

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

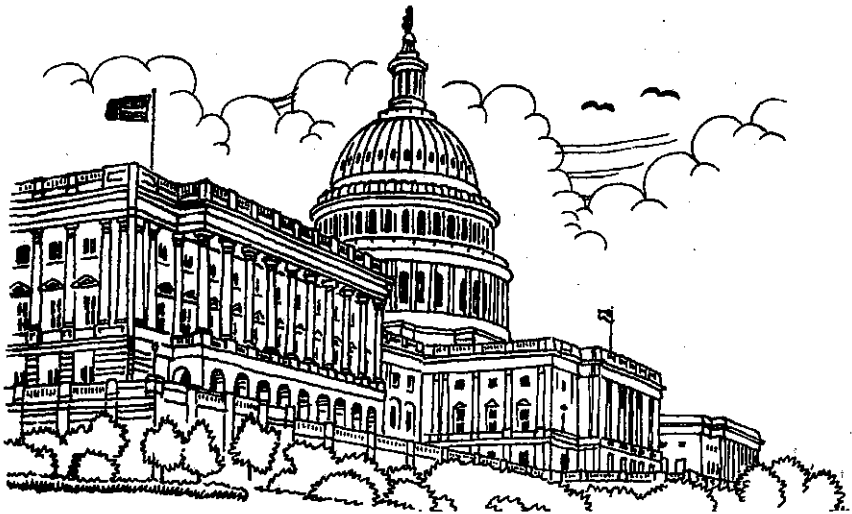
Introduction

(See Article I, Section 1)

The legislative branch of the United States government is described in Article I of the Constitution. Its major job is to make our country's laws. The American system of government is based on a representative form of government. Not all Americans can meet in the same place at the same time to make laws, so Americans choose representatives to make the laws for them. Representatives carry out the will of the people, or they are replaced during the next election.

Laws are passed by a *majority* vote. Majority means one over half. For example, among 10 people, six or more of them must agree in order to pass a law. The larger group of politicians is known as the majority, and the smaller group is known as the *minority*. If you are in the minority, you try to encourage members of the majority to change sides.

The legislative branch of our Federal government is called Congress. Congress is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Congress begins its meetings on the third day of January every odd-numbered year. The meetings are called terms and they last two years with a recess, or break, during the summer. The first term of Congress met from 1789-91. The House of Representatives and the Senate meet in different chambers on opposite sides of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.



The House of Representatives and the Senate meet in the U.S. Capitol Building.

The Congress makes its own rules governing its meetings. It can *expel*, or remove, a member by a two-thirds vote. That means that two thirds of the members, not just a majority, have to agree to an action. A record is kept of all the meetings and is published in the *Congressional Record*.

Members of Congress also have certain *privileges*. They cannot be arrested when going to or coming from Congress, or while attending a session of Congress. A member cannot be sued or punished for anything he or she might say in Congress.

The Constitution goes on to define the individual responsibilities and requirements of the two houses of Congress: the House of Representatives and the Senate, our lawmaking bodies.

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Introduction
≈ Challenges ≈

1. Define:

Majority: _____

Minority: _____

Privilege: _____

Expel: _____

2. What is the major duty of the legislative branch? _____

3. What is the legislative body called? _____

4. Where does it meet? _____

5. What two houses make up the Congress? _____

6. When do its meetings begin? _____

7. What is the name of the record of the meetings of Congress? _____

8. List two privileges of members of the United States Congress. _____

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Introduction

(See Article II, Section 1)

As you have seen, the job of the legislative branch is to make the laws. It is the job of the executive branch to carry out, or execute, those laws. They enforce, or make sure people are obeying, the laws made by the legislative branch.

If the Congress makes it a law that the speed limit should be 70 MPH, then it is the job of the executive branch and its offices to make sure that the citizens of the United States are obeying the speed limit.

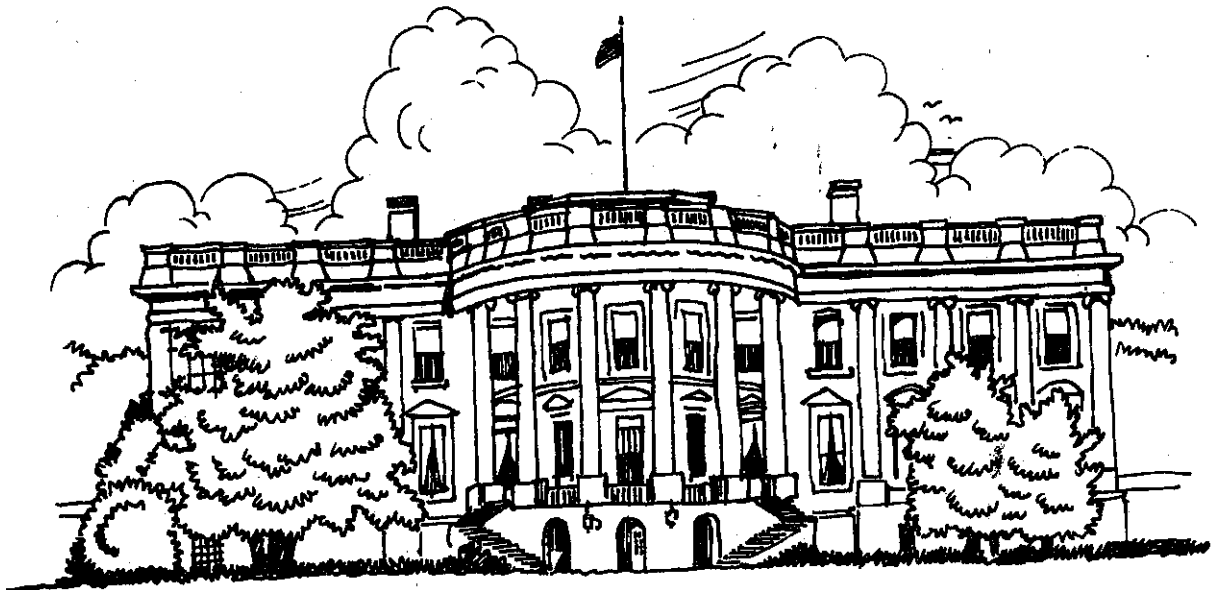
The executive branch of the United States is very large today. The head of the executive branch is the President, but many thousands of people work for him. The executive branch handles much of the day-to-day work of the country.

The President is the chief executive, and he is elected for a four-year term. His second-in-command is called the Vice President. They are both elected at the same time.

The President and Vice President are chosen by the electoral college. The electoral college is made up of men and women from the different states. Each state gets a certain number of people, or electors. That number is determined by the total number of representatives and senators a state has. For example, if Illinois has 22 representatives and 2 senators, then Illinois would get 24 electors, or people, to vote for the President.

When we go to the polls in a presidential election, our votes are counted and the electors take those totals and elect the President based on who the people have selected. Since the common people were poorly educated and informed in the early years of our nation, the electoral college was originally established to keep the common people from making a mistake and electing a disastrous leader.

If there is a tie in a presidential election, or no one candidate receives a clear majority, then the House of Representatives, with each state having only one vote, elects the President.



The President of the United States lives in the White House.

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Introduction
≈ Challenges ≈

1. Define:

Execute: _____

Executive: _____

2. If the legislative branch makes the laws, then the executive branch does what with the laws?

3. What is the title of the chief executive, or head, of the executive branch of the United States?

What is the name of the person who is currently in that office? _____

4. What is the title of the second-in-command? _____

What is that person's name today? _____

5. What is the job of the electoral college? _____

6. How many electoral votes does your state have today? _____

7. What was the original purpose of the electoral college? _____

8. Who chooses the President in the event of a tie? _____
