

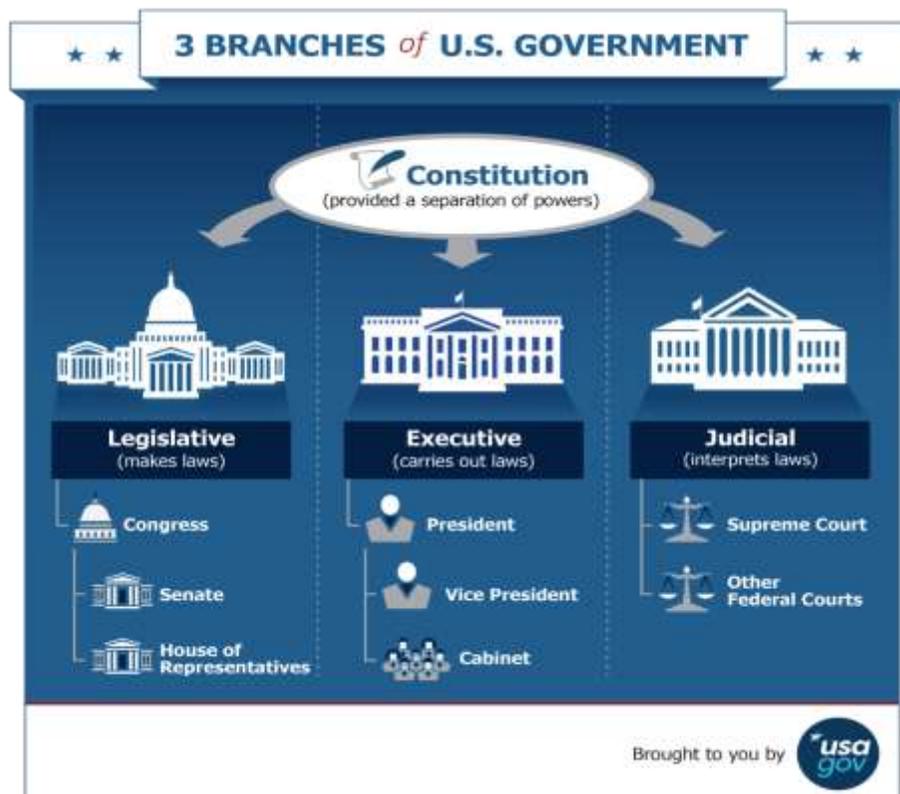
Thema „Wahlen“ am Unterrecht

The Lame Duck President and Midterm Elections

M1 The US government

The power in the US government is divided among three groups of people:

1. **The legislative branch** consists of elected officials who represent the people and vote on legislation. We can compare this to the Luxembourgish *Chamber of Deputies* and the *State Council*.
2. **The executive branch** consists of the head of state (President) elected by citizens. In the US, the presidential nominee chooses a vice president during the election period while the rest of the cabinet are nominated after the election. In Europe, the executive branch is chosen among all the political parties that win the election. In Luxembourg, the Prime Minister, who is nominated by the Grand Duke, nominates his ministers among his coalition partners.
3. The third branch of the government is **the judicial branch**, which is independent from the legislative and executive branch. This is very important because it has to be impartial and just.



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M2 What is a lame duck President?

‘A lame duck’ is a pretty common expression in politics and can refer to various things. One example would be an American president who is still officially in office, while his successor has already been elected, but not inaugurated yet.

Such a president can for example pass many bills, sign executive orders and so on, without much consequence as he/she will leave office soon anyways.

Another example would be a president, who is democrat, while his/her house of representatives consists of mainly of republicans. That way, it would be quite difficult to pass laws and reform anything, as the house of representatives need to sign off on the president’s proposals.

So, there are two ways of looking at the meaning of the expression ‘lame duck presidency’: One connected with the time left to someone’s term as head of state, and the other connected with the division of power described above.

M3 Midterm Elections

Midterm elections happen exactly two years after a presidential election (like 2018 and 2022), and they are a big deal for Congress. Members of the House of Representatives are elected for a 2-year term and Senators are elected for 6 years

Midterm elections are all about control of the House and the Senate. When you are a Representative or a Senator trying to get things done, it is an advantage when you are surrounded by colleagues from your own political party.

The political party in control of either chamber of Congress is called the *majority party*.

The president can’t write or pass laws; Congress does that. In addition, Congress can’t just turn bills into laws; the president has to sign, or veto them first. Presidents often find it easier to get legislation passed when they can work with a Congress that is controlled by their own political party.

Also, Congress doesn’t fear the president’s veto power when the majority party is the same as the president’s.

See tasks on the following page.



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Tasks

1. Sit together in groups. Each group looks up the meaning of the underlined words and expressions in a dictionary. Write the explanations on a sheet of paper and hang it on the wall or blackboard. Let your friends from the other groups guess which explanation goes with which expression in the text.
2. Go to <https://gouvernement.lu/en/systeme-politique.html> . Find out what the three branches of the Luxembourgish system are and create a similar scheme to the one on page 1.
3. What do you think are the advantages or disadvantages of the American government structure compared to our own system?
4. Do you think Luxembourg could have a lame duck Prime Minister? Why or why not? In which case do you think a Prime Minister could be called a *lame duck*?
5. How do the midterm elections concern the President of the United States?
6. Do we have something in Luxembourg which you could compare to Midterm Elections in the US?

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