

# Navigating the Bureaucratic Maze

Shikha Soni

39 US states require at least one class teaching the works of how the US Government works. In these required classes most students learn the basics, you know the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and also the 3 branches of government. However, unless you take the honors or AP versions of these classes you don't really go into depth about the government. Like, for example, did you know that there is actually an unofficial fourth branch to the government? If not, that's ok, because you'll learn more about it today! We'll go into further depth about the bureaucracy, how it plays a role in our budget, and finally take a look at the future of this "fourth branch".

If you live in America you've probably heard your parents or people on the news saying things like "This product is FDA approved!" or "Let's go to the DMV." And although the DMV and FDA have quite little to do with each other in retrospect (other than having ridiculously long names that need to be shortened), they both work in the same branch of government; the bureaucracy! Under the Constitution of the United States of America, the bureaucracy is considered to be under the executive branch of government, but many people consider it the unofficial fourth branch. Each branch of government is considered to have a specific job. The Legislative branch actually makes the laws, the Judicial branch reviews the Constitutionality of the laws, and the Executive branch enforces the laws. Since the president and his cabinet cannot enforce the numerous laws that Congress passes, it delegates some of its jobs to the bureaucracy. Under the power of enforcing laws, the bureaucracy has three main jobs; implementation, administration, and regulation. The bureaucracy's role of implementation is to administer the laws that Congress passes. Administration can only be described as the regular everyday tasks

that the bureaucracy does. And finally, regulation is making sure that companies and people are following these laws set into practice.

Another basic principle of the American governmental system is checks and balances. The idea of checks and balances is to make sure that no branch overpowers the other. One way checks and balances are seen is the US budget. The bureaucracy debates and drafts a proposition for the US Budget which is then presented to the president. Once it is deemed reasonable by the president, it goes to Congress who has the power of the purse (which means they control most money flowing through the US). And if the Judicial Branch deems a part of the budget unconstitutional, they may reject it. But throughout this whole process, we are going to focus on the first step of debating and drafting the budget. Each agency within the bureaucracy submits a proposal of how much money they think they should receive. Each agency manages a different part of the US, so it makes sense that they have different budgets. For example, the Federal Election Commission gets less than .01% of the budget since there isn't a huge need for it anymore. In comparison, the Department of Transportation gets around 1.87% of the budget since transportation is a huge need. (Numbers from the 2022 fiscal year budget) Experts from Lumen Learning even say, "The various bureaucratic agencies submit annual summaries of their activities and budgets for the following year, and committees and subcommittees in both chambers regularly hold hearings to question the leaders of the various bureaucracies." And every year within the budget there are trends that happen to be decades old. For example, the most common trend is that the Department of Defense (DOD) gets some of the highest percentage of the budget. Remember, the budget is a long and complicated process, this article simply highlights the role of the bureaucracy.

So what does the future of the bureaucracy hold? Since the amendment of the Constitution is a long process, we can't really expect any major changes. However, it is noteworthy to say that the budget and our lives as citizens are greatly affected by the government so a great way to take action is by voting not only during the presidential election, but also the midterms. The bureaucracy has been in America for a long time, and it keeps the government in check, remember the government relies on the power of its voters, so don't be scared to speak up and educate!

## Works Cited

“American Government.” *CliffsNotes*,

[www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guides/american-government/the-bureaucracy/the-functions-of-the-federal-bureaucracy#:~:text=The%20federal%20bureaucracy%20performs%20three,pactice%20is%20known%20as%20implementation](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guides/american-government/the-bureaucracy/the-functions-of-the-federal-bureaucracy#:~:text=The%20federal%20bureaucracy%20performs%20three,pactice%20is%20known%20as%20implementation). Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.

Scanlon, Joseph M. “American Government.” *Lumen*,

[courses.lumenlearning.com/atd-monroecc-american-government/chapter/controlling-the-bureaucracy/](https://courses.lumenlearning.com/atd-monroecc-american-government/chapter/controlling-the-bureaucracy/). Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.

Yorio, Kara. “A Look at Civics Education, State by State.” *School Library Journal*, 2020,

[www.slj.com/story/a-look-at-civics-education-state-by-state#:~:text=The%2011%20states%20that%20have,exam%20as%20a%20graduation%20requirement](http://www.slj.com/story/a-look-at-civics-education-state-by-state#:~:text=The%2011%20states%20that%20have,exam%20as%20a%20graduation%20requirement).