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Date _____



Three Branches of Government

Today we're going to talk about the three branches of government...in just a minute.

The US government is based on "separation of powers." In other words, no single person or group can become too powerful. There are three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial. Branches have different responsibilities, but they interact to create a system of checks and balances.

Congress, the legislative branch, creates laws. Elected state senators and representatives pass bills, collect taxes, regulate commerce, and declare war. They can also vote to impeach presidents who are accused of breaking the law.

Congressional bills must be signed by the president, who leads the executive branch. The president can veto any bill, but Congress can override vetoes. The president works with the vice president and a cabinet of appointed officials to carry out laws, lead the military forces, and dictate foreign policy.

The judicial branch includes the Supreme Court and lower courts. Judges interpret and evaluate the fairness of laws passed and carried out by the other branches. Justices of the Supreme Court are nominated by the president and confirmed by Congress to a lifetime term.

Why is separation of powers so important?