

Three branches of government

[Government](#)



It can be hard to believe that not so long ago, many people were trying to live with no job and very little money, and yet something was able to change that into what the United States is like today. The legislative branch, one of the three branches of government, is made up of two groups- the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Together they make up Congress. One law that Congress created is the Social Security Act, which gives retired and elderly citizens a way to continue to receive money, even without a job. Congress, also known as the legislative branch, created a very helpful and efficient law called the Social Security Act, which established a beneficial insurance program for unemployed and retired citizens.

Who's idea was it to create Congress in the first place? In 1787, fifty-five delegates from twelve of the thirteen original states got together to fix the Articles of Confederation, their weaker and more limited version of the Constitution. It only had one branch made up of one house. This meeting, known as the Constitutional Convention, took place in Independence Hall in Philadelphia on May through September of 1787. Delegates attending included George Washington, the leader, James Madison, James Wilson, Alexander Hamilton, and David Brearley.

There were two opinions about how Congress should be run. One opinion was the Virginia Plan, a plan written by James Madison in order to approve the government. In it, it said that representatives should be elected based on the state population, so the states with more people would have more

representation. Many residents of larger states, like James Wilson, agreed with this opinion.

However, the New Jersey Plan, written by William Paterson, said that each state should have an equal amount of representatives. People living in smaller states supported this opinion. For example, David Brearley argued, ""The large states will carry everything before them [and the small states] will be obliged to throw themselves constantly into the scale of some large one in order to have any weight at all." He was explaining that if Congress was based on population, the large states would be the only ones to make a difference in votes and the small ones would have to team up with the large ones in order to have a say.

On June 30, delegates from Connecticut suggested to form two groups- one that met the criteria of the Virginia Plan and one that followed the rules of the New Jersey Plan- and this became known as the Connecticut Compromise. The delegates decided that in the House of Representatives, from the Virginia Plan's idea, there would be one representative for every 40,000 people (they later changed this to 30,000) and slaves would only count as three-fifths of the population. All of these decisions were written in the Constitution.

Article I of the Constitution starts out by stating, " All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives." The first sentence of Article I, Section One says that the branch that creates the laws will be

Congress, made up of the Senate (the house in which each state has an equal amount of representatives) and House of Representatives.

Section Two says that representatives must be at least twenty-five, have been a citizen of the United States for seven years, and that the House can choose its own speaker, officers, and can impeach another representative.

Article I, Section Three states that each state gets two senators that serve for six years. The requirements are that they must be at least thirty and have been a citizen of the United States for at least nine years.

It also says that the vice president is the head of the meetings but there is also a president pro tempore, the substitute. Section Four makes procedures for elections and meetings, and Section Five deals with membership. With two-thirds of the vote, senators can fire members, punish them, make rules, keep track of votes, and force members who didn't show up to come.

Whichever political party has a majority of senators, they are in charge.

For senators and representatives to be elected, American citizens elect them on Election Day. Whichever party has more members becomes the majority, and the other the minority. The president of the Senate, currently Mike Pence, is the vice president and is elected through the Electoral College with the president, but he only votes in ties. The president pro tempore, currently Orrin G. Hatch, is the substitute for the vice president when he isn't available and is 4th in line to the presidency. Majority and minority leaders are elected by members of their party.

Right now, Republicans are the majority, so Mitch McConnell is the majority leader and Charles E. Schumer is the minority leader. The majority leader can make amendments before anyone else in the Senate, meets with foreign dignitaries in the White House, and has more responsibility than the minority leader. However, both represent their party in the Senate.

The head of the House of Representatives is called the Speaker of the House. He or she is the leader of the majority party, is the third in line to president, and is elected by the whole House. The jobs of majority and minority leaders in the House are the same as in the Senate. The Republican majority leader is currently Kevin McCarthy, and the current Democratic minority leader is Nancy Pelosi. What is the purpose of being a representative? Paul Ryan, Speaker of the House, explains,

Governing ourselves was never meant to be easy. This has always been a tough business... Politics can be a battle of ideas, not insults. It can be about solutions. It can be about making a difference. It can be about always striving to do better.

Paul Ryan said this to a group of House interns of both parties. He explained that being a representative and politics in general doesn't need to be all negative; it should be about always striving to make a difference and to come up with solutions. This explains the job of both senators and representatives right now, and the purpose of their jobs.

Both the Senate and the House of Representatives have committees. A committee is a section of the House or Senate that deals with a specific

matter or topic, and makes decisions and proposals relating to that.

Committees also have subcommittees which deal with specific topics within that committee. The Committee of Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, a committee in the Senate, deals with matters like agricultural research, energy, natural resources.

The chairman, head of the meetings, is John Boozman. The Committee of Armed Services, also in the Senate, deals with things like Air Force, military healthcare, science and technology relating to weapons, nuclear weapons, the Marine and Navy and more. The chairman is Tom Cotton. The Committee of Natural Resources in the House of Representatives deals with matters like energy production, mining, mineral lands, irrigation and public lands. The chairman of this committee is Rob Bishop. The Committee of Ways and Means, also in the House, deals with money issues such as debt, trade arrangements, and taxes. The chairman is Kevin Brady.

Congress had to think of a new law in the 1930's. It was a time of poverty for the US called The Great Depression, which came as a result of a stock market crashing. People were not able to afford essential food and homes, and there was nowhere for anyone without a job to go. Franklin Roosevelt, a New York governor at the time, decided to take action. He teamed up with one of his top assistants, Frances Perkins, to make laws for unemployment insurance and benefits for elders. Roosevelt decided to run for president with promises of a "New Deal" to improve financial problems, and won the election in 1933.

FDR believed that the old should have insurance based on the amount of money they earned previously. He set up a group called the CES (Committee on Economic Security) with Perkins, and made new programs to improve the economy. Franklin Roosevelt explained to Perkins, " I see no reason why every child, from the day he is born, shouldn't be a member of the social security system. When he begins to grow up, he should know he will have old-age benefits direct from the insurance system to which he will belong all his life." His opinion was that every single person should be able to be part of the Social Security program, and feel assured that when they retire they will still have some means of support.

After the CES was formed, Perkins gathered a team of people like Barbara Nachtrieb Armstrong, Murray Latimer and Professor J. Douglas Brown, who helped come up with laws for the unemployed and elderly. One problem with the idea was that the team wasn't sure if the Constitution allowed pension, their idea. However, the Constitution does give taxation powers, so they would tax workers and employers for Social Security.

Another problem was that people from both parties thought that this act would take away freedom from the US, plus there were private companies that sold retirement insurance, and this new act would ruin their business. However, in 1935, the team introduced the new act, which was met with criticism by both parties. Republicans thought it would be too expensive for the government to provide each person with eighty-five dollars or less, which was their plan.

A Democratic senator named Bennet Champ Clark even created the Clark Amendment, which said that a company with its own insurance program could opt out of the act so that their business wouldn't be ruined. After much debate from both groups of Congress, and after asking three staff members if they could incorporate the amendment into the law, it was decided that the Clark Amendment could be something to look into in the future. It would take too long to and be too much work to use it. The Social Security Act became a law in 1935, without the Clark Amendment.

Title I and Title II of the Social Security Act created an insurance program to help the elderly and paid benefits to help poor elders. Title III created benefits for the unemployed, although this later became a separate program. The Social Security Act protected citizens ages sixty-five and up from living in poverty. Taxes were collected from workers and employers. Each person's tax would be one percent of their income up to \$3, 000 (it was low because of the Depression).

Nowadays, every American gets a Social Security number when they are born. Each month, taxes are paid by employees and employers. Credits are earned by working, which can then allow them to receive money once they retire. One program is retirement benefits. The amount of money a person receives is based on their old salary. Once a person retires, they receive their monthly payment. Another program is disability benefits, which provides money to anyone with a mental or physical disability, as long as it is verified by a doctor. The government provides benefits to over seven million disabled families through Social Security.

However, there are a few problems. People with disabilities go through a long process in order for the government to know that they aren't lying about their disability. If a claim is denied, that person must go through an appeals process, which takes a very long time and can affect the citizen financially. Also, many people use Medicare, a program that pays expenses for doctor and hospital bills, and the cost is continuing to rise. Therefore, Congress has lowered the amount of money paid to doctors, and doctors are starting to reject patients who have Medicare. Medicare also doesn't always pay for certain services. Also, sometimes one's Social Security number can be stolen, which is like stealing part of their identity.

The Social Security Act was a very useful law because now citizens can have the reassurance of receiving money even when they are disabled or retired. Now there are less poor people because they can still receive money without a job. Without Social Security, we still may be in the Great Depression. Right now, every American citizen has a Social Security number and will receive or already does receive retirement benefits. Hopefully, in the future, Congress will think of a way to improve Social Security even more so that it will help the lives of even more people.