

Three Branches

When the Founding Fathers created the *United States Constitution*, they were determined to create a government that shared power among different parts. Each of these parts would be able to keep the others from gaining too much strength. This is sometimes called a system of **checks and balances**.

The United States government was divided into three **branches**. These are the **Legislative Branch**, the **Executive Branch**, and the **Judicial Branch**. Each one has a unique role that helps our country work!

The **Legislative Branch** is in charge of proposing and voting on new laws for our country. It is made up of two "houses." The first is called the **House of Representatives**. Here, each state has a number of elected representatives based on their population. The larger states get more than the smaller ones. In the **Senate**, the citizens of each state elect two **senators** to represent them. Both of the houses must work together and **compromise** in order to pass, or approve laws.

The **Executive Branch** makes sure the laws are executed, or carried out. It also runs the everyday business of the government. The leader of the Executive Branch is called the **President of the United States**. The people of our country elect this person every four years. The President is also sometimes called the **Commander-in-Chief** because he is the head of the United States Military.

The **Judicial Branch** is to ensure that the government is operating fairly. This branch interprets, or explains, the *Constitution*, and it can judge that certain laws are not fair and overturn them. The head of the Judicial Branch is the **Supreme Court**. It is made up of nine judges called **Supreme Court Justices**.

When one of the branches does something that seems like it doesn't follow the ideas of the Constitution, the others have the ability to prevent it. For example, the president (Executive Branch) can **veto**, or reject, a law passed by the Legislative Branch. The Congress (Legislative Branch) can **impeach** (accuse and put on trial) the president and remove him from office. The Judicial Branch can strike down a law passed by the Congress by judging it **unconstitutional**.

As these parts work together, a healthy government is on display. The three branches give balance to our nation while giving it strength. Our Founding Fathers were very wise when they created this amazing system!

