



## Maggie's Civics Corner

### LESSON 19

**Constitution Close-Up:** *The Constitution says the United States Government must have three branches: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial. Each branch has its own responsibilities, but sometimes they work together to check each other's work. Let's take a look at each one!*

**Today's lesson is about the Legislative Branch:** Article I of the Constitution establishes the legislative branch, which is also called Congress. Congress is made up of two parts: the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House of

Representatives has 435 members, and each state gets a certain number of Representatives depending on how many people live there. Senate, on the other hand, has 100 members – two from each state.

**Making a Law:** Both the House of Representatives and Senate have a role in creating laws. Potential laws (called “bills”) are first studied by a Committee. The Committee can choose to edit, throw away, or accept the bill. If accepted, the House of Representatives will vote on it. If it receives a majority of votes (218 out of 435 members), it can move to Senate. The same then happens in Senate – a Committee studies it and it moves to a majority vote (51 out of 100 senators). Finally, the President has the power to either sign the bill into law or veto the bill, which means to reject it. If this happens, both the House of Representatives and the Senate must get 2/3 of their membership to vote to override the veto and pass the bill into law.

Pretty complicated, huh? The point is to make sure all of our country's laws have been studied and debated thoroughly before being passed. The most important thing to remember is that both parts of Congress and the President have important roles in passing laws.

**Other Powers:** Congress handles our federal budget. It decides how much to tax citizens and how to spend the tax money collected. In 2019, Congress approved the spending of \$4.45 trillion. Congress also has the power to declare war, approve treaties, and more!

**Activity:** Imagine you're a member of the House of Representatives – because you could be one day! What is a law you would propose? For example, I would propose a bill establishing every June 1 as National Pet-a-Dog Day! Draft a bill about anything – education, healthcare, or anything else you care about – and see how many of your friends and family would vote for it.

**Civic Resources:** With your parent's permission, check out this video explaining the Legislative Branch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hltv8-nzcUc>.