

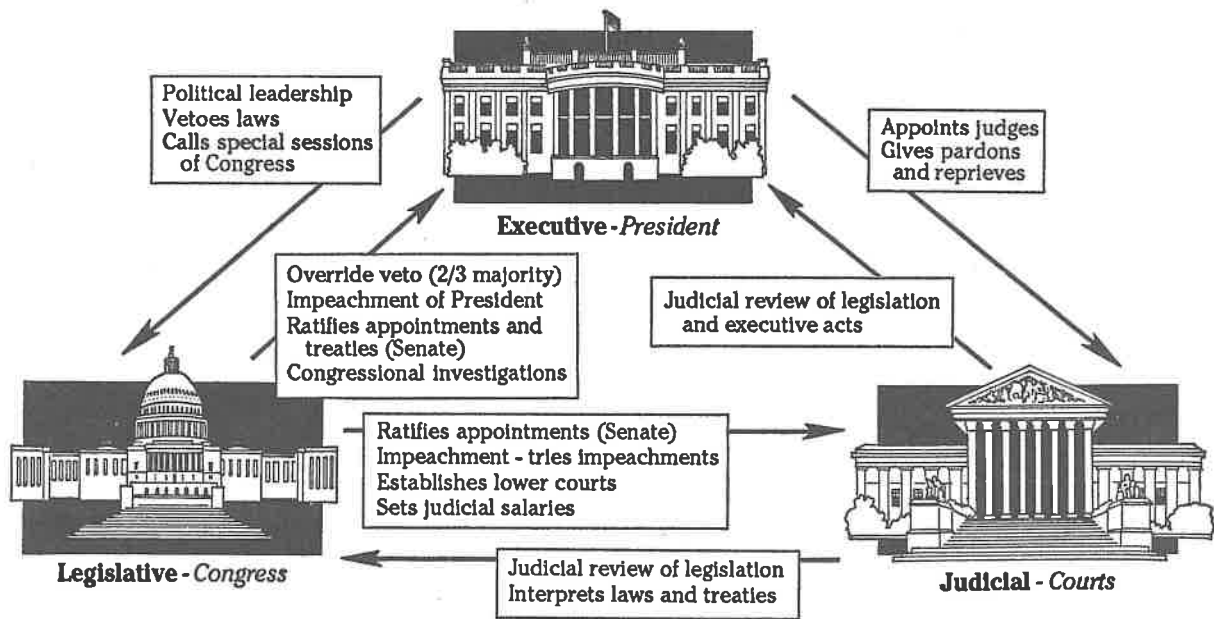
# Separation of Powers

The delegates to the Constitutional Convention were concerned that too much power would be controlled by a few people. They thought the king of Great Britain had too much power. They did not want the same kind of government. The king, with his advisers and Parliament, passed laws for the colonies. These laws were often harmful to the colonists. The colonists wanted a government in which the power was divided.

This was accomplished by establishing three separate branches of government. Each branch was given certain powers and limitations. The **executive** branch (the President) enforces the laws, the **legislative** branch (Congress) makes the laws, and the **judicial** branch (courts) interprets the laws. This is called **separation of powers**.

Each branch was connected through a system of **checks and balances**. Each branch of power "checks up" on the actions of the other branches. There are six basic relationships under the checks-and-balances system. The following chart illustrates the relationships.

The System of Checks and Balances



**A** Complete the following exercise.

1. List the three branches of our government. What does each do?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why were the three branches of government established? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What does separation of powers mean? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**B** Use the diagram “The System of Checks and Balances” on page 16 to answer the following questions. Write your answer in the space provided. Use the following letters for your answers:

a. executive

b. legislative

c. judicial

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Which branch of government appoints federal judges?

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Which branch of government can declare a law unconstitutional?

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Which branch of government can veto legislation (bills)?

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Which branch of government can override the President’s veto?

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Which branch of government can approve or turn down appointment of judges?

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Which branch of government can declare executive acts to be unconstitutional?

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Which branch of government conducts investigations when problems occur?