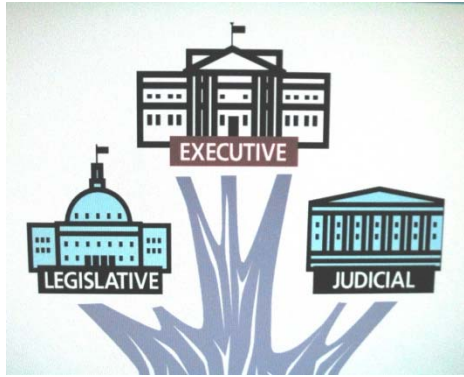


Name _____



Discovering Democracy: The Three Branches of Government

In our democratic society, the government plays a crucial role in making and enforcing laws, ensuring order, and protecting our rights. To ensure a balanced and fair system, the United States government is divided into three separate branches: the Legislative Branch, the Executive

Branch, and the Judicial Branch. Each branch has its own unique responsibilities and powers, working together to maintain a system of checks and balances.

Let's delve into each of these branches to better understand their functions:

The Legislative Branch

The Legislative Branch is like the brain of our government. Its main job is to make laws. It is made up of two parts: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Together, they form the United States Congress.

- **House of Representatives:** This part of Congress consists of 435 members, and the number of representatives from each state is based on its population. These representatives are elected by the people in their respective districts, and they serve two-year terms.
- **Senate:** The Senate, on the other hand, has 100 members, with each state having two senators regardless of its size. Senators are elected by the citizens of their state and serve six-year terms.

The legislative process starts when a lawmaker introduces a bill, which is a proposal for a new law. The bill goes through a series of debates and votes in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. If it passes both chambers, it is sent to the President for approval.

The Executive Branch

The Executive Branch is like the muscles of our government. Its primary role is to enforce and execute the laws created by the Legislative Branch. At the head of this branch is the President of the United States.

- **President:** The President is elected by the citizens of the United States and serves a four-year term. The President is responsible for making important decisions, representing the country in international matters, and commanding the military. They also have the power to veto bills passed by



Name _____

Congress, although Congress can override a veto with a two-thirds majority vote.

- **Vice President:** The Vice President supports the President and is next in line to assume the presidency if the President cannot fulfill their duties.

The Executive Branch also includes various departments and agencies responsible for specific areas like education, defense, and healthcare. The heads of these departments are appointed by the President and must be approved by the Senate.

The Judicial Branch

The Judicial Branch is like the referee of our government. Its main responsibility is to interpret the laws and ensure they are applied fairly and justly. This branch is made up of federal courts, with the Supreme Court being the highest court in the land.

- **Supreme Court:** The Supreme Court consists of nine justices who are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. They serve for life unless they retire or are impeached. The Supreme Court has the power to decide whether laws are constitutional or not.

Other federal courts include Circuit Courts of Appeals and District Courts, which handle various legal matters at different levels.

Checks and Balances

The beauty of the American government system lies in the concept of checks and balances. Each branch has specific powers that help keep the other branches in check to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful.

For example, the President can veto a bill passed by Congress, but Congress can override the veto with a two-thirds majority vote. The Supreme Court can declare a law unconstitutional, but Congress can propose a constitutional amendment to change that law.

