

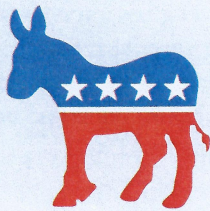
A presidential system: the USA

The USA is a federal union of 50 states based on a presidential system of government – a system where the President exercises the functions of Head of State and Head of Government. The states make their own laws on many issues, but the President and the Congress make laws on issues of national interest, such as defence and finance.

MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES

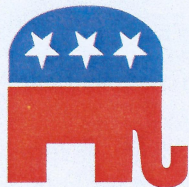


For most of the USA's history, there has been a competitive two-party system and third parties have been extremely unusual.



The Democratic Party

tends to be pro-labour and more inclined to have socially liberal attitudes towards civil rights and welfare spending.



The Republican Party

tends to promote low tax rates and a limited welfare system, combined with a strong military and a tough criminal justice system.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The USA is a¹ republic. The Government is divided into three separate²: the Federal Government, the State Government and the Local Government.

The Federal Government, based in³ DC (District of Columbia), is concerned with issues affecting the country as a whole, such as relationships with other⁴, national defence, citizenship and finance. It is divided into three⁵: the Executive, headed by the President; the Legislative, which includes a bicameral Congress made up of the Senate with 100 Senators and the House of Representatives with 435 members directly elected by popular vote in the various states; and the Judicial, which is⁶ by the Supreme Court.

Unlike the⁷ system of government, the USA is a⁸ system where the powers are separate: the executive and the⁹ cannot hold office in both branches. Each branch serves as a check on the actions of the other.

Other governmental¹⁰ are the responsibility of the individual states. Each state has its own¹¹ with a governor at its head and its own constitution and¹².

Warm up

1 Class discussion. Discuss the following.

- 1 Do countries with a president all have a presidential system?
- 2 Can you give any examples?

Listening & Reading



2 Listen and fill in the gaps in the text above.

3 Read these pages. Correct the statements.

- 1 The US Government is divided into two main groups.
- 2 The Houses of Congress are part of the Executive.

3 Each US state is governed by the Federal Government.

4 The US Constitution was officially adopted in 1787.

4 Read about the amendments in the US Constitution and answer the questions.

- 1 Why does the US Constitution contain a series of amendments?
- 2 What are the first 10 amendments called? Why?
- 3 What do the 15th, 19th and 26th amendments refer to?
- 4 How many amendments has the US Constitution got?