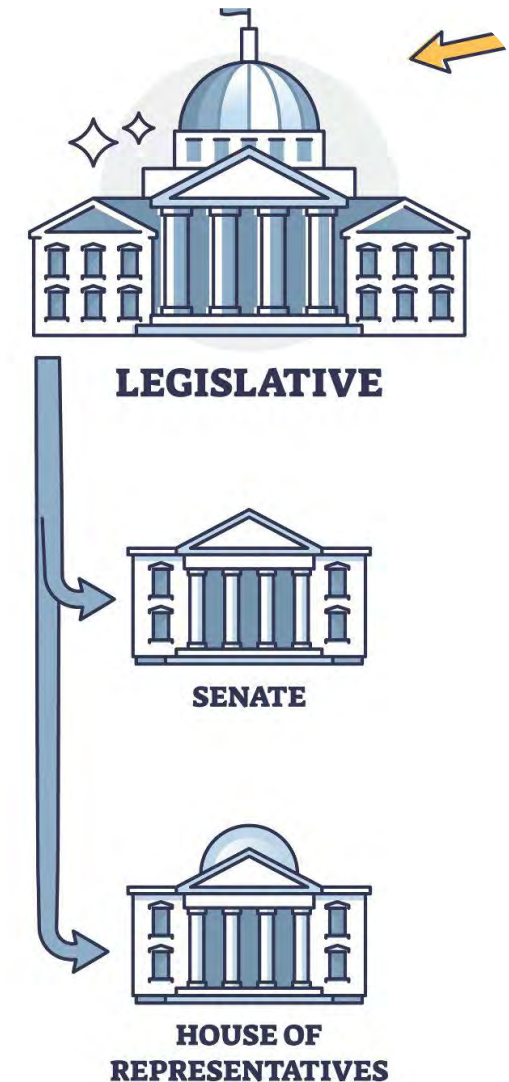
They lead the military, send money where it's needed, help people in emergencies, and make sure government programs work.

- When Congress makes a law to give money to schools, the Executive Branch sends that money out.
- If there's a disaster like a flood, the Executive Branch helps organize emergency help.
- The Executive Branch runs programs like Social Security, Medicare, and the Post Office.

## #2 Legislative Branch (Congress) includes the House of Representatives (based on population) Senate (2 per state)

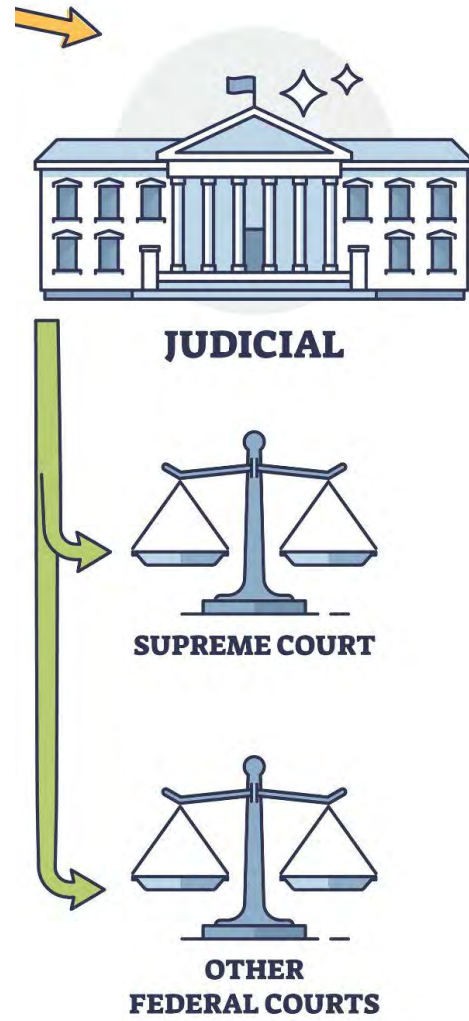
Their job is to:

- **Make the laws**
  - They write and vote on rules everyone must follow.
- **Decide how the government spends money**
  - They choose how much money goes to things like schools, roads, and healthcare.
- **Declare war**
  - Only Congress can decide if the U.S. goes to war.



# #3 Judicial Branch includes Supreme Court justices), and lower federal courts.

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Their job is to:

- **Explain what laws mean.**
  - If people don't agree on what a law says, the court helps decide.
- **Make sure laws follow the Constitution.**
  - If a law breaks the rules of the U.S. Constitution, the court can say it's not allowed.
- **Settle arguments.**
  - Courts help solve problems between people, groups, or the government.



# What Happens When a Branch Oversteps?

- Sometimes one branch tries to do something that's not its job.
- This can upset the balance and hurt people's rights.



# Example 1: Executive Overstepping Power

What happened?

- Presidents have used military force without Congressional approval (e.g., Vietnam War, Libya intervention in 2011). **Executive Branch Overreach: The War Powers Act**
- **Issue:** The Constitution grants Congress the power to declare war (Article I, Section 8).
- **Why It's a Problem:** Bypassing Congress undermines checks and balances and can lead to prolonged conflicts without public debate.

# Example 2: Courts Overstepping Power

What happened?

- The Supreme Court ends a long-standing protection (like the right to an abortion), even though most Americans disagreed.

Why is that a problem?

- Courts are supposed to say what the law means, not create new rules that take away rights.



# Example 3: Legislative Overstepping Power







What happened?

- Congress passes laws that limit what the President or the courts can do.

Why is that a problem?

- It messes with the balance between the branches.

# What Can We Do About It?

-  Know your rights
-  Vote in every election
-  Speak up! Call or write to lawmakers
-  Join groups that fight for justice
-  Go to court – sometimes people file lawsuits to stop unfair laws
-  Tell your story – real-life stories help people understand what's at stake



- Our system works best when no one has too much power.
- It's up to all of us to hold the government accountable.
- Democracy only works if we speak up.