

Article I of the Constitution provides for the **legislative branch** of government. This branch of government is **bicameral**, which means it consists of two houses with equal power. The two houses are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Together, they are called **Congress**, and they meet in Washington, DC, to pass laws.

The Senate has 100 senators, two from each state. To be elected to the Senate, a person must be at least thirty years old and live in the state he or she is representing. That person must also have been a citizen of the United States for at least nine years. Senators are elected for six-year terms. These elections are staggered in time, so that the whole Senate will not have to campaign for reelection at the same time. So every two years, one-third of the Senate is up for reelection. There is no limit to the number of terms a senator may serve.

The leader of the Senate is called the **president** of the Senate. The person who holds this post is the vice president of the United States. The president of the Senate votes in Senate debates if there is a tie. This means that, if there is a tie vote, the vice president of the United States breaks the tie by deciding the issue.

In addition to passing laws, the Senate approves presidential nominees like cabinet members and Supreme Court justices. The Senate also **ratifies** (accepts) treaties that the president makes with other countries.

How is a law created?

When someone thinks there should be a law, he or she writes this idea into what is called a **bill**. Bills can come from a variety of sources, but most come from members of Congress. If the bill starts in the Senate, it debates the bill then sends it to a Senate committee, which makes changes and gets it ready to be voted on. If the Senate approves it, then it goes to the House of Representatives for a vote. This same process happens with a bill that starts in the House of Representatives. If both houses of Congress vote yes, then the president either signs the bill into law or vetoes it.

Answer the Following

1. How old does someone have to be to run for the United States Senate? _____

2. How long is a Senate term, and how many terms may a senator serve? _____

3. Name two things the Senate does, other than passing laws. _____

