

Name _____



Fair and Square

The system of checks and balances is an important part of the U.S. government. It helps make sure that power is shared and fair, reflecting core American values like democracy, fairness, and accountability. This system keeps the government balanced and prevents any one branch from becoming too powerful.

Checks and Balances and Democracy

Democracy means that the people have a voice in the government. In the United States, people vote for

leaders to represent them, but those leaders must also follow the rules. Checks and balances help keep democracy strong by ensuring that decisions are made fairly.

For example, Congress (the Legislative Branch) can pass laws, but the President (the Executive Branch) can veto (reject) them if they are unfair. However, Congress can override the veto if enough members agree. This process makes sure that no one person or group controls everything, which is a key part of democracy.

Checks and Balances and Fairness

Fairness means that rules should apply to everyone equally. The Judicial Branch, which includes the Supreme Court, helps protect fairness by reviewing laws. If a law goes against the Constitution, the Supreme Court can strike it down, ensuring that all laws treat people fairly.

An example of this happened in 1954, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregation in schools was unfair. This decision helped ensure that all children, no matter their background, could receive an equal education.

Checks and Balances and Accountability

Accountability means that leaders must follow the rules and answer for their actions. If a government official breaks the law or misuses power, other branches of government can take action.

For example, in 1974, the Supreme Court ruled in *United States v. Nixon* that President Richard Nixon had to turn over secret recordings related to a government scandal. This case proved that even the President must follow the law, showing how checks and balances hold leaders accountable.

Why Checks and Balances Matter

This system protects the rights of all citizens and ensures that power is shared fairly. Without it, the government could become unfair or one branch could take control. Thanks to checks and balances, American democracy remains fair, strong, and accountable.