

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND INSTITUTIONS

THE PRESIDENCY

Qualifications: a native-born American citizen of at least 35 years of age and at least 14 years a resident of the US. .

Elections: nomination as candidates at national party convention (in July and August) → election by “the college of electors” equal to the number of senators and representatives that state has in the Congress, a total of 538 persons. (Ordinary citizens of at least 18 years of age registered as voters can select electors who shortly after the election in each state gather in their state capital and cast votes for the candidate with the largest number of popular votes in their state). To be successful, a candidate for the presidency must receive 270 electoral votes.

Term of office: four years; begins on January 20 following a November election with an inauguration ceremony; limited to two terms.

Powers:

a) executive – managing national affairs and the work of the federal government; issuing rules, regulations, and instructions which have the force of law for federal agencies. As commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the US, the president may also call into federal service the state units of the National Guard. In times of war or national emergency, the Congress may grant the president even greater powers to manage the national economy and protect the security of the US. The president nominates (and the Senate confirms) the heads of all executive departments and agencies, together with other high-ranking federal officials.

b) legislative – vetoing any bill passed by the Congress and unless two thirds of the members of each house vote to override the veto, the bill does not become law. Much of the legislation dealt with by the Congress is drafted at the initiative of the executive branch.

c) judicial – nominating federal judges, including members of the Supreme Court, which is later to be approved by the Senate; granting a full or conditional pardon to anyone convicted of breaking a federal law.

d) in foreign affairs – appointing ambassadors, ministers and consuls – subject to confirmation by the Senate – and receiving foreign ambassadors and other public officials; managing all official contacts with foreign governments; participating in summit conferences; protecting Americans abroad and foreign nationals in the US; recognizing new nations and new governments, and negotiating treaties which become binding on the US when approved by two-thirds of the Senate.

The day-to-day enforcement and administration of federal laws is in the hands of the various executive departments, created by Congress to deal with national and international affairs. The heads of the 14 departments chosen by the president and approved by the Senate, form a council of advisers known as the president’s “cabinet”: the Departments of Agriculture; of Commerce; of Defense; of Education; of Energy; of Health and Human Services; of Housing and Urban Development; of the Interior; of Justice; of State; of Transportation; of the Treasury; of Veterans Affairs.

POLITICAL PARTIES

The US has developed a two-party system. The two leading parties are the Republicans and the Democrats. The Democrats are thought of as associated with labor and the Republicans with business and industry. Republicans also tend to oppose the greater involvement of the federal government in some areas of public life, which they consider to be the responsibility of the states and local communities. Democrats, on the other hand, tend to favor a more active role of the central government in social matters. There are other parties besides these two, among them a Communist party and several Socialist parties. Minor parties have occasionally won offices at lower levels of government, but they do not play a role in national policies.

All legislative powers of the federal government belong to a **Congress** divided into two chambers, a **Senate** and a **House of Representatives**. The Senate is composed of two members from each state: its current membership is 100. Membership in the House is based on each state's population, and its size is therefore not specified by the Constitution. Its current membership is 435. Regardless of population every state is constitutionally guaranteed at least one member of the House.

Senators are chosen in statewide elections held in even-numbered years. The senatorial term is six years, and every two years one-third of the Senate stands for election. Hence, two-thirds of senators are people with some legislative experience at national level. State legislators divide states into congressional districts, which must be substantially equal in population. Every two years, the voters of each district choose a representative for Congress. Since members of the House serve two-year terms, the life of a Congress is considered to be two years. The twentieth Amendment of the Constitution provides that the Congress will convene in regular session on January 3, unless Congress chooses otherwise. The Congress remains in session until its members want to adjourn – usually late in the year. Sessions are held in the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.

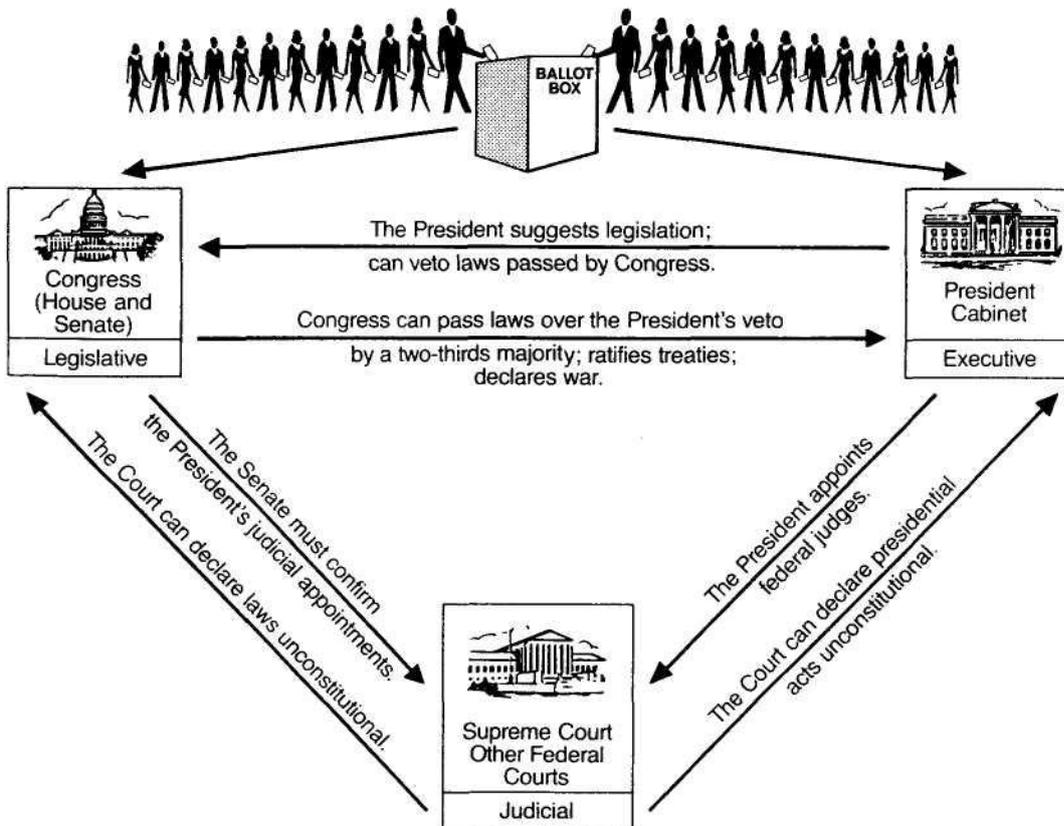
The powers of the whole Congress are spelled out in Article I of the Constitution: to levy and collect taxes; to borrow money for the public treasury; to make rules and regulations governing commerce among the states and with foreign countries; to make uniform rules for naturalization of foreign citizens; to coin money; state its value and provide for the punishment of the counterfeiters; to set the standards of weights and measures; to establish bankruptcy laws for the country as a whole; to establish post offices and post roads; to issue patents and copyrights; to set up a system of federal courts; to punish piracy; to declare war; to raise and support armies; to provide for a navy; to call out the militia to enforce federal laws, suppress lawlessness, or repel invasions; to make all laws for the seat of government; to make all laws necessary to enforce the Constitution.

One of the major characteristics of the Congress is the dominant role committees play in the proceedings, though the Constitution makes no provision for their establishment. At present the Senate has 17 standing (or permanent) committees, the House of Representatives has 19 committees. Each specializes in specific areas of legislation: foreign affairs, defense, banking, agriculture, commerce, appropriations (ассигнование), etc. Almost every bill introduced in either house is referred to a committee for study and recommendations. It is nearly impossible for a bill to reach the Senate or the House without first winning committee approval.

The third branch of the federal government, **the judiciary**, consists of the system of courts spread throughout the country headed by the Supreme Court. A decision of the Supreme Court cannot be appealed to any other court; it cannot be changed either by the president or the Congress. Congress has the power to fix the number of judges sitting in the court, but it cannot change the powers given to the court by the Constitution. At present the Supreme Court consists of the chief justice and eight associate justices. They are nominated by the president and must be approved by the Senate. Once approved, they hold office as the Supreme Court justices for life. The Supreme Court has direct jurisdiction in only two kinds of cases: those involving foreign diplomats and those in which a state is a party. The Supreme Court chooses which cases it will hear. Out of thousands of cases filed annually, the Supreme Court usually hears about 150; most of them involve the interpretation of the Constitution.

The second highest level of the federal judiciary is made up of the courts of appeal, created in 1891 to ease the burden of the Supreme Court. Congress has established 12 regional courts of appeal and, below them 94 federal district courts. The courts of appeal review decisions of the district courts, while district courts hear the cases like theft of federal property, misuse of the mails, and violations of pure-food, banking, and counterfeiting laws.

Checks and Balances. The Constitution provides for three main branches of government which are separate and distinct from one another. The powers given to each are carefully balanced by the powers of the other two. Each branch serves as a check on the others. This is to keep any branch from gaining too much power or from misusing its powers.



The first **official American flag** was displayed on January 9, 1775. It had 13 red and silver stripes symbolizing the first 13 American states. The Union Jack flag of Britain was in the top left-hand corner of the flag. On June 14, 1777 the American Congress adopted the design for a new flag with 13 stars (one for each state) on the blue field instead of the British Union Jack. In 1818 Congress passed a law providing that the flag of the US be 13 horizontal red and white stripes (7 red + 6 white ones) and 20 stars symbolizing the 20 states of the American Union. It was also decided that on admission of each new state to the union another star was to be added to the flag. Thus today there are 50 stars in the flag. The 13 red and white stripes symbolize the first 13 states of the USA. Sometimes the American flag is nicknamed “*Stars and Stripes*”. The *red* color symbolizes courage, the *white* – purity, and the *blue* color – firmness and justice.

By a special Act of Congress in 1931, the famous song, *The Star-Spangled Banner* written in 1914 became **the national anthem** of the USA. When the flag is displayed and the National Anthem is played, all who are present should face toward the flag and salute. There are other popular patriotic songs, such as: *My Country, 'Tis of Thee; America, the Beautiful; God Bless America*.

The national symbol is an American eagle with a ribbon in its mouth bearing the Latin phrase *Eplubrius unium* which means: “Many made one”. Its breast bears red and white stripes of the American flag. The eagle is holding an olive branch of peace and 13 arrows of war. Over the eagle’s head there is a rosette with 13 stars symbolizing the first 13 states.

ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY 2

Administration	президент и его кабинет	президент і його кабінет
electoral college	коллегия выборщиков	колегія виборщиків
donkey	эмблема демократической партии	емблема демократичної партії
Father of the House	старейшина палаты представителей	старійшина Палати представників
caucus	совещание лидеров/членов политической партии для назначения кандидатов	нарада лідерів/членів політичної партії для призначення кандидатів
the Speaker recognizes...	Слово предоставляется ...	Слово надається ...
convention system	система выдвижения кандидатов на пост президента на съездах партий	система висунення кандидатів на пост президента на з'їздах партій
holdover senator	сенатор, остающийся в обновленном составе сената	сенатор, що залишається в оновленому складі сенату
Grand Old Party	Республиканская партия	Республіканська партія
checks and balances	принцип взаимозависимости и взаимоограничения законодательной, исполнительной и судебной власти	принцип взаємозалежності і взаємообмеження законодавчої, виконавчої і судової влади
sitting president	президент, находящийся у власти	президент, що перебуває при владі
Speaker of the House of Representatives	председатель Палаты представителей	голова Палати представників
primary (election)	предварительные выборы в штатах для определения наиболее вероятных кандидатов на пост президента	попередні вибори в штатах для визначення найвірогідніших кандидатів на пост президента
WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant)	о кандидате на выборах	про кандидата на виборах
nine old men	о Верховном суде США, состоящем из 9 членов, назначаемых на этот пост пожизненно	про Верховний суд США, що складається з 9 членів, що призначаються на цей пост довічно
midnight appointment	назначения в последние дни пребывания администрации у власти	призначення в останні дні перебування адміністрації у влади
campaign button	нагрудный значок с портретом кандидата или эмблемой партии	нагрудний значок з портретом кандидата або емблемою партії
favorite son	лицо, выдвигаемое в президенты на предвыборном съезде партии из числа своих членов	особа, що висувається в президенти на передвиборному з'їзді партії з числа своїх членів
elephant	эмблема республиканской партии	емблема республіканської партії
president-elect	избранный, но еще не вступивший на пост президента	вибраний, але такий що ще не вступив на пост президента
popular vote	голоса избирателей	голоси виборців
electoral vote	голоса выборщиков	голоси виборців
snipe	агитационный плакат	агітаційний плакат
honeymoon period	«медовый месяц», начальный период пребывания на должности после победы на выборах	«медовий місяць», початковий період перебування на посаді після перемоги на виборах
presidential year	(разг.) год выборов президента	(розм.) рік виборів президента