

The Montana and U.S. governments consist of three branches—legislative, executive, and judicial. This separation of powers, established by our Montana and U.S. Constitutions, includes a system of checks and balances to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful.



## LEGISLATIVE

Federal: Congress  
State: Legislature



Makes laws and controls budget.



## JUDICIAL

U.S. Supreme Court, Federal Courts  
Montana Supreme Court, State Courts



Interprets laws, determines constitutionality, and resolves legal disputes.



## EXECUTIVE

Federal: President, Cabinet  
State: Governor, Agencies



Carries out and enforces laws.

## THE ROLE OF OUR COURTS

**Interpret Laws:** Determines the meaning of laws and how they should be applied to cases.

**Judicial Review:** Gives courts the power to evaluate if laws or government actions are constitutional.

**Balance of Power:** Serves as an independent check on the other branches of government, ensuring laws are enforced equally.

**Protect Rights:** Defends individual rights and freedoms by striking down unconstitutional laws.

**Resolve Disputes:** Settles legal disagreements and holds individuals and the government accountable under the law.

**Provide Stability:** Establishes legal precedents to guide future rulings and provide predictability in the legal system.



## THE RULE OF LAW

Rule of Law is shorthand for a Constitutional structure to produce predictable outcomes from a fair process, not from the whims of the powerful. The Rule of Law requires the three branches of government: Someone to make the law, someone to enforce the law, and someone to interpret the law. All checks and balances come from the rule of law.

## THE IMPACT OF THE COURTS ON THE PEOPLE



### Maintains Balance of Power

Prevents any single branch of government from becoming too powerful, ensuring a system of checks and balances.



### Protects Core Values

Defends fundamental democratic principles, such as freedom of speech, right to privacy, and due process, regardless of public opinion.



### Upholds the Rule of Law

Ensures the Constitution is the supreme law of the land and that everyone, including government officials, is subject to the law.



### Ensures Impartiality

An independent judiciary is protected from political pressure to apply the law impartially and defend our constitutional rights.

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