

# THE US POLITICAL SYSTEM

Revision Sheet for Business School Entrance Exams | Updated February 2026

## THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

**Principle:** Separation of Powers established by the US Constitution (1787)

EXECUTIVE BRANCH	LEGISLATIVE BRANCH	JUDICIAL BRANCH
<p><b>Role:</b> Enforces laws</p> <p><b>Head:</b> President</p> <p><b>Term:</b> 4 years (max 2 terms)</p> <p><b>Election:</b> Electoral College</p>	<p><b>Role:</b> Makes laws</p> <p><b>Structure:</b> Bicameral Congress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Senate: 100 senators (2 per state, 6-year terms)</li><li>House: 435 representatives (based on population, 2-year terms)</li></ul>	<p><b>Role:</b> Interprets laws</p> <p><b>Head:</b> Supreme Court</p> <p><b>Justices:</b> 9 members</p> <p><b>Appointment:</b> For life</p>
<p><b>CURRENT OFFICIALS (2025-2029):</b> President: <b>Donald Trump</b> Vice President: <b>J.D. Vance</b></p>	<p><b>CURRENT LEADERSHIP:</b> Senate Majority Leader: <b>John Thune</b> (Republican)</p> <p>Speaker of the House: <b>Mike Johnson</b> (Republican)</p>	<p><b>CURRENT LEADERSHIP:</b> Chief Justice: <b>John Roberts</b></p> <p><b>Composition:</b> Conservative majority (6-3)</p>
<p><b>Key Powers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Commander-in-Chief</li><li>Appoints federal judges</li><li>Signs/vetoes bills</li><li>Foreign policy leader</li></ul>	<p><b>Key Powers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Creates federal laws</li><li>Approves budget</li><li>Declares war</li><li>Senate confirms appointments</li><li>Can override veto (2/3 majority)</li></ul>	<p><b>Key Powers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Judicial review</li><li>Constitutional interpretation</li><li>Final court of appeal</li><li>Can declare laws unconstitutional</li></ul>

## THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

DEMOCRATIC PARTY	REPUBLICAN PARTY (GOP)
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<b>Symbol:</b> Donkey <b>Color:</b> Blue  <b>General ideology:</b> Liberal/Progressive  <b>Key values:</b> Social programs, environmental protection, civil rights  <b>Notable figures:</b> Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, Barack Obama	<b>Symbol:</b> Elephant <b>Color:</b> Red  <b>General ideology:</b> Conservative  <b>Key values:</b> Free market, limited government, traditional values  <b>Notable figures:</b> Donald Trump, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush
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## ■ CHECKS AND BALANCES

Each branch can limit the powers of the others:

✓ President can veto laws passed by Congress
✓ Congress can override presidential veto (2/3 majority required)
✓ Congress approves presidential appointments and treaties
✓ Supreme Court can declare laws unconstitutional
✓ President appoints Supreme Court justices
✓ Senate confirms Supreme Court appointments
✓ Congress can impeach and remove the President or judges

## ■■ ELECTORAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

<b>Total electors:</b> 538
<b>To win presidency:</b> 270 electoral votes needed
<b>Allocation:</b> Each state gets electors = Senators + Representatives
<b>Winner-take-all:</b> Candidate winning popular vote gets all electoral votes (in most states)
<b>Exceptions:</b> Maine and Nebraska use proportional allocation

## ■ KEY ELECTORAL DATES

<b>Presidential Elections:</b> Every 4 years (2024, 2028, 2032...)
<b>Midterm Elections:</b> Every 2 years (entire House + 1/3 of Senate)
<b>Inauguration Day:</b> January 20th following election
<b>Election Day:</b> First Tuesday after first Monday in November

**Term limits:** President limited to 2 terms (22nd Amendment, 1951)

## ■ CURRENT POLITICAL LANDSCAPE (2025-2026)

**Presidency:** Republican control (Donald Trump)

**Senate:** Republican majority

**House of Representatives:** Republican majority

**Important:** The 2024 election resulted in Republican control of the presidency and both chambers of Congress, giving the party unified government control.