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UNIT SYNOPSIS

Developing Understanding:

In this unit, students continue to explore policymaking, focusing on its complexity and the idea that it is a process involving multiple governmental institutions and actors. Students will look at issues or policies from several different perspectives and then apply their knowledge to better understand the complexity of the policymaking process.

The Constitution grants specific powers to Congress, the presidency, and the courts, each of which exercises informal powers (developed through political practice, tradition, and legislation). Because power is widely distributed, and checks prevent one branch from overreaching or usurping powers from the others, institutional actors are in the position where they must both compete and cooperate in order to govern.

Note: Coverage of the judicial branch has been moved to Unit 3, where it will be taught in context with civil rights and civil liberties cases. This shift is designed to help students develop stronger connections between judicial decisions and the protection of individual rights.

Building the Course Skills:

This unit builds upon the skills practiced in Unit 4 and 5, including concept application and data analysis. Provide opportunities for students to practice identifying data from different types of graphs. At this point in the course, you can have them practice identifying data, patterns, and trends in the data, and drawing conclusions. Students will need direction in order to know how to draw conclusions and apply information from data. Help them practice these skills by linking data to political behaviors using the different branches of government or budgets of bureaucratic agencies.

Essential Questions:

- *Which branch of government is the most powerful? Why?*
- *Are there really checks and balances when one political party controls all three branches of government? Why or why not?*
- *In what ways has the evolution of the government powers affected Americans and their daily lives?*

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS AND CONTENT STANDARDS

Below are the standards **taught** and **assessed** in this unit.

Topic, Enduring Understanding, Learning Objectives (*Students will be able to...*)

2.1 Congress: The Senate and the House of Representatives

- LO 2.1.A Describe the different structures, powers, and functions of each house of Congress.

2.2 Structures, Powers, and Functions of Congress

- LO 2.2.A Explain how the structure, powers, and functions of both houses of Congress affect the policymaking process.

2.3 Congressional Behavior

- LO 2.3.A Explain how congressional behavior is influenced by election processes, partisanship, and divided government.

2.4 Roles and Powers of the President

- LO 2.4.A Explain how the president can implement a policy agenda.

2.5 Checks on the Presidency

- LO 2.5.A Explain how the president's agenda can create tension and frequent confrontations with Congress.

2.6 Expansion of Presidential Power

- LO 2.6.A Explain how presidents have interpreted and justified their use of formal and informal powers.

2.7 Presidential Communication

- LO 2.7.A Explain how communication technology has changed the president's relationship with the national constituency and the other branches.

~~2.8 The Judicial Branch~~

- ~~• LO 2.8.A Explain the principle of judicial review and how it checks the power of other branches.~~

~~2.9 The Role of the Judicial Branch~~

- ~~• LO 2.9.A Explain the role of legal precedent in judicial decision making.~~

~~2.10 The Court in Action~~

- ~~• LO 2.10.A Explain how life tenure can lead to debate about the Supreme Court's power.~~

~~2.11 Checks on the Judicial Branch~~

- ~~• LO 2.11.A Explain how the exercise of judicial review can lead to debate about the Supreme Court's power.~~

2.12 The Bureaucracy

- LO 2.12.A Explain how the bureaucracy carries out the responsibilities of the federal government.

2.13 Discretionary and Rulemaking Authority

- LO 2.13.A Explain how the federal bureaucracy uses delegated discretionary authority for rulemaking and implementation.

2.14 Holding the Bureaucracy Accountable

- LO 2.14.A Explain how Congress uses its oversight power in its relationship with the executive branch.
- LO 2.14.B Explain how the president ensures that executive branch agencies and departments carry out their responsibilities in concert with the goals of the administration.

2.15 Policy and the Branches of Government

- LO 2.15.A Explain the extent to which governmental branches can hold the bureaucracy accountable given the competing interests of Congress, the president, and the federal courts.

Instructional Note:

Topics 2.8–2.11 and their objectives have been moved to Unit 3 to strengthen connections between the judiciary, civil rights, and civil liberties, while also alleviating pacing issues in Unit 2.

In Unit 2, students should still learn about the judicial appointment process (in the context of Congress) and the judicial check of judicial review. However, they do not need to cover content such as judicial ideology, the structure of the federal courts, or the process by which the Supreme Court takes on a case until Unit 3.