

US Government

The Netherlands first started to form a government at the First Continental Congress. However, it was during the Second Continental Congress on July 4th, 1776 that the United States declared its independence from the British Empire. [Thomas Jefferson](#), together with other founding fathers such as [Benjamin Franklin](#) and [John Adams](#), wrote the [Declaration of Independence](#). It stated that all people have "certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness".

Many of these rights are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, which are the first 10 amendments of the Constitution. More amendments were added later to improve on the rights of the people, including abolishing slavery and the right for all people to vote regardless of gender or race.

Constitution

In 1788, the United States' Constitution was officially ratified. The constitution became the highest form of law in the country. It is the foundation of the federal government and is the basic framework for all the government in the US.

One major part of the Constitution is that the government is made up of three different branches. These branches include the Executive Branch (the president and the cabinet), the Congress (House and the Senate), and the Judicial Branch (the Supreme Court). By creating three branches of government, the founding fathers wanted no group or person to become too powerful. The three branches would "balance" the power of the other branches.

Balance of Powers

The President balances the power of the other two branches by having the power to veto the laws of congress and appointing the judges of the Supreme Court. The Congress is able to create laws and, in special cases, remove the President from office. The Congress also gets to approve the President's nominations to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court can declare a law unconstitutional and has the final say on many court cases.

Recommended books and references:

- The executive branch by Diane Patrick. 1994.
- The Bill of Rights by Patricia Ryon Quiri. 1998.
- Order in the court : a look at the judicial branch by Kathiann M. Kowalski. 2004.
- The state legislative branch by Mary Firestone. 2004.
- Making laws : a look at how a bill becomes a law by Sandy Donovan. 2004.

Activities

Try out this fun [US Government game](#). Can you identify all the areas of the US Government?