

Branches of Government

District Assessment Study Guide

Delegates at the Constitutional Convention wanted to divide power within the federal government when it was established. They did not want any of these powers to be controlled by just one man or one group. The delegates were afraid that if a small group received too much power, the United States would wind up under the rule of another dictator.

To avoid the risk of dictatorship or tyranny, the group divided the new government into three parts, or branches: the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch. This system of government is the same that is in Texas.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH:

The Governor is the head of the Executive branch of government and the leader of the State of Texas. He/she works with State Senators and Representatives to pass laws that will help the citizens of Texas. Before any bill can become a law, it must pass through the Governor's office, where it will be signed into law or vetoed. The Governor is the only person who has the power to call a special session. A Texas Governor must be at least 30 years old and a resident of Texas for 5 years before being elected.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH:

The Texas Legislature is the lawmaking branch of the government. It is divided into two parts: the Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate. Both teams have to make and approve the "rules" or laws that will govern Texas. These rules will give order and peace to cities within Texas. There is a diverse group of 150 members in the Texas House of

Representatives and 31 members of the Texas Senate. These men and women are citizens from around the state who live and work right next to you. The House and Senate meet every other year and the second Tuesday in January at noon to make laws. The Legislative session continues for no more than 140 days.



Texas House Chamber

JUDICIAL BRANCH:

The Texas Supreme Court heads the Judicial branch. The Judicial branch is made up of many different courts. A second highest court is the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. Its powers include interpreting the Constitution, reviewing laws, and deciding cases involving states' rights. Judges, the court leaders, decide the meaning of laws, how they are applied, and whether they break the rules of the Constitution. If a person or group is found guilty of breaking a law, the Judicial system decides how they should be punished.

CHECKS AND BALANCES:

By creating three branches of government, the delegates built a "check and balance" system into the Constitution. This system was built so that no one branch of our government could become too powerful. Each branch plays an important role in making sure that the State of Texas runs smoothly.

Name _____ Date _____