

How Our Government Works



INTERACTIVITY

Participate in a class discussion to preview the content of this lesson.



I will know the responsibilities of the three branches of the United States government.

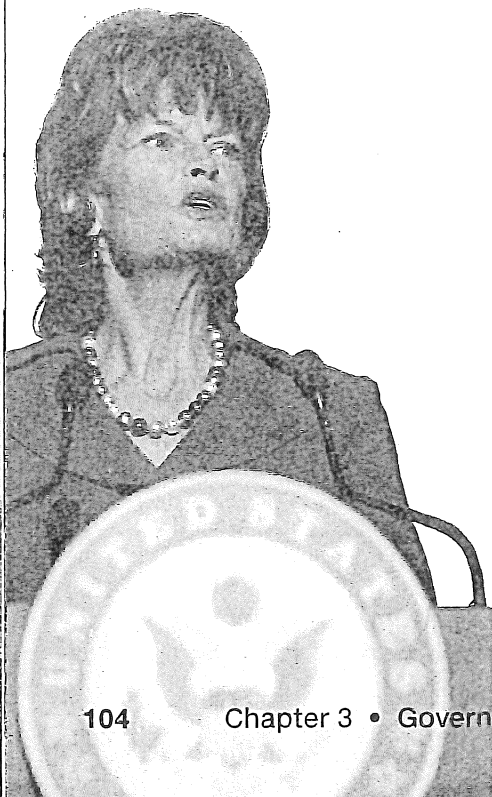
Vocabulary

legislative branch
executive branch
judicial branch
checks and balances

Academic Vocabulary

control
enforce
ensure

Lisa Murkowski is a Republican senator from Alaska. There are two major political parties in the United States: Republicans and Democrats.



Jumpstart Activity

Divide into two groups. One group forms a large outer circle. The other group forms a smaller inner circle. As a class, discuss how you think the outer circle is like the federal government and how the inner circle is like the state government.

The Constitution describes how the federal, or national, government of the United States is set up. The government has three different branches, or parts. They are the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judicial branch.

The Three Branches and Their Responsibilities

The **legislative branch** of the federal government makes laws, or rules, that Americans must obey. This branch, called Congress, has two parts. One is the House of Representatives, known as the House. The other is the Senate. The House and the Senate work together to create and pass laws.

The nation's citizens elect all members of Congress. Each state elects two representatives, called senators, to the Senate. Each state also elects representatives to the House. The number of House representatives that each state elects depends on the state's population. So California, which has a large population, elects more than 50 representatives to the House. States with a smaller population elect fewer representatives. Alaska, for example, elects one.