

Legislative bodies are often the most powerful branch of government in representative democracies. The Parliament won out against the king in the English civil war. In the U.S., the importance our founding fathers placed on the legislative branch is revealed when they wrote the constitution and placed their discussion of the Congress before their discussion of the other branches of government. Unfortunately, in recent times it is clear that Congress is broken.

Congress has given up much of its power to bureaucracies. They have given federal bureaucracies general directions and given these agencies broad discretion on how to meet the established goals. By delegating power, the Congress has given up the ability to directly make policy. Now much policy making is done by unaccountable bureaucrats who cannot be removed from office by an electorate who believes the agencies are doing a bad job.

Congress has also given away significant power to the presidency. President Trump was able to impose tariffs on our imports from various countries by claiming these tariffs were needed for national security reasons. A tariff is simply a tax on imported goods. The constitution is very clear that tax proposals should originate in the House of Representatives and not simply be imposed unilaterally by the president. This is but one example of when Congress has willingly given up one of its powers to the president.

Congress was supposed to be the branch of government that kept the executive branch in check. However, since congress has outsourced much of its responsibility, it is no longer an effective policy maker. Instead of trying to produce meaningful legislation, Congress has become focused on impeachment. Specifically, the House of Representatives is turning its attention to removing the president because it realizes that policy is being made often unilaterally by the president.

Luckily, the geniuses who wrote our constitution provided for other checks on the executive branch. States can produce their own laws and produce policies that directly conflict with the federal government's policies. The states have shown a willingness to act on their own. Also, the federal judiciary can effectively referee disagreements that arise when federal policy and state policies conflict. As it stands now, unelected and therefore unaccountable federal bureaucrats and the president face resistance from the states.

It is my great hope that Congressional representatives from both parties start to take back the power Congress has given up. The beauty of our system is that every branch and level of government does not have to be working for us to get good results. However, the legislative branch is important enough that the nation will eventually need it to become effective again.

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