

The Powers of Congress

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ACADEMIC
VOCABULARY

granted = given

In the Constitution, the powers **granted** to the Congress fall into three categories - expressed, implied, and special.

Expressed or delegated powers are also called the **enumerated powers**.

² **Expressed (or delegated)** powers are specific authorities granted to the lawmaking body of our government. These specific powers allow the Congress to create the laws necessary to run our country. Expressed powers fall into the following categories:

fiscal = related to government money or public money

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⁴ 1) **Fiscal Power**

Levy = If the government **levies** a tax, it requires that the tax money be collected.

counterfeit = fake; **Counterfeit** money is not genuine but is made to look real.

⁵ The Congress is responsible for **levying** and collecting taxes. This money is used to pay our country's debts and to provide for the defense and well-being of our nation. Congress controls borrowing money and coining and printing **currency**. They also establish standards for weights and measures and punish **counterfeiters**.

currency = the money used in a particular country; The American currency is the U.S. dollar.

interstate = between states

⁶ 2) **Trade Regulation**

⁷ The Congress holds the power to regulate foreign and **interstate** trade. However, they cannot make a law that would give an advantage in trade between two or more states.

⁸ 3) **Military Power**

⁹ The Congress is responsible for defending our country by establishing a military force. The organization, arming, establishment of military laws - and seeing that military laws are enforced, belongs to Congress. Military power is shared with the president who is considered the Commander in Chief. However, the power to declare war is granted to the Congress.

copyright = the legal right to be the only producer or seller of a book, film, music, play, etc.

¹⁰ 4) **Other Powers**

¹¹ Congress is also responsible for establishing rules for citizenship in the United States. They are required to maintain a post office, make laws for **copyrights** and **patents**, and govern the District of Columbia. The Constitution also granted the power to establish our federal court system to the Congress.

patent = legal right to be the only maker or seller of a machine, product, or invention

implied = hinted or suggested but not directly expressed or written

Note: The **elastic clause** is also called the “**necessary and proper clause.**”

¹² Within the expressed powers of Congress granted in the Constitution, the words "make laws necessary and proper" created implied powers for the Congress. These words became known as the **elastic** clause. Over the years, this clause has been used by Congress to expand its powers. Congress handles situations that the Founding Fathers would never have dreamed of under this wording. The Congress has used its implied powers to create military academies, form a national bank, and investigate misconduct by government officials.

elastic = Something that is **elastic** is stretchable or adaptable to the situation.

¹³ Even though the elastic clause has been used to expand Congressional power, the powers of Congress are still limited in many ways. The president has **veto** power, and the Supreme Court determines whether laws are in agreement with the Constitution.

veto = the power to stop or prevent a bill from becoming a law

¹⁴ Congress has also been granted special powers in the Constitution. It is responsible for the **impeachment** of high-ranking government officials who commit a crime against the country. Charges are made by the House, while the Senate acts as the court in an impeachment proceeding. In addition, the Senate is given the power of approving treaties and presidential appointments. The House of Representatives also has a special job. In a presidential election where a candidate does not receive a **majority** of the electoral votes, the House meets to choose the next President.

impeach = to accuse an official of wrongdoing and to put him/her on trial

majority = more than half

¹⁵ The Founding Fathers gave the Legislative Branch specific powers to provide for the needs of our nation. In addition, they made sure that this branch would not have unlimited powers that could change the freedom of our country. The many long hours spent writing our Constitution has assured our liberty for more than two hundred years.