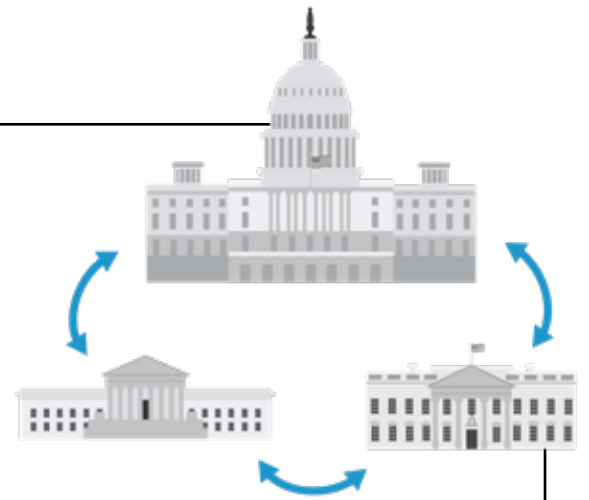# A System of Checks and Balances:

Legislative Branch

The federal government in the United States is divided
into three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. To prevent any one branch
from having too much power, they have a system of checks and balances. That is, they
have ways to keep each other in "check" and "balance" each other out.

The legislative branch is made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives.
Together they are called Congress. Congress makes new laws and changes existing laws.

Preview

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The Senate also has some ways of balancing the other branches on its own. It
gets to approve or reject people appointed by the President, who is the head of the
executive branch. This includes judges appointed to serve in the judicial branch. The
Senate also decides whether to ratify or reject treaties the President wants to make with
other countries.

Being Checked and Balanced

Any law Congress makes can be ruled unconstitutional by a federal court. If the
Supreme Court—the highest court in the country—agrees with that ruling, then the law
is removed or changed.

While Congress makes laws, it rarely makes them on its own. Proposals for laws
are called bills. If the majority of both the House and the Senate approves a bill,
it is sent to the President to be signed into law. If the President vetoes it, it does not
become a law. Unless two-thirds of the House and Senate still approve it. Then the
veto is overridden.

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A System of Checks and Balances:

Legislative Branch
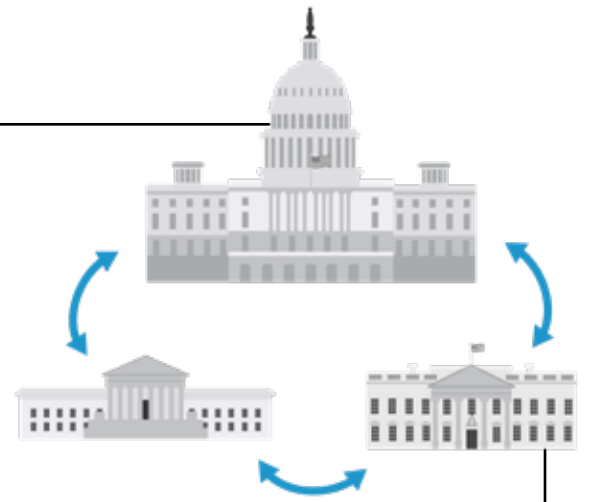
1. Write an **L** (legislative), **E** (executive), or **J** (judicial) on the lines to show which branch is checking or balancing the other in each example.

   a. _**J**_ finds a law unconstitutional _**L**_

   b. ____ impeaches a judge ____

   c. ____ ratifies a treaty ____

What does the word _investigate_ mean?

   a. angrily send to jail   **b.** carefully question and look into
   c. purposefully ignore   **d.** quickly kick out of office

4. Which of the following is not a way the legislative branch can check or balance the executive branch?

   a. impeach a president   **b.** override a veto with two-thirds majority
   c. reject an appointment   **d.** decide an executive order is unconstitutional

5. Congress can start the process of amending, or making changes to, the Constitution. Imagine they do manage to amend it. How would that impact the judicial branch?

   _____

   _____

   _____

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A System of Checks and Balances:

Legislative Branch
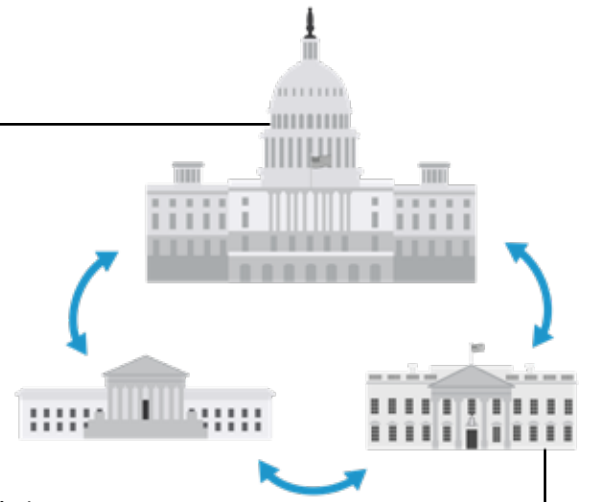
The following terms are vocabulary words from the article.
Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing
the corresponding letter on the line.

1. _____ veto

a. to make and change laws in order to govern

5. _____ impeachment

e. to undo; to cancel out and do something else

6. _____ Senate

f. process to remove someone from office

7. _____ budget

g. plan for what money can be spent on and how much can be spent

8. _____ ratify

h. to disapprove a bill

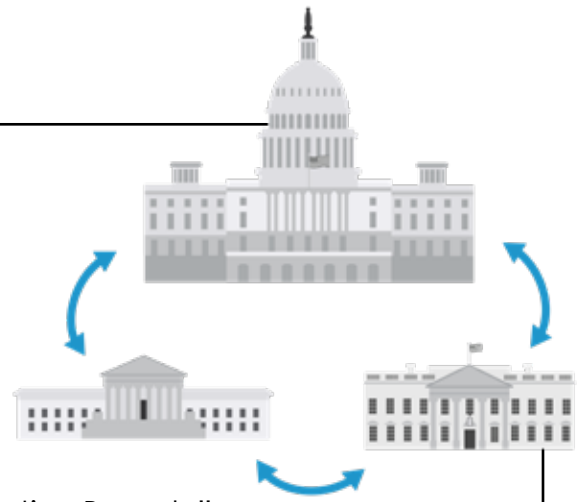**9.** _____ investigate

i. more than half

10. _____ override

j. to carefully question and look into

Name: _____

A System of Checks and Balances:

Legislative Branch

In the article, "A System of Checks and Balances: Legislative Branch,"
you learned about many ways the legislative branch balances and is balanced by
the other branches.

Which of Congress's ways of checking and balancing the other branches do you think
is the most important? Why? Be sure to state if it's something all of Congress does or
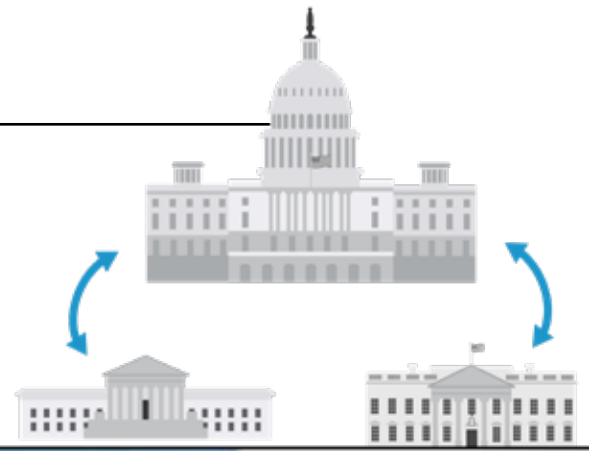just one part of it, and which branch(es) it impacts.

Preview

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A System of Checks and Balances:
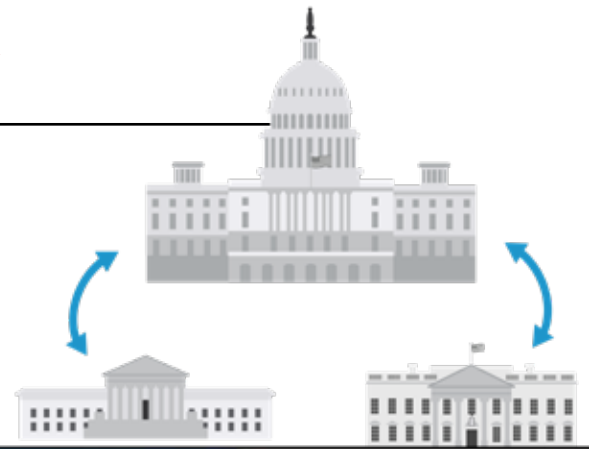
Legislative Branch

Imagine they do manage to amend it. How would that impact the judicial branch?

Answers will vary. An example is: The judicial branch decides

if laws are constitutional. If Congress changes the Constitution,

then that will change what the judicial branch decides is

constitutional or not.

A System of Checks and Balances:

Legislative Branch

Preview
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9. __j__ investigate

i. more than half

10. __e__ override

j. to carefully question and look into