

Fundamentals of Government



**Presented by: Lisa Elijah &
Julie Howell**



Welcome & Webinar Process

- Today's webinar will be recorded and available for viewing on PVA.org
- Closed Captioning is available. Click the CC button in the meeting controls bar at the bottom of your screen to turn it on.
- If you have a question, please type it in the Q&A box. Questions will be answered at the end of the program



Introductions

- Julie Howell – Associate Legislative Director, Army Veteran
- Lisa Elijah – Grassroots Advocacy Manager, Air Force Veteran, PVA member



Series Overview

- The 5 W's & an H–
 - **Fundamentals of Government**
 - The Legislative Process
 - Understanding the Issues & Becoming a Change Agent
 - Who is Advocating & Who With
 - The Art of Advocacy



What this is & what this is not

- This is NOT a comprehensive civics course
- This is NOT a place to debate politics or personal beliefs
- This is NOT going to turn into a forum for debate

- This IS a small overview of the structures government
- This IS a refresher course for those that might want it
- This IS a 30,000 foot view of our current system



Why You Should Know About the Government

- Different levels of government have different responsibilities
- For example:
 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
 - State Veteran Benefits
 - Veteran parking



The Fundamentals of Government

Today we'll cover:

Federal Government

Three Branches of Government

State & Local Governments



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Federal Government

- 3 branches – same at the state level
 - Legislative Branch
 - Judicial Branch
 - Executive Branch

United States CONSTITUTION



LEGISLATIVE

CONGRESS



EXECUTIVE



JUDICIAL



Legislative Branch

- Established by Article I of the Constitution, grants Congress sole authority to enact legislation and declare war, the right to confirm or reject.
 - Congress – House of Representatives and the Senate
 - To pass legislation and get it signed into law, both the House and Senate must pass the same bill, by majority vote. The president can veto by passing the bill again in each chamber with at least 2/3rds of each body voting in favor



Legislative Branch Partners

- Congressional Budget Office
- Government Accountability Office
- Architect of the Capitol
- Government Publishing Office
- Library of Congress
- National Archives
- US Capitol Police



Legislative: House of Representatives

- 435 elected members, divided among the 50 states in proportion to their population
 - 2-year terms
 - 6 non-voting members – DC, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, US Virgin Island, Northern Mariana Island
 - Power to initiate revenue bills, impeach federal officials
 - Limited time for debate (moves quickly)
 - Elect the President in the case of an Electoral College tie
 - Speaker of the House – elected by representatives, is third in line of succession to the Presidency
- Must be:
 - At least 25
 - US citizen for at least 7 years
 - Resident of the state they represent (BUT not necessarily the district)



Legislative: US Senate

- 100 Senators, 2 from each state
 - 6-year terms
 - Staggered so that about 1/3rd are up for reelection every two years
 - Unlimited time for debate (moves slowly)
 - Sole power to confirm presidential appointments, ratify treaties
 - EXCEPTION – House must also approve appointments of VP and any treaty that involves foreign trade
- Must be:
 - At least 30
 - US citizen for at least 9 years
 - Resident of the state they represent



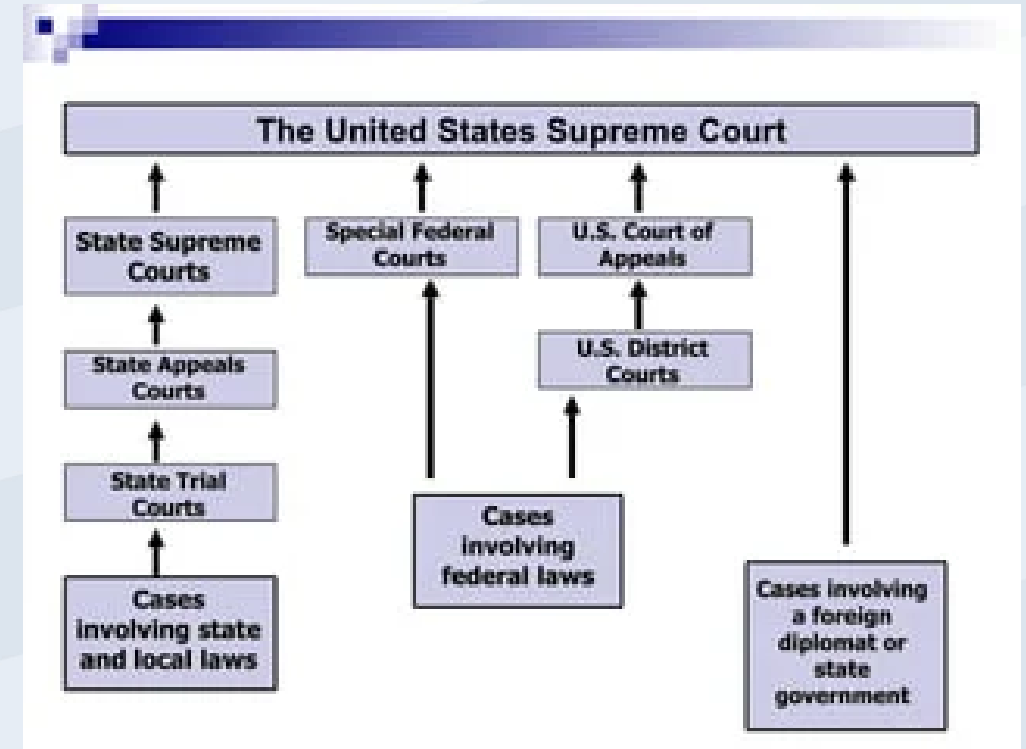
Executive Branch

- Responsible for making sure the laws of the United States are obeyed
- The President is the head of the executive branch
 - Vice President
 - Executive Office of the President
 - The Cabinet – 15 executive departments
- Eligibility Criteria for Presidential Candidates
 - Natural-born citizen of the US
 - At least 35 years old
 - Been a resident of the US for at least 14 years
 - Limited to two 2-year terms

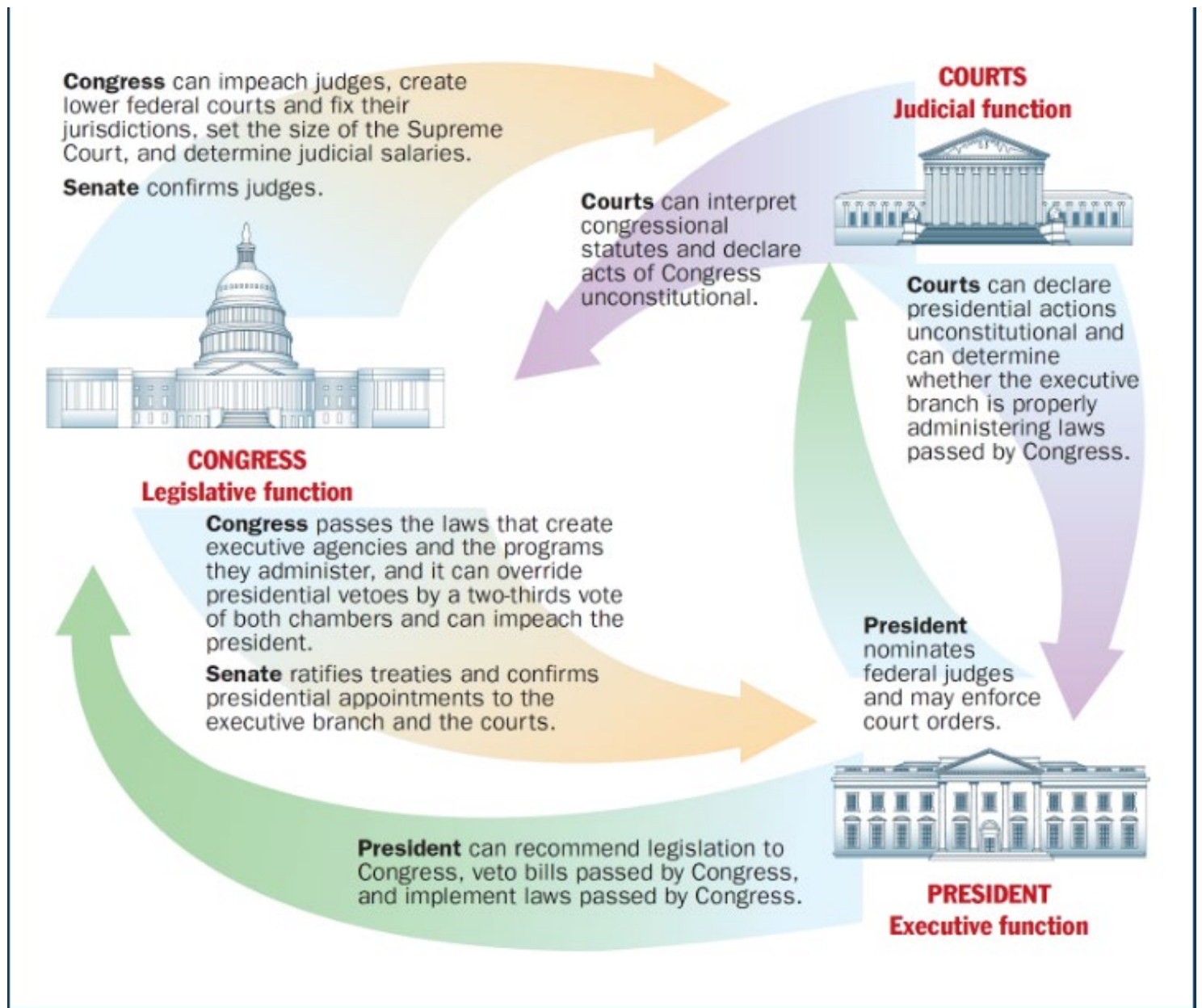


Judicial Branch

- Decides the constitutionality of federal laws and resolves other disputes about federal laws
- American Court system is based off of the English Common Law system
- The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS)
 - The US Constitution does not stipulate the number of Justices, set by Congress



Separation of Powers





State Government

- State governments are modeled after the federal government:
 - Executive Branch
 - Legislative Branch
 - Judicial Branch

State: Executive Branch

- Headed by the governor who is directly elected
 - Lt. Governor
 - AG
 - Secretary of State



State: Legislative Branch

- Elected representatives who consider issues introduced by its members before a governor signs bills into law (i.e. budget approve, tax legislation)
 - Smaller upper chamber
 - State Senate (usually 4-year terms)
 - Larger lower chamber
 - House of Representatives/Assembly/House of Delegates (usually 2-year terms)



State: Judicial Branch

- State Courts look at state laws
 - Judicial appointments/elections, determined by legislation of the state constitution



Local Government

- Federal and States governments have power similar in a lot of ways, but local government must be granted power by the state
 - Usually two tiers:
 - Counties (or boroughs, parishes, municipalities)
 - Municipal governments (Or cities/towns)
 - organized around a population center, correspond to geographical destinations used by US Census Bureau (very in size)





Quick Review

- Federal and State governments are similar in structure
- They both have a legislative, executive, and judicial branch
- Separation of powers is critical for government success
- Knowing the difference between federal and state is important
- While they are similar, they have different powers and authorities

- That was A LOT of information, take a breath, blow it out...



Questions & Answers?

We are happy to answer any questions you may have

Again, this was just an overview of certain aspects of the Government



Webinar Code

- For participants viewing the recording that would like credit for session one, please email the code 2A1FG to Lisa Elijah at lisae@pva.org
- Join us next time on May 30th @ 3pm
 - We will cover the Legislative Process

