



NEWSHOUR

A NewsHour with Jim Lehrer special for students

EXTRA

Handout I: Declare Your Powers

Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Your teacher will divide you up into three large groups each representing one of the three branches of government. Then choose one or two partners to review the “separation of powers/checks and balances” chart below. After your review your teacher will lead the class in an activity to identify which branch of government has the power to perform the action described in the list of circumstances below the chart. Follow these directions:

1. After the circumstance is read aloud by the teacher, decide if your group has the power to perform this action and indicate by raising your hands.
2. If your group is one of the other two branches that didn't raise your hands, determine if your branch of government has the power to “check” the branch that did have the power
3. When asked by your teacher, indicate that your group does have a check on the power exercised by raising your hands
4. Be prepared to explain what power your branch has to check the other branch's power.

Circumstances:

- A. Homeland Security officials have been ordered to open suspicious packages they believe might be from terrorists.
- B. A bill recently passed to allow citizens to choose their own health care plan under Medicare.
- C. The United States has signed a peace treaty with Iran.
- D. A law, recently passed in a state legislature banning gay marriages, is being challenged as unconstitutional.
- E. A bill is passed outlawing American citizens from making contributions to charitable organizations from the Middle East.
- F. A replacement for the Attorney General has been given to Congress.
- G. A recent law closing a tax reduction for US companies establishing off shore companies to is ruled constitutional.
- H. A recent bill to increase funding for education was passed over the President's rejection of the bill.
- I. A health care insurance company has been ordered to pay for additional treatment requested by a patient.

The Three Branches of Government

Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances

