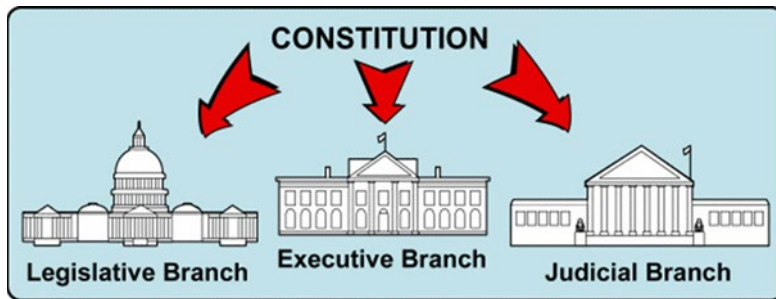




ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY CENTERS ON DISABILITIES
THE LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY & RESEARCH NETWORK

Plain Language: Confirmation Process Supreme Court of the United States



The Government of the United States has three branches: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial.



The Legislative Branch, Congress, makes the laws. Congress is made up of two parts: the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Senate has the job to confirm judicial nominations.



The Executive Branch, headed by the president, makes sure the laws are followed (executed). Judges in the Judicial Branch, including the nine Supreme Court Justices, are chosen by Presidents



The Judicial Branch is a system of courts that interprets our laws by deciding what exactly they mean in hard cases. The Supreme Court is at the top of the Judicial Branch. Its nine members, called Justices, also decide whether or not the laws Congress passes or the things the president does are allowed by the Constitution.

Judges in the Judicial Branch, including the nine Supreme Court Justices, are chosen by Presidents (Executive Branch), but only if the Senate (half of the Legislative Branch) agrees to the president's choices. More than half of the 100 U.S. Senators have to vote yes on the president's choice for that person to become a Justice. If there is a tie in the vote, meaning 50 Senators vote yes and 50 Senators vote no, then the Vice President votes to break the tie.

Once a Justice is confirmed by the Senate, they serve on the Court until they decide to retire or until they die. Since there are only nine Supreme Court Justices, and they can serve for 20 or 30 years, or even longer, it is a really big deal when one of them retires or dies and a president gets to choose a replacement.

Terms to Know:

Justice: One of the nine members of the Supreme Court. Once chosen, they can serve until they die.

Nominate: The president names, or nominates, his choice for the Supreme Court.

Nominee: The president's choice for the Supreme Court.

Confirmation: The process of the Senate saying yes or no to the president's choice.

Hearing: As part of the confirmation in the Senate, the Judiciary Committee will ask the nominee lots of questions about their ideas and experience.

Seat: One of the nine positions on the Supreme Court.

Senate: The half of the Legislative branch that has to agree to the President's choices for the Supreme Court Justices.