



The Legislative Branch | Lesson Plan

How does the structure of the legislative branch ensure representation and balance of power in the U.S. government?

Students will be able to identify and describe the main responsibilities and functions of the legislative branch of the United States government, including the roles of the Senate and the House of Representatives and key positions such as the Speaker of the House and the Vice President.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the components and responsibilities of the legislative branch, including the Senate and the House of Representatives.
- Describe the process of how a bill becomes a law, including the necessary steps and key roles involved.
- Analyze the role of the Vice President in the Senate, particularly in the case of a tie vote.
- Compare the powers and functions of the Senate and the House of Representatives, including their roles in impeachment.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Congress:** The collective name for the Senate and the House of Representatives.
- **Senate:** One of the two chambers of Congress, where each state is represented by two senators.
- **House of Representatives:** The other chamber of Congress, where the number of representatives is determined by the population of each state.
- **Bill:** A proposed law presented for approval to a legislative body.
- **Majority Support:** More than half of the votes in a legislative body.
- **President:** The head of the executive branch who signs bills into law.
- **Vice President:** The individual who casts the deciding vote in the Senate in case of a tie.
- **Articles of Impeachment:** The formal charges initiated by the House of Representatives to begin the process of removing a president from office.
- **Two-thirds Majority:** A requirement that two-thirds of the members of both chambers of Congress must vote in favor to override a presidential veto.
- **Speaker of the House:** The presiding officer of the House of Representatives.

Educational Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.3, CCRA.L.4

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, U.S. History, Western Civilization, Political Science, Liberty, Freedom



What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: The Legislative Branch* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The Legislative Branch* (Click [Here](#))

Lesson Plan (45 mins.)

Warm Up: (10 mins.)

1. Briefly explain that today's lesson will cover the important aspects of the legislative branch of the U.S. government.
2. Explain that the legislative branch is responsible for making laws and is divided into two parts: the Senate and the House of Representatives, collectively known as Congress.
3. Mention that the primary job of Congress is to propose and pass bills into law.
4. Describe the Senate's composition: 100 senators, two from each state, regardless of population.
5. Highlight that this equal representation helps balance the interests of states with smaller populations against those with larger populations.
6. Explain the role of the Vice President in the Senate, who casts the deciding vote in case of a tie.
7. Describe the House's composition: 435 members, with the number of representatives from each state determined by its population.
8. Emphasize that this ensures representation is based on population size, giving more populous states more influence in the House.
9. Explain that the Speaker of the House leads this chamber.
10. Outline the steps of the legislative process:
 - A bill is proposed by a member of either the Senate or the House.
 - The bill must receive majority support in both the Senate and the House.
 - After passing both chambers, the bill is sent to the President.
 - The President can sign the bill into law or veto it.
 - If vetoed, Congress can override the veto with a two-thirds majority vote in both chambers.
11. Summarize the key points: the roles of the Senate and the House, the process of making a law, and the checks and balances involved.
12. Hand out individual copies of the "Street Smarts: The Legislative Branch Worksheet" and let students know that they will play along with other contestants in a game-show-style video that covers the basics of what they just learned about the Legislative Branch.

Watch and Complete (20 minutes)

1. Play the *Street Smarts: The Legislative Branch* video. Pause the video at opportune times using these guiding questions to ensure understanding:
 - What is the primary responsibility of the legislative branch?
 - How is Congress structured, and what are its two main components?

- How many senators are there in total, and how many does each state have?
- Why do you think the Constitution allows two senators to each state regardless of its population size?
- Who casts the vote in the Senate if there is a tie, and why is this role significant?
- How is the number of representatives for each state determined?
- How many members are there in the House of Representatives?
- Who leads the House of Representatives, and what is their title?
- What is a bill, and what steps must it go through to become law?
- What happens if the President vetoes a bill, and how can Congress override the veto?
- Why is it important for both houses of Congress to approve a bill before it goes to the President?
- What is the purpose of requiring a two-thirds majority to override a presidential veto?
- How does the power of impeachment work, and which chamber of Congress has this power?

Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

1. After the video, ask students to share one thing they learned about the legislative branch.
2. Explain how understanding the legislative branch helps us as citizens. For example, knowing how laws are made can empower us to participate in the democratic process, such as voting and contacting our representatives.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (20 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.