Name: _____

The Legislative Branch

What do you think of when you think of laws? Probably things like speed limits or laws against robbery. But there are many types of laws. Federal laws are national laws. Some decide how the government makes or spends money. Some control trade between states. Some are also about crimes.

The United States government has three branches. The judicial branch decides what laws mean and how to apply them. The executive branch makes sure laws are carried out. The only branch that can make or change federal laws is the legislative branch.

The legislative branch actually has two branches. We call it bicameral, which means

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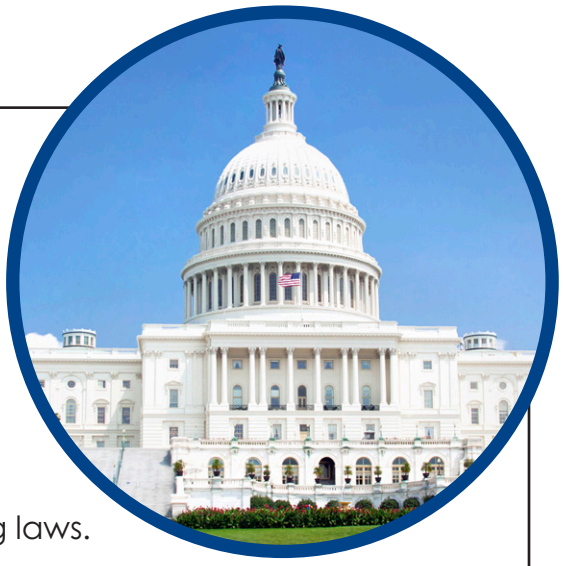
The House of Representatives contains 435 voting members. The number a state gets is decided by their population. There are also 6 non-voting members from Washington, D.C. and U.S. territories like Puerto Rico. Their leader is called the Speaker of the House.

How do they make laws? First, a member of Congress introduces a proposal for a law called a bill. A group of congresspeople called a committee talks about the bill and makes changes to it. Once a committee approves it, it can go to the full House or Senate for a vote. If they vote against the bill, it can go back to a committee for more changes. If it is approved, the bill goes to the other chamber of Congress. Both chambers need to approve a bill before it is sent to the President. If the President approves, it is signed into law. If it is vetoed, or disapproved, it goes back to Congress. If enough people in Congress vote to approve it anyway—two-thirds—it still becomes a law.

The legislative branch has other powers too. Only Congress can officially declare war. The President appoints federal judges and leaders of different agencies, but the Senate has to approve them. The Senate gets to ratify, or approve, any treaty the President wants to make. Congress can make other branches of government answer questions if there are problems. They can also ask questions of other people and companies about things that will help them make laws.

Name: _____



The Legislative Branch

1. The main jobs of the legislative branch are to

   _____ new laws and _____ existing laws.

2. Reread the following sentences from the article.

   The Senate contains 100 senators.
   The House of Representatives contains 435 voting members.

   In the sentences above, which of the following definitions of *contains* is being used?

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   population

   _____ the chamber where representation is completely equal

4. Which of the following is *not* a power of Congress?

   a. declare war
   b. approve presidential appointments
   c. ratify treaties
   d. veto a law

5. What happens if there is a tied vote in the Senate?

   a. The Speaker of the House breaks the vote.
   b. The Vice President breaks the vote.
   c. The President breaks the vote.
   d. The bill has to go back to a committee for changes.

6. Can a bill become a law if it is vetoed? Explain why or why not.

   _____

   _____

Name: _____

The Legislative Branch

Use words from the article, "The Legislative Branch," to complete the crossword.

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Across

2. a meeting to talk about a particular topic; the House and Senate together

7. having two chambers

9. lands owned by a person or country

11. the first group of people who make changes to and vote on a bill

Down

1. a representative that each state gets two of

3. a room

4. to formally announce

5. to approve a treaty

6. to disapprove or refuse

8. the building where Congress works

10. a proposal for a law

Name: _____

The Legislative Branch

In the article, "The Legislative Branch," you learned that the legislative branch is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Pretend you have a friend who is surprised to learn that Congress has two branches. Using information from the article, explain to your friend what the two branches of Congress are, how they are different, and their roles in making laws.

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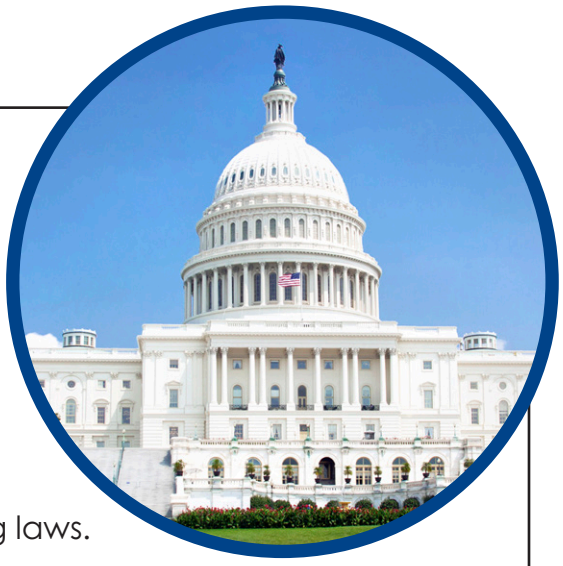
ANSWER KEY

The Legislative Branch



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   ...atives — population

   Senate — the chamber where representation is completely equal

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   a. declare war **b.** approve presidential appointments
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   a. The Speaker of the House breaks the vote.
   b. The Vice President breaks the vote.
   c. The President breaks the vote.
   d. The bill has to go back to a committee for changes.

6. Can a bill become a law if it is vetoed? Explain why or why not.

   Yes, a bill can still become a law if it is vetoed. Two-thirds of Congress need to approve it.

SOLUTION

The Legislative Branch

Use words from the article, "The Legislative Branch," to complete the crossword.

Across

2. a meeting to talk about a particular topic; the House and Senate together

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