

Power in Balance

Trace how the national branches share power under the Constitution.

CE.2 “The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze how American constitutional government functions at the national level by describing the structure and powers of the government (the three branches of government).”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each power of Congress, circle each power of the president, and write a small 1 beside each example of one branch checking another branch. These marks will help you track both separate powers and shared limits.

Three Branches, Shared Limits

- ① The Constitution divides national power among three branches so that no one part controls everything. Article I creates Congress, the legislative branch, made up of the House of Representatives and Senate. Congress can introduce and pass bills, collect taxes, declare war, and regulate commerce. For a bill to reach the president, both chambers must approve the same version. This process requires representatives and senators to debate, revise, and vote. Article I also gives Congress oversight tools, including investigations and the power to impeach certain federal officials.
- ② Article II creates the executive branch, led by the president. The president carries out federal laws and directs executive departments that administer many programs. A president may sign a bill into law or veto it. Congress can respond to a veto by passing the bill again with a two-thirds vote in each chamber. The president is commander in chief of the armed forces, nominates judges and many other officials, and makes treaties. However, the Senate must approve treaties and confirm many presidential nominations.
- ③ Article III creates the judicial branch, including the Supreme Court and lower federal courts established by Congress. Courts decide cases involving the Constitution, federal laws, and disputes between states. Through judicial review, courts may rule that a law or executive action conflicts with the Constitution. This check does not make judges rulers. Congress can change a law, propose constitutional amendments, and shape the lower federal courts. The president appoints federal judges, while the Senate must confirm them. These shared powers are called checks and balances.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 According to Article I, what must Congress do before a bill can reach the president?

2 How can Congress check a president who vetoes a bill? Include the vote required.

3 What two branches share responsibility for placing a federal judge on the court? Explain each branch's role.

4 What can courts do through judicial review, and how can Congress respond to a law that a court finds unconstitutional?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Create a four-sentence constitutional scenario about a bill that Congress passes and the president vetoes. Explain how Congress could respond, then explain one way the judicial branch could become involved if someone challenged the law.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each power of Congress, circle each power of the president, and write a small 1 beside each example of one branch checking another branch. These marks will help you track both separate powers and shared limits. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	According to Article I, what must Congress do before a bill can reach the president?	The House of Representatives and Senate must both approve the same version of the bill.
2	How can Congress check a president who vetoes a bill? Include the vote required.	Congress can override the veto by passing the bill again with a two-thirds vote in each chamber.
3	What two branches share responsibility for placing a federal judge on the court? Explain each branch's role.	The president nominates or appoints a federal judge, and the Senate confirms the nomination.
4	What can courts do through judicial review, and how can Congress respond to a law that a court finds unconstitutional?	Courts can rule that a law conflicts with the Constitution. Congress can change the law or propose a constitutional amendment.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress passes a bill that requires a new federal program. The president vetoes the bill because the president disagrees with it. Congress can override the veto if two-thirds of each chamber vote for the bill again. If the bill becomes law and someone claims it violates the Constitution, a federal court could review that claim.

Accept accurate scenarios that show Congress passing a bill, a presidential veto, and a two-thirds override vote in both chambers. The judicial branch explanation should state that a court can review whether a law conflicts with the Constitution.