

Delaware Day 4th Grade Competition

Lesson Six

Checking and Balancing Power

Students will be able to

- Explain why the Founders divided the government into three branches* (Panel 1:3)

** The 2018 Delaware Day competition does not have a specific question about checks and balances. However, teachers may find this helpful for students to have a better understanding why the framers divided the government into three branches. For a complete lesson on checks and balances, see Michigan Citizenship Collaborative Curriculum at www.micitizenshipcurriculum.org, 4th Grade United States Social Studies, Unit 5: Our Federal Government, Lesson 5.*

This lesson contains information, resources and ideas to help students understand reasons why the Founders divided the government into three branches. Teachers will determine best practices and methods to instruct the students.

1. Introductory Activities

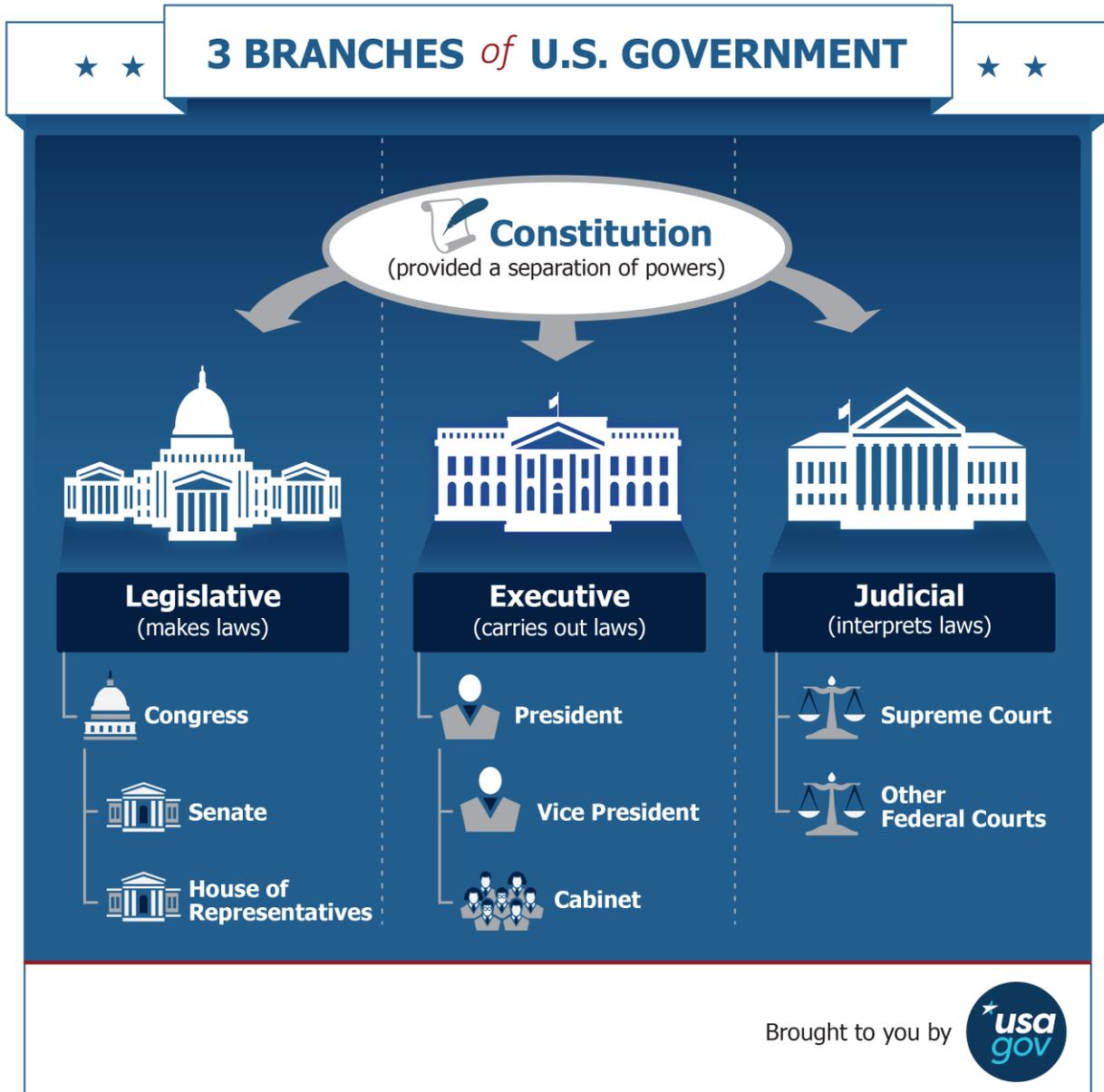
- a. Have students view Document 1: *Three Branches of Government* (usa.gov) to review the three branches of the U.S. government (see lesson two). Ask students if they believe separating the three branches keeps any one of the branches from becoming too powerful. Have students explain their responses. (You might remind them that in the Government of Egbonia, the Council and the President were two branches and they each had their own duties, yet the President kept taking more and more power.)
- b. Distribute Document 2a: *Power Problems* (www.micitizenshipcurriculum.org) (Document 2b is an answer key). Ask students to either individually or in small groups fill in the “What’s the Problem” column but to keep the last column blank. Share and ask them to think of ways these problems could be prevented.

2. Historical Background

Explain to students that the framers of the Constitution were concerned that dividing power among the three branches would not keep one branch from becoming too powerful. They created a system of checks and balances where each branch would be able to “check” or limit the power of the other two branches.

3. Application Activity

- a. Have students view Document 3: *Graphic Organizer*. Review the handout together and help students understand the language.
- b. Ask students to work with a partner to identify which check belongs in the last column of Document 2a.
- c. As you review the answers, refer back to Document 3. (See Document 2b for the answers.)
- d. Document 4: *Checks and Balances Reference Sheet* (www.micitizenshipcurriculum.org) is included for reference.



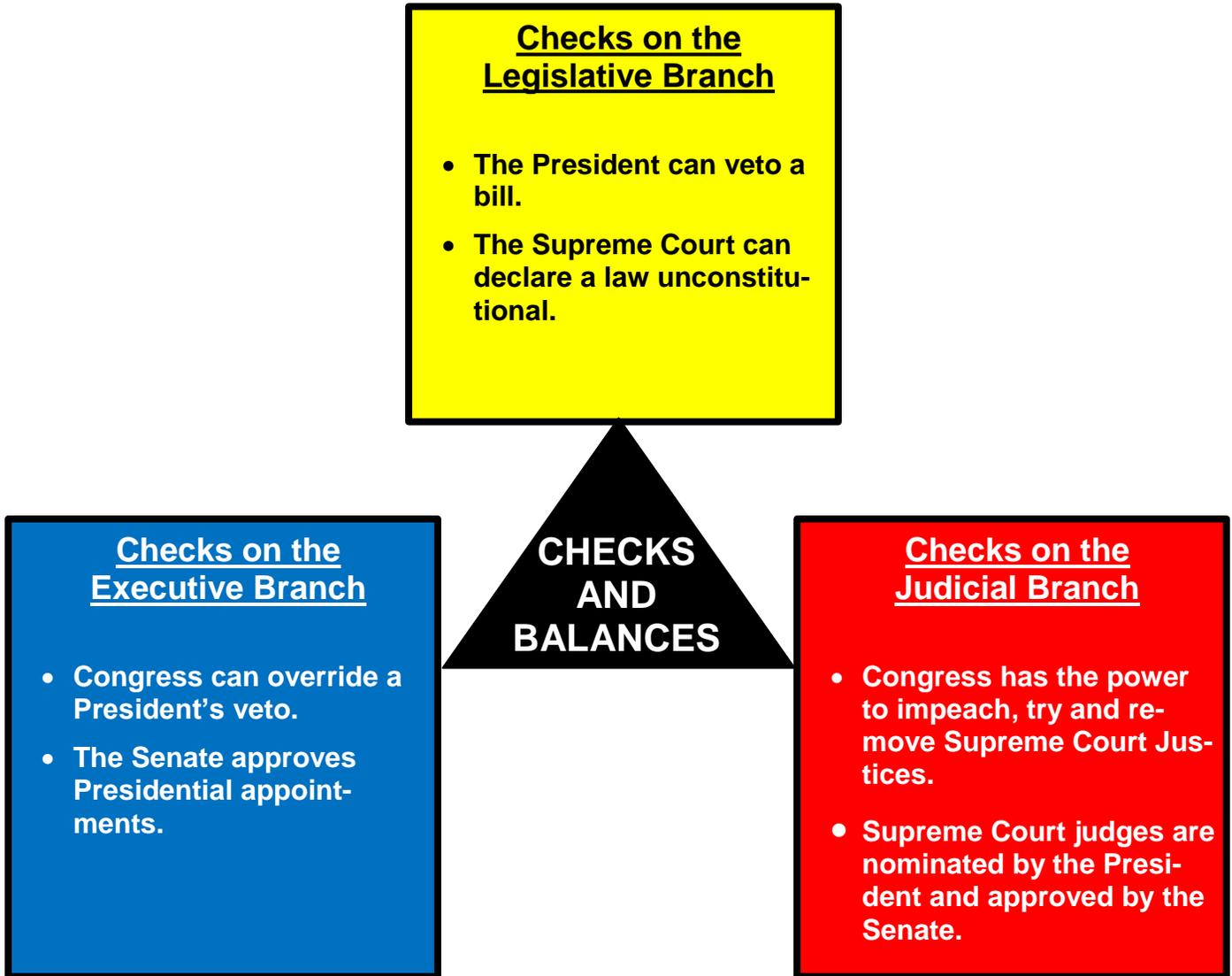
Power Problems

Power	Use of Power	What's the Problem?	What check would prevent this from happening?
Congress has the power to make laws.	Congress makes a law requiring all citizens to wear red on Mondays.		
The President has the power to appoint judges to the Supreme Court.	The President appoints his brother, a plumber, to the Supreme Court.		
The President has the power to make treaties with other countries	The President makes a treaty with Canada that gives Canada the states of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.		

Power Problems - Answer Key

Power	Use of Power	What's the Problem?	What check would prevent this from happening?
Congress has the power to make laws.	Congress makes a law requiring all citizens to wear red on Mondays.	The law would violate people's rights to free speech. Clothing has been considered symbolic speech	The President has the power to veto a bill. The Supreme Court can declare the law unconstitutional.
The President has the power to appoint judges to the Supreme Court.	The President appoints his brother, a plumber, to the Supreme Court.	The brother might not be qualified.	The Senate has the power to approve (confirm) the President's appointments for judges.
The President has the power to make treaties with other countries	The President makes a treaty with Canada that gives Canada the states of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.	This would not be fair to people living in those states.	The Senate has the power to approve (ratify) any treaty.

Graphic Organizer



Michigan Citizenship Collaborative Curriculum, www.micitizenshipcurriculum.org 4th Grade
United States Social Studies, Unit 5: Our Federal Government, Lesson 5

CHECKS AND BALANCES REFERENCE SHEET

The Legislative Branch	
Checks on the Executive Branch	Checks on the Judicial Branch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only the Congress can declare war. The President controls the armed forces but the Congress controls the money needed to support the armed forces. The Senate must approve of presidential appointments. The House of Representatives has the power to impeach the President. This means the President is charged with wrong-doing. The Senate has the power to try the President after he or she has been impeached. Congress may override Presidential vetoes. Senate approves treaties and ambassadors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congress has the power to impeach, try and remove Supreme Court Justices and federal judges from office Senate approves federal judges Congress has the power to alter the size of the Supreme Court. Congress has the power to create other federal courts besides the Supreme Court, which was created by the Constitution.

The Executive Branch	
Checks on the Legislative Branch	Checks on the Judicial Branch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The President can veto a law. Vice President is President of the Senate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courts do not have the power to enforce their decisions. The President is responsible for this. Power to nominate new judges.

The Judicial Branch	
Checks on the Legislative Branch	Checks on the Executive Branch
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- The Supreme Court can declare a law unconstitutional.

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- Chief Justice sits as President of the Senate during presidential impeachment.

Michigan Citizenship Collaborative Curriculum, www.micitizenshipcurriculum.org 4th Grade United States Social Studies, Unit 5: Our Federal Government, Lesson 5