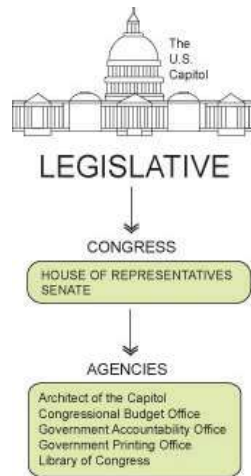


## The Legislative Branch



The legislative branch of government has the authority to make laws for the nation. It was established in Article I of the Constitution with the creation of Congress. Agencies such as the Government Printing Office, Library of Congress, Congressional Budget Office, and the Government Accountability Office, that provide support services for the Congress are also part of the legislative branch.

Congress is bicameral, that is, it is made up of two chambers, the Senate and the House of Representatives. This system was created by the Founding Fathers after much debate. Delegates to the Constitutional Convention from larger and more populated states wanted congressional representation to be based upon population. Fearing domination, delegates from smaller states wanted equal representation. The Great Compromise resulted in the creation of two houses, with representation based on population in one and with equal representation in the other.

Now members of Congress are elected by a direct vote of the people of the state they represent. It has not always been this way for the Senate. Prior to 1913 and the 17th Amendment to the Constitution, Senators were chosen by their state legislatures. The Senate was viewed as representative of state governments, not of the people. It was the responsibility of Senators to ensure that their state was treated equally in legislation.

Source: *Ben's Guide to U.S. Government*, U.S. Government Publishing Office (<https://bensguide.gpo.gov>).