

# First Branch Legislative Answer Key

<b>First Branch: Legislative</b>	
<b>6. Congressional Relationships:</b> What are the differences between the House and the Senate? Complete the graphic organizer using what you learned from the reading.	
<b>House of Representatives</b>	<b>Senate</b>
<b>Number of members:</b> 435	<b>Number of members:</b> 100
<b>Electoral process (electors, party, etc.):</b> All are elected by voters of each state and the District of Columbia. Each state has a certain number of representatives based on population.	<b>Electoral process (electors, party, etc.):</b> Each state has two senators, regardless of population. They are elected by voters of each state.
<b>Length of term:</b> Two years	<b>Length of term:</b> Six years
<b>Key responsibilities:</b> Representatives propose and pass bills, oversee the executive branch, and confirm or reject presidential appointments.	<b>Key responsibilities:</b> Senators propose and pass bills, oversee the executive branch, and confirm or reject presidential appointments.
<b>Shared responsibilities:</b> Both chambers have the power to impeach federal officials and to ratify treaties.	
<b>Executive branch (agency)</b>	<b>Age</b>
House: 25 years Senate: 30 years	House: 25 years Senate: 30 years
<b>Party membership</b>	<b>Electoral process (electors, party, etc.)</b>
House: 25 years Senate: 30 years	House: 25 years Senate: 30 years

## FIRST BRANCH LEGISLATIVE ANSWER KEY

THE CONCEPT OF THE “FIRST BRANCH” REFERS TO THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT, PRIMARILY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UNITED STATES. THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH IS ONE OF THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT, ALONGSIDE THE EXECUTIVE AND JUDICIAL BRANCHES. IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING LAWS AND OVERSEEING THE FUNCTIONING OF THE GOVERNMENT. THIS ARTICLE WILL EXPLORE THE STRUCTURE, FUNCTION, AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH, AS WELL AS PROVIDE AN ANSWER KEY FOR COMMON QUESTIONS RELATED TO ITS OPERATIONS.

## UNDERSTANDING THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH IS PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR CREATING LAWS THAT GOVERN THE NATION. IN THE UNITED STATES, THIS BRANCH IS BICAMERAL, CONSISTING OF TWO SEPARATE CHAMBERS: THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE SENATE. EACH CHAMBER HAS DISTINCT ROLES, POWERS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES, WHICH ARE CRITICAL TO THE FUNCTIONING OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

- HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:
  - COMPRISED OF 435 MEMBERS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IS THE LARGER CHAMBER.
  - MEMBERSHIP IS BASED ON THE POPULATION OF EACH STATE, WITH MORE POPULOUS STATES HAVING MORE REPRESENTATIVES.
  - MEMBERS SERVE TWO-YEAR TERMS.
  - THE HOUSE HAS THE EXCLUSIVE POWER TO INITIATE REVENUE BILLS AND IMPEACH FEDERAL OFFICIALS.
- SENATE:
  - THE SENATE CONSISTS OF 100 MEMBERS, WITH EACH STATE HAVING TWO SENATORS, REGARDLESS OF POPULATION.
  - SENATORS SERVE SIX-YEAR TERMS, WITH APPROXIMATELY ONE-THIRD OF THE SENATE UP FOR ELECTION EVERY TWO YEARS.
  - THE SENATE HAS THE POWER TO CONFIRM PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENTS AND RATIFY TREATIES.

## FUNCTIONS OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH HAS SEVERAL KEY FUNCTIONS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE GOVERNANCE OF THE COUNTRY. THESE INCLUDE:

## LAW-MAKING

THE PRIMARY FUNCTION OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH IS TO DRAFT, DEBATE, AND PASS LAWS. THE PROCESS TYPICALLY FOLLOWS THESE STEPS:

- DRAFTING: A MEMBER OF CONGRESS DRAFTS A BILL.
- COMMITTEE REVIEW: THE BILL IS SENT TO A COMMITTEE FOR REVIEW AND REVISION.
- DEBATE: THE BILL IS DEBATED IN THE CHAMBER, ALLOWING MEMBERS TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS AND PROPOSE AMENDMENTS.
- VOTING: ONCE DEBATED, THE BILL IS PUT TO A VOTE. IF IT PASSES WITH A MAJORITY IN ONE CHAMBER, IT GOES TO THE OTHER CHAMBER FOR CONSIDERATION.
- PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL: IF BOTH CHAMBERS PASS THE BILL, IT IS SENT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR APPROVAL OR VETO.

## OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATION

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO OVERSEE THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND ENSURE THAT LAWS ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED EFFECTIVELY. THIS INCLUDES:

- CONDUCTING HEARINGS AND INVESTIGATIONS TO GATHER INFORMATION.
- HOLDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS TO DISCUSS ISSUES AND POLICIES.
- REVIEWING FEDERAL PROGRAMS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS.

## REPRESENTATION

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS REPRESENT THEIR CONSTITUENTS, ADVOCATING FOR THEIR INTERESTS AND CONCERNS. THIS REPRESENTATION IS CRUCIAL FOR A FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY, AS IT ENSURES THAT DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS ARE CONSIDERED IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS.

## POWER OF THE PURSE

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH HOLDS SIGNIFICANT AUTHORITY OVER GOVERNMENT SPENDING AND TAXATION. THIS INCLUDES:

- INITIATING BUDGET PROPOSALS.
- APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMS.
- SETTING TAX POLICY AND RATES.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH PLAYS AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN THE BALANCE OF POWER WITHIN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. BY ESTABLISHING LAWS, OVERSEEING THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH, AND REPRESENTING THE PEOPLE, CONGRESS SERVES AS A CHECK ON THE POWERS OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE JUDICIARY.

## CHECKS AND BALANCES

THE SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES IS INTEGRAL TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH EXERCISES ITS POWERS TO PREVENT ANY ONE BRANCH FROM BECOMING TOO POWERFUL. FOR EXAMPLE:

- THE SENATE'S POWER TO CONFIRM APPOINTMENTS ENSURES THAT THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH IS HELD ACCOUNTABLE.
- THE HOUSE'S ABILITY TO IMPEACH FEDERAL OFFICIALS PROVIDES A MECHANISM FOR ADDRESSING MISCONDUCT.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH IS ALSO SIGNIFICANT IN FOSTERING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT. MEMBERS OF CONGRESS OFTEN HOLD TOWN HALL MEETINGS, PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY EVENTS, AND ENGAGE WITH THEIR CONSTITUENTS THROUGH VARIOUS CHANNELS. THIS INTERACTION HELPS TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC, ENSURING THAT CITIZENS ARE INFORMED AND INVOLVED IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.

## **COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH**

THIS SECTION SERVES AS AN ANSWER KEY TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH, PROVIDING CLARITY ON ITS ROLES, FUNCTIONS, AND PROCEDURES.

### **1. WHAT IS THE MAIN FUNCTION OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH?**

THE PRIMARY FUNCTION OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH IS TO CREATE LAWS THAT GOVERN THE COUNTRY. IT ALSO OVERSEES THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND REPRESENTS THE INTERESTS OF THE PUBLIC.

### **2. HOW MANY MEMBERS ARE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE SENATE?**

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HAS 435 MEMBERS, WHILE THE SENATE CONSISTS OF 100 MEMBERS.

### **3. HOW LONG DO MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE SERVE?**

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SERVE TWO-YEAR TERMS, WHILE SENATORS SERVE SIX-YEAR TERMS.

### **4. WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR A BILL TO BECOME A LAW?**

THE PROCESS INVOLVES DRAFTING THE BILL, COMMITTEE REVIEW, DEBATE, VOTING IN BOTH CHAMBERS, AND FINALLY, APPROVAL OR VETO BY THE PRESIDENT.

### **5. WHAT POWERS DOES THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH HAVE?**

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH HAS THE POWER TO CREATE LAWS, REGULATE COMMERCE, DECLARE WAR, TAX, AND OVERSEE THE FEDERAL BUDGET, AMONG OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES.

### **6. WHAT ROLE DOES THE SENATE PLAY IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS?**

THE SENATE REVIEWS AND VOTES ON LEGISLATION PASSED BY THE HOUSE, CONFIRMS PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENTS, AND RATIFIES TREATIES.

## 7. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERM "POWER OF THE PURSE"?

THE TERM "POWER OF THE PURSE" REFERS TO THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH'S AUTHORITY TO CONTROL GOVERNMENT SPENDING AND TAXATION, ENSURING THAT FUNDS ARE ALLOCATED ACCORDING TO THE LAW.

## 8. HOW DOES THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH CHECK THE POWERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH?

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH CHECKS THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH THROUGH OVERSIGHT, THE POWER TO CONFIRM APPOINTMENTS, AND THE ABILITY TO IMPEACH AND REMOVE OFFICIALS FROM OFFICE.

## 9. HOW CAN CITIZENS ENGAGE WITH THEIR REPRESENTATIVES?

CITIZENS CAN ENGAGE WITH THEIR REPRESENTATIVES BY ATTENDING TOWN HALL MEETINGS, CONTACTING THEIR OFFICES VIA PHONE OR EMAIL, PARTICIPATING IN ADVOCACY GROUPS, AND VOTING IN ELECTIONS.

## 10. WHY IS REPRESENTATION IMPORTANT IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS?

REPRESENTATION IS CRUCIAL BECAUSE IT ENSURES THAT THE DIVERSE INTERESTS AND NEEDS OF CONSTITUENTS ARE CONSIDERED IN THE LAW-MAKING PROCESS, PROMOTING DEMOCRACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

## CONCLUSION

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH, AS THE FIRST BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT, PLAYS A PIVOTAL ROLE IN SHAPING THE LAWS AND POLICIES THAT GOVERN SOCIETY. BY UNDERSTANDING ITS STRUCTURE, FUNCTIONS, AND SIGNIFICANCE, CITIZENS CAN BETTER APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR ENGAGEMENT WITH THIS BRANCH. THROUGH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS, INDIVIDUALS CAN INFLUENCE THE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA AND HOLD THEIR REPRESENTATIVES ACCOUNTABLE, ULTIMATELY CONTRIBUTING TO A MORE RESPONSIVE AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### WHAT IS THE PRIMARY FUNCTION OF THE FIRST BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT?

THE PRIMARY FUNCTION OF THE FIRST BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT, KNOWN AS THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH, IS TO CREATE, AMEND, AND ENACT LAWS.

### WHAT ARE THE TWO HOUSES OF THE U.S. CONGRESS?

THE TWO HOUSES OF THE U.S. CONGRESS ARE THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

### HOW MANY MEMBERS ARE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES?

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HAS 435 MEMBERS.

## WHAT IS THE TERM LENGTH FOR A U.S. SENATOR?

A U.S. SENATOR SERVES A TERM OF SIX YEARS.

## WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR CONGRESS TO PASS A BILL?

FOR CONGRESS TO PASS A BILL, IT MUST BE APPROVED BY BOTH THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE SENATE AND THEN SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT.

## WHAT ROLE DOES THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE PLAY?

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE PRESIDES OVER THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MANAGES ITS PROCEEDINGS, AND REPRESENTS THE HOUSE IN ALL OFFICIAL CAPACITIES.

## WHAT IS A FILIBUSTER?

A FILIBUSTER IS A TACTIC USED IN THE SENATE TO DELAY OR BLOCK LEGISLATIVE ACTION BY EXTENDING DEBATE ON A BILL.

## WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF REDISTRICTING?

REDISTRICTING IS THE PROCESS OF REDRAWING THE BOUNDARIES OF ELECTORAL DISTRICTS, WHICH OCCURS EVERY TEN YEARS AFTER THE CENSUS.

## HOW CAN CONGRESS OVERRIDE A PRESIDENTIAL VETO?

CONGRESS CAN OVERRIDE A PRESIDENTIAL VETO BY ACHIEVING A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY VOTE IN BOTH THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE SENATE.

## WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NECESSARY AND PROPER CLAUSE?

THE NECESSARY AND PROPER CLAUSE ALLOWS CONGRESS TO CREATE LAWS DEEMED NECESSARY TO EXECUTE ITS ENUMERATED POWERS, PROVIDING FLEXIBILITY IN LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY.

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## First Branch Legislative Answer Key

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