

FROM THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS UNTIL US

The United States of America is a Federal Union of fifty states plus the District of Columbia. The Federal Government resides in Washington DC.

The Government of the USA is based on the Constitution, written in 1787 and signed by 13 states. The first ten amendments are known as Bill of Rights.

- USA is a **REPUBLIC**= the citizens elect the officials who govern them.
- USA is a **DEMOCRACY** = the citizens have certain rights. They include rights of free speech, free press and freedom of religion. A citizen has also the right to have a fast and fair trial.



The Constitution provides for a **FEDERAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT**.

So the power is divided between

- **THE STATES**
- **THE NATIONAL (OR FEDERAL) GOVERNMENT.**

This division of power stops both the States and the Government to have too much power.



“**We** the People of the United States, in
Order to form a more perfect Union,
establish Justice, insure domestic
Tranquillity, provide for the common
defence, promote the general Welfare, and
secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves
and our Posterity, do ordain and establish
this Constitution for the United States of
America...”

The Preamble of the US Constitution

WHO IS THE US PRESIDENT?

The Constitution says that the USA is

- A **free democratic** country
- A **Presidential Republic** = the President is the head of the Government

The national government is divided into three branches:

- **THE LEGISLATIVE**
- **THE EXECUTIVE**
- **THE JUDICIARY**

The executive branch is headed by **THE PRESIDENT**.

- He is the most powerful individual in America.
- He is elected by the people every four years.
- He can be reelected only once.

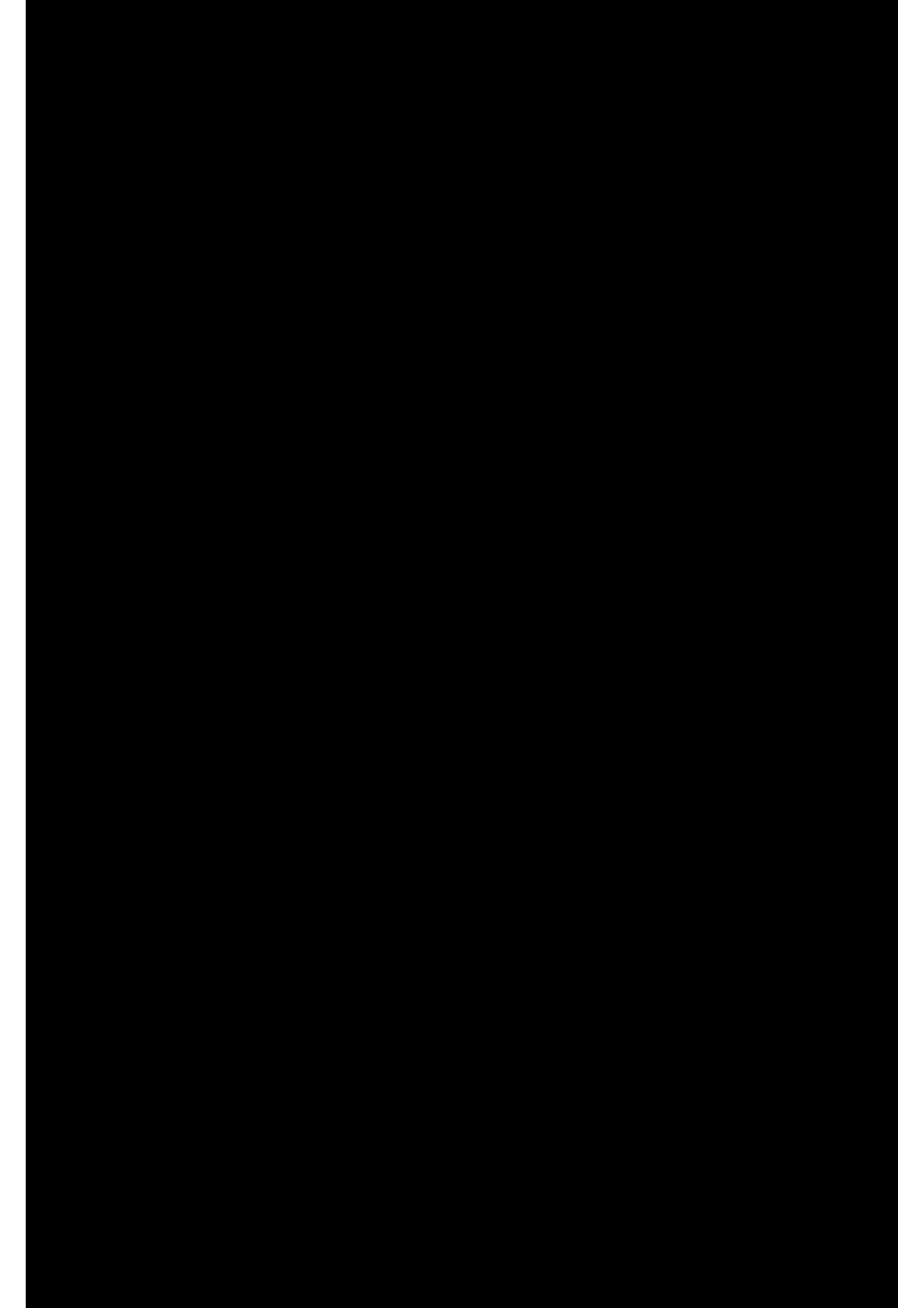
LEGISLATIVE	EXECUTIVE	JUDICIARY
Congress	President	Courts
▪ Senate ▪ House of Representatives	▪ Vice President ▪ Cabinet	▪ Federal Court ▪ Supreme Court

WHAT ARE HIS FUNCTIONS?

- He **carries out the decisions** taken by the Congress, he can make laws only on the Congress' approval.
- He formulates **foreign policy**.
- He is the head **of the State** and of the **Armed Forces**.
- He has the control of the country with the **vice-President and the Cabinet** chosen by him.

WHO CAN BE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES?

- He must be a **native-born American**
- He must be over **35 years old**.
- He lives in the White House in Washington



WHAT ARE THE POLITICAL PARTIES?

In the USA there are two main political parties

- **THE REPUBLICAN PARTY**
- **THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The Democratic party first president was Andrew Jackson in 1828 and then F.D. Roosevelt, H. S. Truman, J. F. Kennedy until the president Barack Obama. Democrats generally support higher taxes. So they can fund more government programs.

In general they are classified as a centre-left party.

The symbol of the Democratic Party is the Donkey.

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

It was founded in 1854 as an anti-slavery party and the first president was Abraham Lincoln. Republicans generally prefer lower taxes and a smaller government.

The Republican Party is identified as conservative and right-wing.

The symbol of the Republican party is the elephant.

OTHER PARTIES

There are other smaller parties (Libertarian, Socialist and Constitution party).

They **aren't** very big but they can have influence on the Presidential election taking votes from the two major party candidates.

HOW DO THE PARTIES DETERMINE THEIR CANDIDATE?

DELEGATES

In the US presidential primary election, **delegates** of every party, not voters (not common people), determine the nominee for the major political parties



The delegates elect the candidates.

The delegates attend their **party's national convention (a big meeting)** where they decide the presidential nominee. The delegates are local leaders that represent their states at the **party's** national nominating convention.

THE CONVENTION

The purpose of a political convention is for each party to declare its presidential candidate.

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

It happens through a process of state-by-state elections to get the delegates. A candidate must win the majority of delegates to win the party nomination. Generally, in most Primary elections, the winner emerges at the beginning of the **party's** convention, so sometimes **it's** a formality.

The **PRIMARY ELECTIONS** select a candidate for every party (**Super Tuesday**), but every state has got different rules to determine the candidate.

After each party determines a presidential nominee, the candidates choose **a running mate**. The teams prepare their aggressive campaigns in preparation for the election finale in November.

For example Trump chose Pence as his running mate and Clinton chose Kaine.

THE CAMPAIGNS

The general election campaigns last from the end of the primary season in June until the general vote in November.

General election campaigns tend to focus their efforts on **Swing states**, or states in which there is no clear Democratic or Republican majority. The most notorious swing states in recent years have been Florida and Ohio.

General election campaigns are extremely expensive, because candidates in the general election must appeal to a vast number of voters.

For this reason, candidates try to convince not only voters but also donors to support their candidacy.

One of the most important moments in the electoral campaigns is the TV debate: it's a fighting between the candidates. The first tv debate was between Kennedy and Nixon in 1960.

WHAT HAPPENS ON ELECTION DAY?

On general election day, registered voters go to their local polling center to make their choice for the president, but the president is determined by a system called the **Electoral College**.

A candidate only needs to win a majority of votes in the state to receive all of its Electoral College votes. (winner-take-all basis).

WHAT'S THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE?

The Electoral College is made up by electors or representatives, that are allocated in each state. States with bigger populations have more electors (a big electoral college). States with smaller populations have fewer.

To win the presidency, a candidate must win a majority, or 270, of the electors.

The electors then cast their votes about a month later.

The new president does not officially take office until the inauguration ceremony in late January

« I do solemnly swear [Or affirm]
that I will faithfully execute the
office of President of the United
States, and will to the best of my
ability, preserve, protect, and
defend the Constitution of the
United States. »

(Affirmation of the US President)

ELECTORAL COLLEGE