There have been instances in the past where such declarations have been ignored by the other two branches. Below the U.S. Supreme Court are the [United States Courts of Appeals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_court_of_appeals), and below them in turn are the [United States District Courts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_district_court), which are the general trial courts for federal law, and for certain controversies between litigants who are not deemed citizens of the same state ("[diversity jurisdiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diversity_jurisdiction)").

There are three levels of federal courts with *general jurisdiction*, meaning that these courts handle criminal cases and civil lawsuits between individuals. Other courts, such as the [bankruptcy courts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_bankruptcy_court) and the [Tax Court](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Tax_Court), are specialized courts handling only certain kinds of cases ("[subject matter jurisdiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subject_matter_jurisdiction)"). The Bankruptcy Courts are "under" the supervision of the district courts, and, as such, are not considered part of the "[Article III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Article_Three_of_the_United_States_Constitution)" judiciary and also as such their judges do not have lifetime tenure, nor are they Constitutionally exempt from diminution of their remuneration.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_government_of_the_United_States#cite_note-14) Also the Tax Court is not an Article III court (but is, instead an "Article I Court").[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_government_of_the_United_States#cite_note-15)

The district courts are the trial courts wherein cases that are considered under the Judicial Code (Title 28, United States Code) consistent with the jurisdictional precepts of "[federal question jurisdiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_question_jurisdiction)" and "diversity jurisdiction" and "[pendent jurisdiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pendent_jurisdiction)" can be filed and decided. The district courts can also hear cases under "[removal jurisdiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Removal_jurisdiction)", wherein a case brought in State court meets the requirements for diversity jurisdiction, and one party litigant chooses to "remove" the case from state court to federal court.

The United States Courts of Appeals are appellate courts that hear appeals of cases decided by the district courts, and some direct appeals from administrative agencies, and some interlocutory appeals. The U.S. Supreme Court hears appeals from the decisions of the courts of appeals or state supreme courts, and in addition has [original jurisdiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Original_jurisdiction) over a few cases.

The judicial power extends to cases arising under the Constitution, an [Act of Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Act_of_Congress); a U.S. [treaty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty); cases affecting [ambassadors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambassador), [ministers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diplomatic_rank) and [consuls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consul_%28representative%29) of foreign countries in the U.S.; cases and controversies to which the federal government is a party; controversies between states (or their citizens) and foreign nations (or their citizens or subjects); and bankruptcy cases (collectively "federal-question jurisdiction"). The [Eleventh Amendment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleventh_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution) removed from federal jurisdiction cases in which citizens of one state were the plaintiffs and the government of another state was the defendant. It did not disturb federal jurisdiction in cases in which a state government is a plaintiff and a citizen of another state the defendant.

The power of the federal courts extends both to civil actions for damages and other redress, and to criminal cases arising under federal law. The interplay of the Supremacy Clause and Article III has resulted in a complex set of relationships between state and federal courts. Federal courts can sometimes hear cases arising under state law pursuant to [diversity jurisdiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diversity_jurisdiction), state courts can decide certain matters involving federal law, and a handful of federal claims are primarily reserved by federal statute to the state courts (for example, those arising from the [Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telephone_Consumer_Protection_Act_of_1991)). Both court systems thus can be said to have [exclusive jurisdiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exclusive_jurisdiction) in some areas and [concurrent jurisdiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concurrent_jurisdiction) in others.