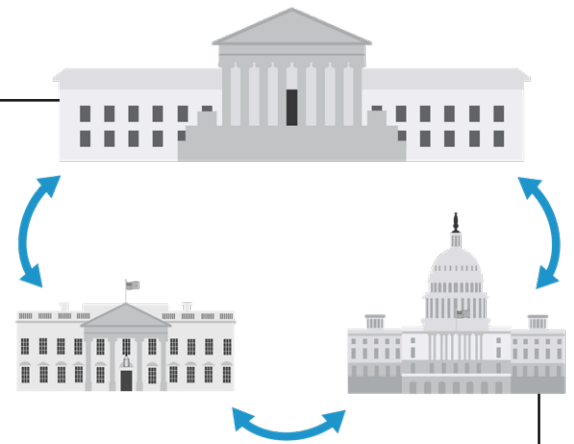


Name: _____

A System of Checks and Balances:

Judicial Branch



The people who founded the United States didn't want their leaders to have complete power like English kings. They gave some powers to the states and others to the federal government. They also set up three separate branches in the federal government: judicial, executive, and legislative. Each branch has different ways to check and balance the others. This keeps any one branch from gaining too much power.

The judicial branch is made up of federal judges at three different court levels. The highest is the Supreme Court. This branch interprets laws to decide what they mean. It also decides how the laws should be applied. Most importantly, it decides if laws follow the Constitution.

Checking and Balancing

The judicial branch checks the legislative and executive branches in mostly the same way. Federal judges rule on cases that people bring to them about federal laws. They can rule a law is unconstitutional and get it thrown out. Or they can rule that the way a law is being carried out by the executive branch is unconstitutional. If they do, the way the law is carried out must change. They can do the same things to a president's executive orders.

Federal judges in the three levels of courts are appointed for life. This is supposed to let them make their decisions without worrying about political pressures. That means judges can help balance the other branches over time.

Being Checked and Balanced

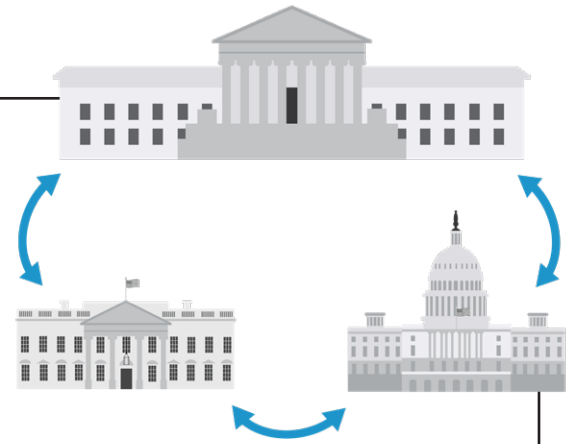
To become a federal judge, a person needs to do two things. The first is to be nominated by the President. The second is to be approved by the Senate. Judges can't finish being appointed if the Senate rejects them. But if they are approved, they can serve until they pass away or resign. The only other way for them to leave office is by Congress. Congress can remove judges through a process called impeachment if they commit a crime.

The executive branch also has an unusual way to check the judicial branch's power. It's true that presidents can't change a federal court's ruling about a law. But they can grant something called presidential pardons to individual people. These can undo federal convictions or change the sentence a criminal receives.

Name: _____

A System of Checks and Balances:

Judicial Branch



1. Write a **J** (judicial), **E** (executive), or **L** (legislative) on the lines to show which branch is checking or balancing the other in each example.

- a. E appoints judges J
- b. finds a law unconstitutional
- c. impeaches a judge
- d. grants a pardon
- e. declares an executive order unconstitutional

2. What are the three things the judicial branch gets to decide about laws?

3. Which of the following is *not* a way the President can check or balance the Supreme Court?

- a. pardon a federal criminal
- b. pick the number of judges on the court
- c. change someone's sentence
- d. nominate someone to the court

4. The text says federal judges can only leave office if they resign, pass away, or are impeached. What does *resign* mean?

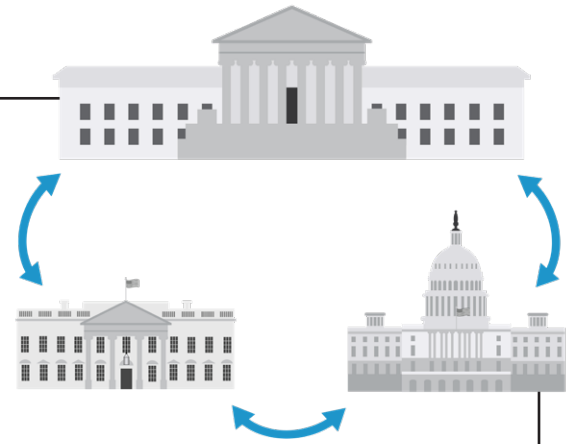
- a. to die
- b. to be forced to leave
- c. to run away
- d. to leave a job by choice

5. Why do federal judges serve for life? What benefit does this have for a system of checks and balances?

Name: _____

A System of Checks and Balances:

Judicial Branch



Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article.
Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. ___ n t ___ ___ p r ___ t

clue: to decide what something means

1. _____

2. j ___ ___ i c i ___ l

clue: dealing with courts and casting judgment

2. _____

3. p ___ e s ___ ___ ___ e s

clue: forces and strains that change behavior

3. _____

4. ___ n ___ o n ___ ___ ___ t u t ___ ___ n ___ l

clue: something that goes against the Constitution

4. _____

5. n ___ ___ i n ___ t e

clue: to appoint; to choose someone to try to fill a position

5. _____

6. ___ ___ n t e ___ c ___

clue: the punishment for a crime

6. _____

7. ___ ___ s i g ___

clue: to leave a job or position by choice

7. _____

8. ___ a r ___ o ___

clue: forgiveness or a removal of punishment

8. _____

9. ___ m ___ e a ___ ___ m e ___ t

clue: process to remove someone from office

9. _____

10. ___ o ___ ___ i c t ___ ___ n

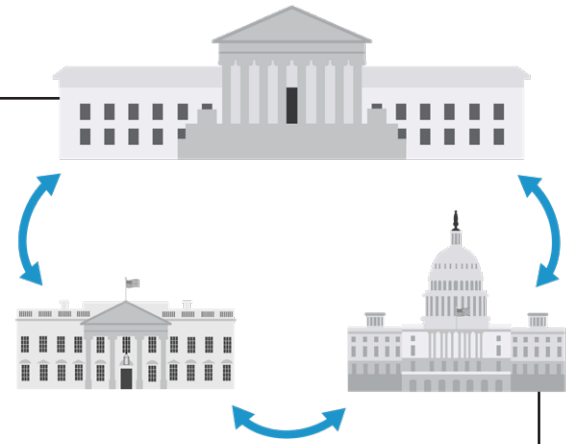
clue: ruling that someone was found guilty of a crime

10. _____

Name: _____

A System of Checks and Balances:

Judicial Branch



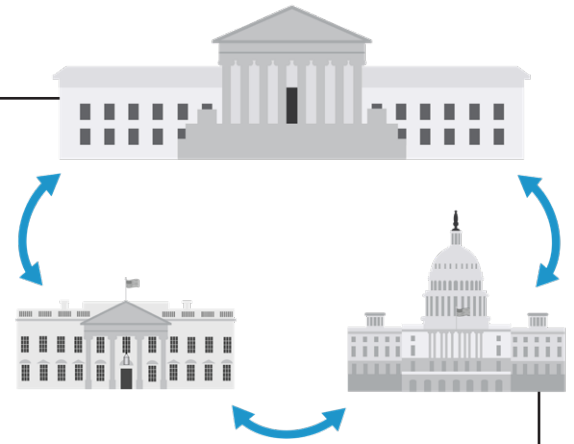
In the article, "A System of Checks and Balances: Judicial Branch," you learned about many ways the judicial branch balances and is balanced by the other branches of government.

It's a long and difficult process, but the Constitution can be amended, or changed. Using information from the article, explain the ways an amendment to the Constitution would impact the judicial branch. Then explain how it would impact the other branches *through* the judicial branch.

ANSWER KEY

A System of Checks and Balances:

Judicial Branch



1. Write a **J** (judicial), **E** (executive), or **L** (legislative) on the lines to show which branch is checking or balancing the other in each example.

- E** appoints judges **J**
- J** finds a law unconstitutional **L**
- L** impeaches a judge **J**
- E** grants a pardon **J**
- J** declares an executive order unconstitutional **E**

2. What are the three things the judicial branch gets to decide about laws?

The judicial branch decides what laws mean, how they should be applied, and if they follow the Constitution.

3. Which of the following is *not* a way the President can check or balance the Supreme Court?

- pardon a federal criminal
- pick the number of judges on the court**
- change someone's sentence
- nominate someone to the court

4. The text says federal judges can only leave office if they resign, pass away, or are impeached. What does *resign* mean?

- to die
- to be forced to leave
- to run away
- to leave a job by choice**

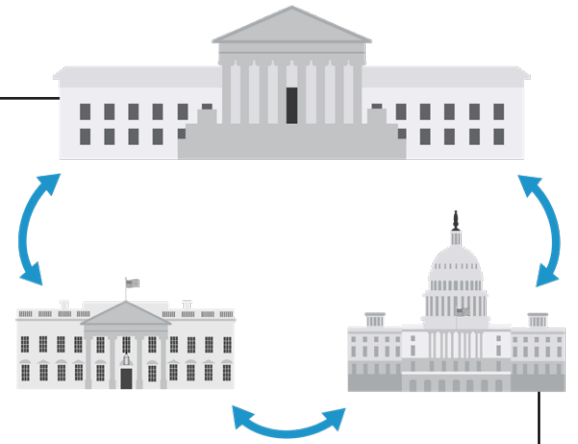
5. Why do federal judges serve for life? What benefit does this have for a system of checks and balances?

Serving for life is meant to let them make their decisions without worrying about political pressures. It means they can balance the other branches over time.

ANSWER KEY

A System of Checks and Balances:

Judicial Branch



Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. i n t e r p r e t

clue: to decide what something means

1. interpret

2. j u d i c i a l

clue: dealing with courts and casting judgment

2. judicial

3. p r e s s u r e s

clue: forces and strains that change behavior

3. pressures

4. u n c o n s t i t u t i o n a l

clue: something that goes against the Constitution

4. unconstitutional

5. n o m i n a t e

clue: to appoint; to choose someone to try to fill a position

5. nominate

6. s e n t e n c e

clue: the punishment for a crime

6. sentence

7. r e s i g n

clue: to leave a job or position by choice

7. resign

8. p a r d o n

clue: forgiveness or a removal of punishment

8. pardon

9. i m p e a c h m e n t

clue: process to remove someone from office

9. impeachment

10. c o n v i c t i o n

clue: ruling that someone was found guilty of a crime

10. conviction