

# Political structure in united states

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The first article explains the structure and rules of Congress. It explains how its structure and role has changed and evolved since the founding period. This directly relates to question 2 of unit 4, which asks how have the roles of the legislative branch evolved. This article describes the advantages and disadvantages of bicameralism and political parties. In the United States' bicameral legislature, the election process has changed in the Senate. Until 1913, senators were appointed by state legislature. This is different from the election of representatives in the House of Representative, where representatives are elected based on popular vote.

Differences between the House and Senate are important. Due to the fact of their separation, they have evolved differently. The House has evolved to where majority rules, while the Senate has evolved to value the minority. Until the 1890s, the minority in the House had significant power. In the 1890s, Speaker Thomas Reed made reforms and “empowered the majority to overrule or block obstruction tactics” by the minority. Differences between the House and the Senate make legislative action more difficult. Members of each chamber have different policy opinions, making agreement harder to reach. Committees from each chamber help reduce disagreement by forcing compromise. Committees work together to create bills and pass legislation. “Committees help Congress produce policy ideas and legislation and make laws. But they may also induce bias into the policy process.” The article gives data that shows an increase in rates of gridlock across congressional sessions from about 45% to about 65%. Also, the number of cloture votes have increased from about 10 to 150.

Parties also slow down the legislative process while adding functionality by forcing compromise. Drawbacks include polarization, which causes disagreement. Congress' bicameral legislature has created advantages, but they also present themselves with disadvantages.

The second article explains the powers and duties of the president. This relates to the third question of this unit, which asks how have the duties and power of the president grown since the founding period. The Framers established a president to provide leadership for the nation. The Framers intended for a president with little authority and fewer responsibilities as it has grown to have now. "As the country has increasingly looked to the national government to respond to national problems, a large, active government has evolved to implement these solutions." The country requires a strong executive in order to run smoothly. With a small executive branch, a country our size would not function.

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt "requested that Congress provide him with an institutional framework to meet the new demands of the president's expanded domestic policy role, which required more information, more expertise, and more staff." Congress passed the Reorganization Act of 1939, "establishing the institutionalized Executive Office of the President." Since then, the executive branch has grown greatly. The federal bureaucracy is extremely large to keep up with the public's demand. "The power of the bureaucracy, however, should not be measured by its size but rather by the level of independence and discretionary authority exercised by its appointed officials."

The Framers feared an executive branch this large because they believed if the president gained too much power, he “ could conceal and evade responsibility.” However, the Framers never envisioned our nation to be the size that it is today, geographically or population-wise. The growth of the executive branch “ occurred as a result of both historical and institutional factors. The demands of democracy, war, and welfare all played a role.” The United States has also grown to acquire broader international responsibilities, which also requires a strong leader.

The third article describes how “ the Supreme Court is the highest appellate court in the federal judicial system.” It describes some times when justices even had personal arguments among each other although they try to avoid them.

“ Although justices make every effort to maintain collegiality, personal and ideological antagonisms have at times created rifts among them.” The article describes how Justice Benjamin Robbins Curtis “ was so incensed” at the way Chief Justice Taney treated him that he resigned from the court.

The article also lists different landmark decisions made by the court since the founding period. In 1803, the decision of Marbury v. Madison stated that the Supreme Court “ was the final arbiter of the meaning of the Constitution.” Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall stated that every act of Congress had to be measured against it. This is known as judicial review, the court’s power to determine an act of Congress unconstitutional.

Since Marbury v. Madison, “ Marshall had kept the Court out of partisan politics.” By deciding on the case Dred Scott v. Sandford, the court did “

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exactly what Marshall had avoided.” Chief Justice Taney “ put the Court into the center of the most divisive issue in national politics.” In the decision, Taney ruled that the Missouri Supreme Court, along with the lower courts, were correct in ruling against Scott because “ Scott had no case, nor should the case have come to federal courts, for Scott was not a citizen” because he was a slave.

The article explains other landmark decisions as well, such as Plessy v. Ferguson, Brown v. Board of Education, and Roe v. Wade.

The court has made its fair share of bad decisions in the past, however, none of which had gone against the constitution.

The last article describes the evolution of federalism in the United States. “ The United States is the world’s oldest federal country, and the institutions of federalism established by the US Constitution have been durable despite substantial centralization since 1789.”

The article argues that the indigenous federations of the Iroquois Confederation and the Dakota League of the Seven Council Fires guided the founders of American federalism. Other arguments in the article describe the influence of the puritans on American federalism.

The Articles of Confederation “ generated agitation for a tighter union.” The Constitution “ authorized Congress to legislate for individuals.” This new power “ transformed” ancient ideas of federalism into a modern idea of federalism.

Before the civil war, dual federalism was established. “ This era witnessed contentious debates over the nature of the union.” Parties were formed, the federalists and anti federalists. One debate of the time was whether states had the right to secede. “ Madison held that states have a right of interpretation,” while “ John C. Calhoun and other southerners defined the Constitution as a compact from which states can secede.” At this time, the Supreme Court wanted to protect the federal government’s powers against state encroachment. They wanted to help maintain a strong federal government.

The article further explains other evolutions of United States federalism, including the transition toward cooperative federalism, the rise of regulatory or coercive federalism, and the normalized regulatory or coercive federalism, which occurred in 1990 and is still in effect,