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# The Legislative Branch

American Government Unit Companion

**Directions**

* Complete Prepare and Strategies for Success sections before you begin a unit.
* Complete Summaries and Reflect and Review sections before you take the unit assessment.
* For more details about each section, return to the course overview unit.

## Prepare icon. Prepare

Throughout the Legislative Branch unit, you will explore the following Essential Questions.

### Essential question icon. Essential Questions

* How does Congress represent the people’s interests?
* What powers does the legislative branch have?
* How does Congress check and balance the other branches of government?

In Lessons 1–5, you will learn about the following topics:

* the roles of the legislative branch
* the similarities and differences between the House of Representatives and Senate
* the committee system in Congress—where legistlative action takes place

At the end of Lesson 5, you will take a cumulative quiz.

In Lessons 6–10, you will learn about the following topics:

* the specific powers, or expressed powers, the Constitution gives Congress
* Congress’s implied powers, or the powers derived from the Elastic Clause
* how Congress keeps the executive branch in check

At the end of Lesson 10, you will take a cumulative quiz.

In Lessons 11 and 12, you will learn about the following topics:

* the steps to create a new law
* your state representative and his or her committee activity
* writing a letter to an elected official

In Lesson 12, you will complete a class discussion.

In Lesson 14, you will take a cumulative test.

## Strategies for success icon. Strategies for Success

### Identify Main Ideas and Details

Have you gotten lost reading an article online or text for class? What about when you were in a discussion with family or friends and you want to interrupt and ask—What’s your point? If so, you were searching to identify the main idea, or purpose.

Throughout The Legislative Branch unit, you will exercise your rights and responsibilities as a citizen in our democracy. You will write a letter to one of your representatives in Congress and share it in a class discussion, while reviewing other student’s work. Before you make your voice heard, you will need to do some research to become an informed participant.

Using government websites, investigate your representatives in Congress, find out what committees they sit on and what bills they are trying to pass. You will need to stay focused while reading to find out if your elected officials are representing you and your state in Congress.

To find the main idea and supporting details of a reading, you need to do the following:

* Scan titles, headings and images before reading.

Review the titles and headings of the sections first. Look over any photos, graphs, or charts, and read the captions. Pay special attention to words that may be bolded or highlighted and ideas that are bulleted.

* Read the entire selection and then identify the main point of the selection.

Sometimes the main idea can be found in the first or second sentence of the first few paragraphs. Sometimes, it is the last sentence. While you read, ask yourself, “What is the main point of this selection?”

* Find details within the selection that build on and support the main idea.

Review the reading for details, or supporting evidence, that build on the main idea. Many of the details in the text need to be related. If these details don’t seem to connect, you might not have the right main idea yet. So while reading you need to ask yourself, “Does this build on the main idea?”

To see an example of careful reading, access the “Identify Main Ideas and Details” 21st Century Skill Video through the Web Links resource by selecting the backpack icon. As you experience the video, notice how the students do the following:

* scan titles, headings and images before reading
* read the entire selection and then identify the main point of the selection
* find details or statements within the selection that build on the main idea

This is the approach you should take every time you read.

Now you will have the opportunity to practice these skills. Read the selection below and identify the main idea and supporting details.

Congress has a split personality. On the one hand, it is a lawmaking institution and makes policy for the entire nation. In this capacity, all the members are expected to set aside their personal ambitions and perhaps even the concerns of their constituencies [the people an elected official represents]. Yet Congress is also a representative assembly, made up of 535 elected officials who serve as links between their constituents and the National Government. The dual roles of making laws and responding to constituents’ demands forces members to balance national concerns against the specific interests of their States or districts.

—James M. Burns, et al., Government by the People

**Main Idea:** Congress must balance national concerns along with the interests of their constituents.

**Supporting details:**  it is a lawmaking institution and makes policy for the entire nation; members are expected to set aside their personal ambitions and perhaps even the concerns of their constituencies; Congress is also a representative assembly, made up of 535 elected officials who serve as links between their constituents and the National Government

You will read more about the job of a member in Congress in Lesson 1.

 Summaries

You may read summaries of the Magruder’s American Government textbook pages assigned in each lesson. Decide whether you want to read them before, during, or after a lesson.

* Read before a lesson to preview the most important information ahead of time, including people, places, and events.
* Read during or after a lesson to review Magruder’s American Government pages without rereading every word.

Access the American Government Summaries through the Web Links resource by selecting the backpack icon. Read the corresponding summary with the lesson.

* Lesson 1: The Legislative Branch – An Overview
* Lesson 2: Congress – A Separation of Powers
* Lesson 3: The House of Representatives – The Lower Chamber
* Lesson 4: The Senate – The Upper Chamber
* Lesson 5: Congressional Committees at Work
* Lesson 6: Powers of Congress – An Overview
* Lesson 7: Expressed Powers of Congress – Money & Commerce
* Lesson 8: Expressed Powers of Congress – Foreign and Domestic Affairs
* Lesson 9: The Implied Powers of Congress
* Lesson 10: Non-Legislative Powers of Congress
* Lesson 11: How a Bill Becomes Law

 Reflect and Review

Before the unit assessment, use the checklist to reflect on what you have learned throughout the Foundations of American Government unit. This will help determine what content to review to prepare for the multiple question types on the assessment.

1. Read each of the statements.
2. If you agree with the statement, check the box.
3. Revisit statements that you did not check. Return to the lesson resources to review the content. Study the key words using the Glossary.

### Statements

#### Multiple Choice Questions

| **[**check mark**]** | **Statement** | **Key Words** | **Resources** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | I can explain the expressed powers of Congress including the following:   * commerce powers * currency powers * war powers | * expressed powers * commerce power * currency power | * Lesson 7: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > The Expressed Powers > The Commerce Power * Lesson 7: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > The Expressed Powers > The Money Powers * Lesson 8: Flipped Video: “Expressed Powers” * Lesson 8: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > The Expressed Powers > The War Powers |
|  | I can explain the non-legislative powers of Congress including the following:   * purpose of Congressional investigations * process of impeachment and the role each chamber of Congress plays | * impeach | * Lesson 10: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > The Implied and Nonlegislative Powers >The Power to Investigate * Lesson 10: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > The Implied and Nonlegislative Powers > Interactive Gallery: Implied Power of Congressional Investigation * Lesson 10: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > The Implied and Nonlegislative Powers > Impeachment |
|  | I can explain how Congress functions to represent the people including changes made by the following:   * the Seventeenth Amendment * Reapportionment Act of 1929 | * apportioned * constituencies * reapportion * term | * Lesson 1: “Introduction to the Legislative Branch” Video * Lesson 1: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > The National Legislature > Congress – The Job * Lesson 3: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > The The Two Houses > Reapportionment of Congress |
|  | I can explain the role and structure of the legislative branch including the following:   * committee system * party whips | * bicameral * seniority rule * select committee | * Lesson 5: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > Congress at Work > Standing Committees * Lesson 5: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > Congress at Work > Select Committees |
|  | I can explain how a bill becomes a law. | * bill * veto * filibuster | * Lesson 11: Flipped Video: “Making Law” * Lesson 11: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > Congress at Work – Making Law > The First Steps * Lesson 11: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > Congress at Work – Making Law > The Bill in Committee * Lesson 11: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > Congress at Work – Making Law > The Bill on the House Floor * Lesson 11: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > Congress at Work – Making Law > The Bill on the Senate Floor * Lesson 11: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > Congress at Work – Making Law > House-Senate Conference Committees |
|  | I can explain how a bill becomes a law. | * bill * veto * filibuster * cloture | * Lesson 11: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > Congress at Work – Making Law > The President Acts on a Bill |

| **[✓]** | **Statement** | **Key Words** | **Resources** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | I can analyze the similarities and differences between the House of Representatives and Senate by the following characteristics:   * size * election process * term length * leadership | * term | * Lesson 4: Flipped Video: “House and Senate” * Lesson 3: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > The Two Houses > Reapportionment of Congress * Lesson 4: Magruder’s American Government: The Legislative Branch > The Two Houses > The Senate - Size, Election and Terms |