

# The Constitution of the United States Explained

## Article 1, Section 1: Congress

**Directions:** This handout explores and explains the Constitution of the United States of America. You should...

1. Read the **text** of Article 1, Section 1 of the Constitution
2. Read the **explanation** of Article 1, Section 1 of the Constitution
3. Consider the text and explanation of Article 1, Section 1. Then, complete the short-answer questions to deepen your understanding

### Text:

#### **Article. I.**

##### **SECTION. 1**

All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

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### Explanation:

The Constitution of the United States begins by announcing that all **legislative powers, herein granted**, will be **vested** in the **Congress of the United States**.

- **Legislative powers** are the powers to make and pass laws.
- Importantly, the term **herein granted** means that the legislative powers given to Congress by the Constitution are not unlimited. Unlike Kings and Queens, Congress only has the powers specifically listed in the Constitution.
- Those powers will be **vested**, meaning granted or given, to Congress.

Next, the Constitution defines the structure of Congress, saying it will consist of a **Senate** and **House of Representatives**.

→ This section creates a bicameral legislature, meaning Congress is separated into two separate lawmaking groups. By separating legislative power between the **House of Representatives**, whose members represent smaller areas of the country and have shorter terms, and the **Senate**, whose members serve longer terms and were originally selected by state governments instead of votes, the Constitution ensures the legislature won't get too powerful and infringe on the people's freedom.

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### **Short Answer Questions:**

1. What powers are granted by Article 1, Section 1 and what group does the United States Constitution give those powers to?
2. What limits, if any, are placed on the powers granted by Article 1, Section 1 of the United States Constitution?
3. Why did the framers of the Constitution create a bicameral legislature where Congress is separated into two separate bodies?

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### Article 1, Section 1: Congress (**TEACHER COPY**)

#### Short Answer Questions:

1. What powers are granted by Article 1, Section 1 and what group does the United States Constitution give those powers to?

**Sample Answer:** Article 1, Section 1 grants legislative powers, meaning the power to make and pass laws. The Constitution gives those powers to Congress, which consists of two separate lawmaking bodies- the House of Representatives and the United States Senate.

2. What limits, if any, are placed on the powers granted by Article 1, Section 1 of the United States Constitution?

**Sample Answer:** Article 1, Section 1 of the Constitution places many limitations on the legislative powers it grants to Congress. The term “herein granted” means that Congress only has the law making powers specifically granted to them by the constitution, so they cannot exercise any additional powers outside of those granted powers. Congress’s power is also limited by its bicameral structure. By separating Congress into two different chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate, each chamber's power is limited by the other.

3. Why did the framers of the Constitution create a bicameral legislature where Congress is separated into two separate bodies?

**Sample Answer:** The framers created a bicameral legislature to limit Congress’s power and make Congress more responsive to the people of the United States. Members of the House of Representatives represent smaller areas and are elected every two years, so they should be more attuned to public opinion. Senators serve for longer periods, represent entire states, and were originally selected by state governments so they are less responsive to public opinion.