**What is Congress?**

The United States Congress is the **legislative** (lawmaking) branch of our federal government. Congress meets in Washington, D.C. to make **federal laws**—laws that apply to the entire country. Congress is **bicameral**, which means it is made up of **two chambers**: the **Senate** and the **House of Representatives**. Each chamber includes elected officials from all fifty states. Congress was created by the Constitution, and that document describes how this branch of government works.

1. What branch is Congress linked with? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What does bicameral mean? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. What are the two chambers of Congress? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Why Congress?**

When the Constitution was written, the goal was to create a government that represented the people. Congress works toward this goal by creating laws that reflect the needs and wants of United States citizens. The work Congress does serves the nation as a whole. Senators help by representing the needs of their entire state, while members of the House (also called Representatives) work for the people in a specific section of their state.

1. Who do Senators represent? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Who do Representatives represent? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. How many senators does each state have? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why is the number of representatives so much higher? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. What qualification do Senators and Representatives share? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. What can the Senate do that the House can’t? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. How can Congress check the power of the president? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Who’s In Charge?**

The Constitution also says who is in charge of each chamber. You may be surprised to learn that the vice president of the United States is also the president of the Senate! (The VP doesn’t get a vote though, except when there’s a tie.) But the VP can’t always be there, so senators also elect a “**president pro tempore**” who leads when the VP isn’t available. In the House of Representatives, the leader is called the **speaker of the House**. The representatives vote to decide who their speaker will be. It’s an important job—the speaker is second in line to become president of the United States in an emergency, after the Vice President!