

Module 3: Congress

Topic 2 Content: Legislative Checks on Power

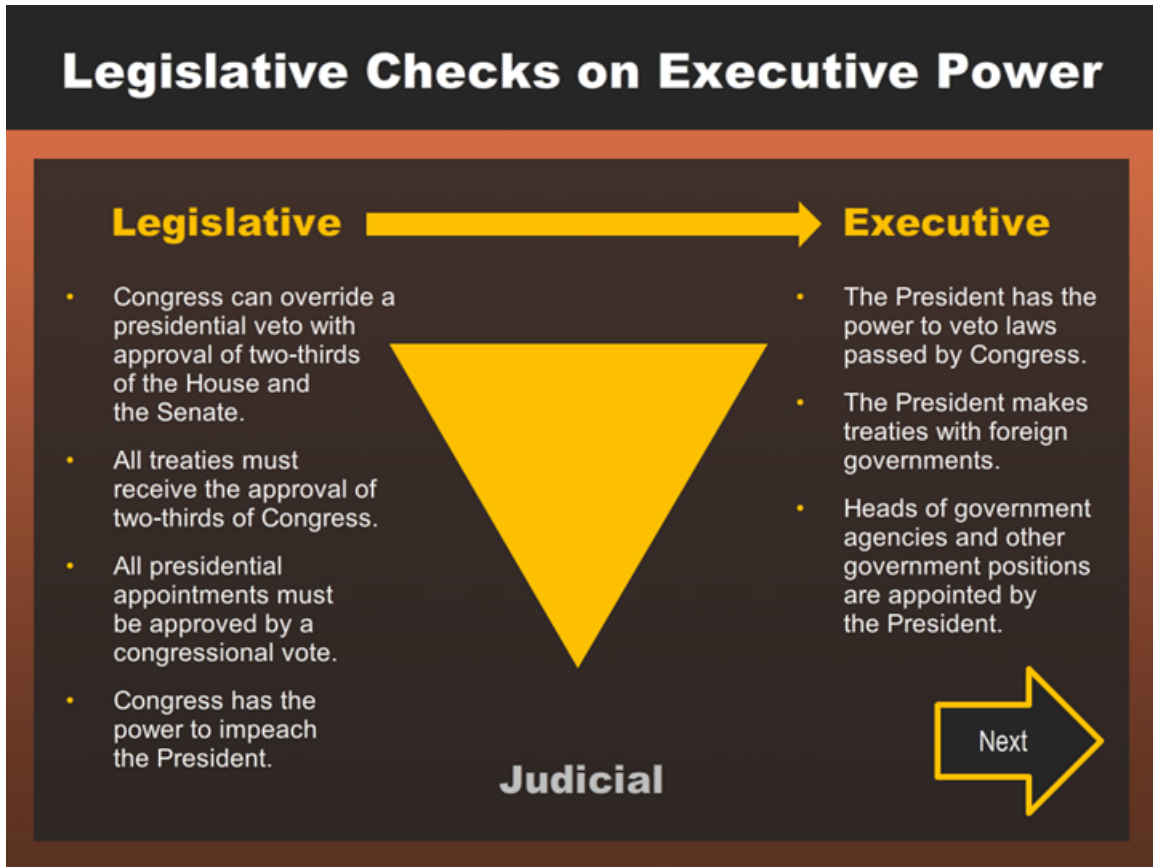
Introduction



Demi Tracy: One of the key principles of the U.S. Constitution is the separation of powers. The three branches of government each have powers that are separate and distinct. Another key principle of the Constitution is its system of checks and balances, which prevent one branch from gaining too much power over the others. In this episode, Bill O'Law and Pilar de la Casa join us to help explain how Congress limits the power of the executive and judicial branches of government.

Legislative Checks on Executive Power

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Bill O’Law: There are a few ways in which the legislative branch is able to check the power of the executive branch. The President has the power to veto a law passed by Congress; however, Congress has the power to override this presidential veto. If the President vetoes a bill that has been passed by Congress, Congress may override the veto with the approval of two-thirds of the Senate and the House.

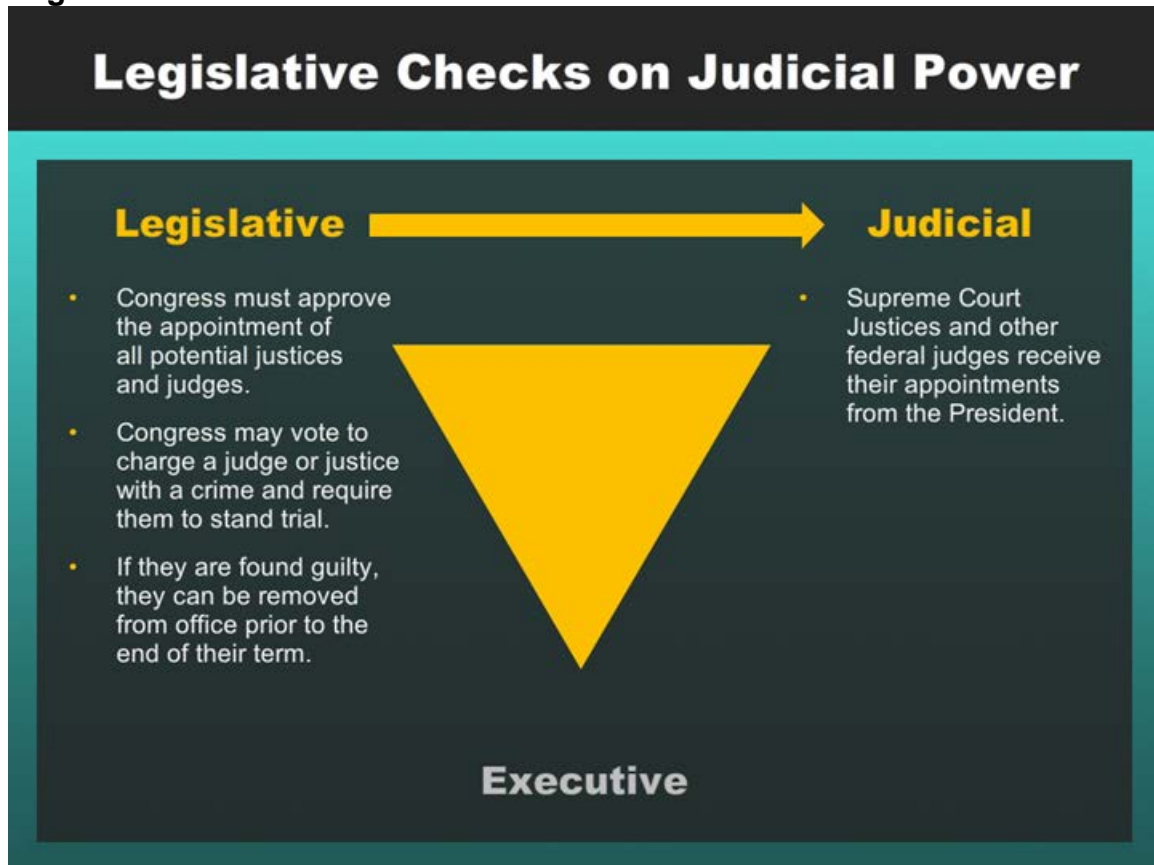
Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution grants the President the power to make treaties with foreign governments, but all treaties must receive the approval of Congress. A treaty cannot be signed into law unless it receives the approval of two-thirds of the Congress.

The President also has the power to appoint the heads of government agencies, ambassadors, and other government officials. Each and every one of these presidential appointments must be approved by a congressional vote.

Finally, one of the main checks that the legislative branch has on the executive branch is the power to impeach the President. This occurs when Congress votes to charge the President with a crime, requiring him or her to stand trial. If the President is found guilty, he or she can be removed from office prior to the end of his or her term.

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Legislative Checks on Judicial Power



Pilar de la Casa: Supreme Court Justices and other federal judges receive their appointments from the President of the United States. These appointments are not official until Congress approves them. Congress also has the power to impeach and convict judges and Supreme Court Justices. Congress may vote to charge a judge or justice with a crime and require that they stand trial. If found guilty, they can be removed from office prior to the end of their term.

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Ending of Episode



Demi Tracy: That's all for this episode of WUSG News. We hope you enjoyed learning about the legislative checks on the power of the executive and judicial branches.