



Our National Government





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The three branches of
the U.S. government work
together for the people.

Who's in Charge of Our Government?

We think of the president as being the head of our country. However, the president works with other leaders to run the nation.

In fact, the United States government has three branches. One branch includes people who are elected to make the laws. Another branch includes people who make sure the country's laws are followed. The president, who is also elected, is part of this branch. The third branch includes people who are in the courts. These people decide what the laws mean.

On a baseball team, the pitcher and catcher have different jobs. Like pitchers and catchers, people in each branch of government have different jobs, yet they work together to run our country.

Key Notes:

How does the U.S. president work with other leaders?



The White House is the home of the president of the United States.

Leading the Way

The president of the United States leads the executive branch of government. The president has several jobs, including planning how the country might spend its money and trying to pass new laws. The executive branch is in charge of the armed forces, such as the army, and it handles law enforcement as well. The enforcement section of the executive branch makes sure people follow the country's laws. Also, the president and the executive branch work with the leaders of other countries.

Many people do many different kinds of jobs for the executive branch. These jobs include caring for our natural parks, keeping track of taxes, working in other countries for our government, and making sure the laws are enforced.

Key Notes:

What is the executive branch of the U.S. government?



This photo shows the members of the 114th U.S. Congress.

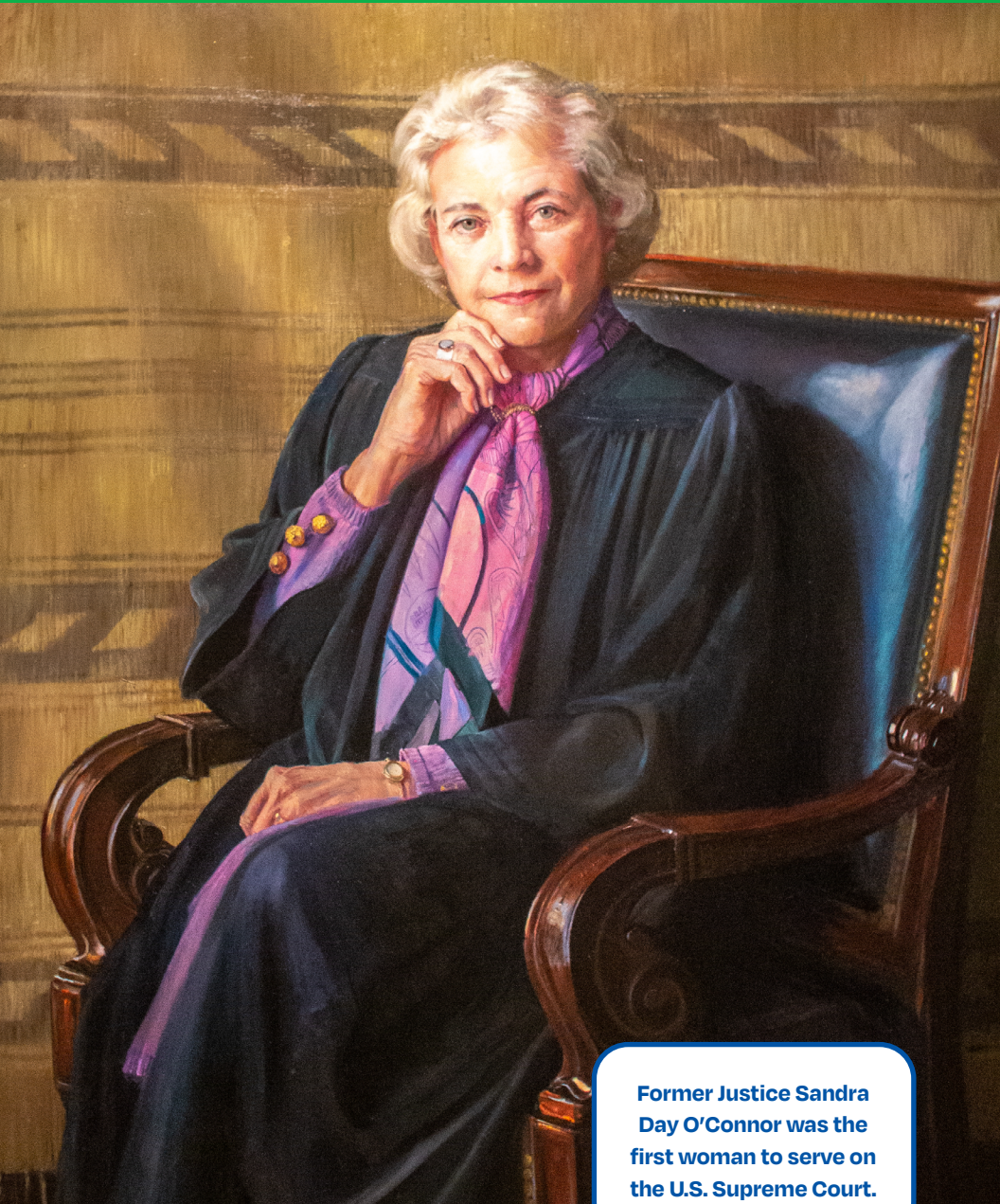
Making the Laws

All countries need laws that everyone in the country must follow. In the United States, Congress makes the laws for the nation. Congress is part of the nation's legislative branch of government.

Congress has two sections, which are called houses. One house is made up of 100 people, two people are elected from each of the 50 states. The other house has many more members. The number of people in that house is based on how many people live in the state. States with many people have more members than do states with fewer people. People in both houses of the legislative branch create, discuss, and pass laws, and all laws must be passed by both houses of Congress.

Key Notes:

What are the houses of Congress?



Former Justice Sandra Day O'Connor was the first woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Deciding What the Laws Mean

The job of the third branch of government, called the judicial branch, is to decide what the laws mean. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States, or the head of the Judicial Branch. The nine judges who make up the Supreme Court have the final word on the meaning of the law. They are the only leaders of our nation who are not elected by the people.

The Supreme Court hear from people who different ideas about the meaning of a law. Then, they decide which meaning they think is right. Only five of the nine judges need to agree for the Supreme Court to decide what a law means.

Key Notes:

What is the judicial branch of government?

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