

OUR DIVIDED GOVERNMENT

THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT IN CARTOONS

A Teacher's Resource Booklet

with Lesson Plans and Reproducible
Student-Activity Assignments



Contents

Introduction	2
Lesson 1 Executive Branch	4
Lesson 2 Legislative Branch	12
Lesson 3 Judicial Branch	20
Lesson 4 Checks and Balances	28
Answers	36
Appendix Cartoons and Images	39

Introduction

Our Divided Federal System

The vision that shaped our federal system of government is perhaps best captured by James Madison in these famous words from no. 47 of *The Federalist Papers*:

What is government but the greatest of all reflections on human nature. If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.

In the spirit of this hard-headed realism, the nation's Founders created a government that was both strong and constrained by a highly complex assortment of internal and external controls.

Among the external controls on our federal government are provisions for selecting (and removing) officials in regular elections as well as the many protections of individual rights contained in the U.S. Constitution. The internal controls are found in the way powers are divided among the three branches of government. In many cases, two or more of the branches share certain powers in complicated ways. Of course, this sharing of powers also often allows each branch to check the power of the others when it sees a need. How this system of checks and balances works is the focus of this booklet. Its twenty-four thought-provoking editorial cartoons should help your students understand how our system is designed to facilitate vigorous government action while also limiting it in order to protect the liberty that is at its very heart. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

Executive Branch

The cartoons in this section are arranged chronologically and thematically. This gives you a chance to explore the key powers and duties of the president while also looking at the way the executive branch has evolved over the past century.

Legislative Branch

The cartoons here focus on the key lawmaking and regulatory powers of Congress, with some attention also to Congress's role in foreign affairs and to the issue of campaign-finance reform.

Judicial Branch

The first cartoons focus on the U.S. Supreme Court's power of judicial review and the question of how independent the court is of public opinion. Two final cartoons present opposing views on one highly controversial issue—school prayer—that has been before the court often in recent years.

Checks and Balances

Each cartoon in this lesson focuses on a different way in which the three branches of government can check one another's powers. The cartoons reveal the key internal controls on our federal system to which Madison refers in the words quoted above.

Using Visual Images in the Classroom

Many textbooks today contain colorful visuals, but, all too often, these images function primarily to fill space or offer little educational value. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable, often doing little more than providing simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, school materials pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help the students master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as social or historical documents. The lessons in MindSparks booklets focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, all of which include an emotional power and the ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general and their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

After using the booklet, you may wish to look at some of the many other MindSparks products using editorial cartoons, photographs, posters, and other visual images.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with six cartoons per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND-INFORMATION SHEET

This page provides brief summaries explaining the six illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY PAGES FOR EACH VISUAL DISPLAY

Each page includes one image, and a sequence of questions is provided to help you plan an all-classroom discussion while examining the image. The questions take students step-by-step through an analysis of the visual. For students who require more support to answer the questions, you may hand them an entire discussion-activity page, reproducible in order to provide more visual support. For students who need less support to answer questions, keep the page yourself, and ask the questions of the class as a whole in order to provide a listening and response-writing activity. In addition to these questions, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. The instructions for these activities are directed to the student. Some are individual assignments while others work best as small-group or all-class activities. You may reproduce any of these pages for classroom use. Answers to factual questions are also provided on the inside back cover of the booklet.

ILLUSTRATIONS AND OTHER VISUAL ART

Images are printed alongside discussion questions and follow-up activities on reproducible pages, making them readily available to students. Stand-alone versions of all images, also reproducible, can be found in the appendix. Using images without the text may prove useful for testing or to encourage students to formulate their own analyses before consulting the text.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will learn more about the key powers and duties of the U.S. president.
 2. Students will better understand how the executive branch shares powers with the other branches of government.
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Executive Branch

Use the following information to help your students better understand the six editorial cartoons making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE CARTOONS*Cartoon 1*

The president is the nation's leader in war and peace. It is important to keep in mind two less glamorous roles the president plays, because these two roles often come into conflict. First, the president heads the executive branch of government. At the same time, the president is also the leader of his or her own political party. As "chief executive," the president appoints cabinet officials and many other key government employees. In the past, the president was also in charge of a huge spoils system, the system in which the election winner gave out thousands of less important government jobs to loyal party members. In the late 1800s, anger about the spoils system grew as the need for better-trained government experts and administrators became clear. In 1884, Grover Cleveland won election as president as a reformer determined to limit the spoils system. As this cartoon suggests, he had no wish to spend his time handing out jobs to self-interested party members. Over time, the civil service reform Cleveland backed did take the hiring of most government workers out of the hands of elected politicians.

Cartoon 2

The president's powers are all carefully defined in the U.S. Constitution. However, each president must decide how to use those powers. In the 1800s, the presidency was not nearly as powerful an office as it would later become. In fact, the entire federal government was much smaller than it is today. In the early part of the twentieth century, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson both acted to expand the role of the national government—the presidency in particular. Then, in the 1920s, presidents again tended to view their role in a more limited way. This was especially true of Calvin Coolidge, the president referred to in this cartoon. The prosperity of the 1920s made Coolidge very popular. Millions of Americans agreed with his view that presidents should set limited goals for government in dealing with society's problems.

Cartoon 3

The Great Depression turned millions of Americans against Coolidge's ideas about government's limited role. By 1933, with millions out of work, Franklin Delano Roosevelt took charge and made the presidency the source of an endless stream of new ideas for fixing the ailing economy. His New Deal began a huge expansion of the role of the federal government, with the president now clearly in charge of setting the nation's economic agenda. Not everyone was impressed with FDR's way of coping with the

Great Depression. In fact, Roosevelt did not have a fully developed set of ideas about how the U.S. economy worked or a complete plan for what the role of government should be. His approach was, as he put it, “to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another.” This cartoon takes a slightly amused and critical view of “Doctor” Roosevelt’s hit or miss technique.

Cartoon 4

The Constitution gives the president the role of commander-in-chief of the nation’s armed forces. In the twentieth century, wars became increasingly dangerous, destructive, and costly. The power of the president has also grown during times of military crisis since the early 1900s. After the New Deal decade, the total mobilization required for World War II caused a further expansion of the role of the federal government. Harry Truman took over as president in 1945, near the end of the war. He then set the nation’s course in containing the Soviet Union at the start of what came to be known as the Cold War. Containment of communism led to yet another vast expansion of the U.S. military role in the world. As a result, most Americans accepted the need for steady and powerful leadership by the nation’s presidents.

Cartoon 5

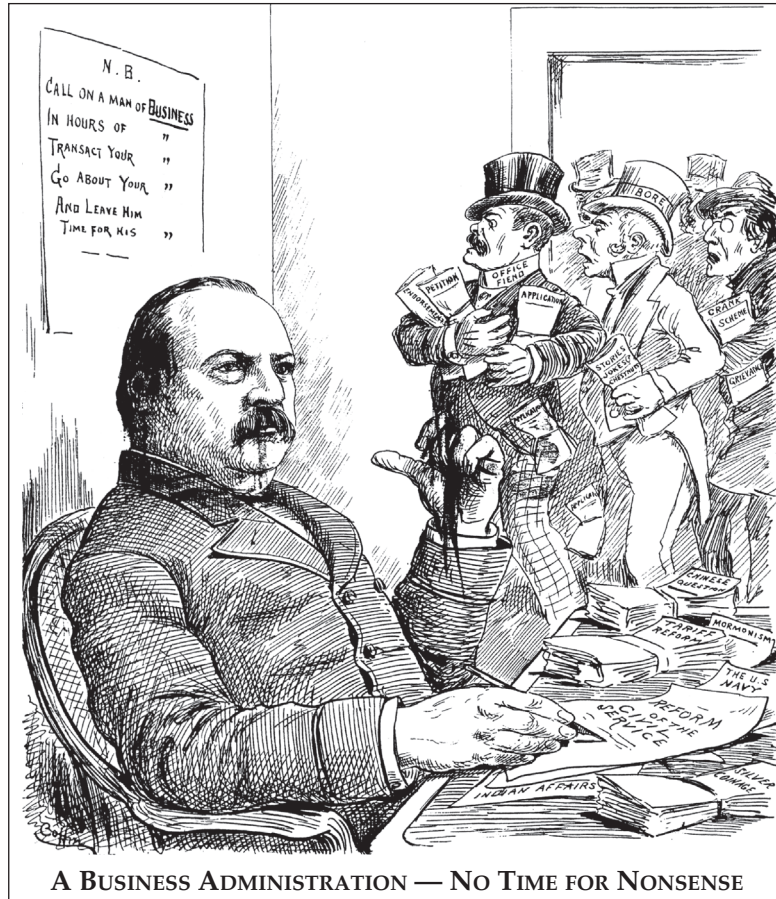
In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan built up U.S. defenses in order to take a stronger stand against Soviet military ventures and Soviet support for communist rebels in several parts of the world. Some Americans saw Reagan as a dangerous, out-of-control cowboy. Others admired him for his tough stance toward the Soviets. It is difficult to tell how critical this cartoon is. Its portrayal of Reagan as a cowboy seems to poke fun at him, yet it also suggests the enormous political clout Reagan’s great popularity gave him. In this way, the cartoon illustrates another important aspect of the U.S. presidency—its ability to become what Theodore Roosevelt called a bully pulpit. Certain presidents, at least, seem able to appeal directly to the hopes of millions of Americans and move them to support key programs or ideas. Ronald Reagan was a master of this bully pulpit. In that sense, he was a powerful president, yet Reagan himself wanted to limit the role and power of the federal government, including the power of the executive branch. He had real doubts about government’s ability to solve many of the social problems with which it was trying to cope. While he admired Franklin D. Roosevelt, he wanted presidents in the future to be more like Calvin Coolidge. In a way, Ronald Reagan posed questions and challenges about government that we are still wrestling with today.

Cartoon 6

During Reagan’s presidency, the Soviet Union began a process of reform that soon led to its complete collapse. By 1991, the Cold War was over. Under President Bill Clinton (1993–2001), a time of relative peace and prosperity began. The huge Reagan-era defense budgets were cut back, which helped Clinton bring down government deficits. Entitlement programs, such as Social Security and Medicare, kept growing, however. Then with the horrifying terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, American life was again unsettled by a new war, this one against Islamist extremists. Many Americans rallied behind President George W. Bush, but as this cartoon suggests, not all of them approved of his approach to the economy or the war. In the modern age, social and economic goals and defense have often made conflicting demands for limited government funds. This cartoon illustrates how this trade-off could still cause a president big problems.

Lesson 1 — Executive Branch

Cartoon 1



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-10344

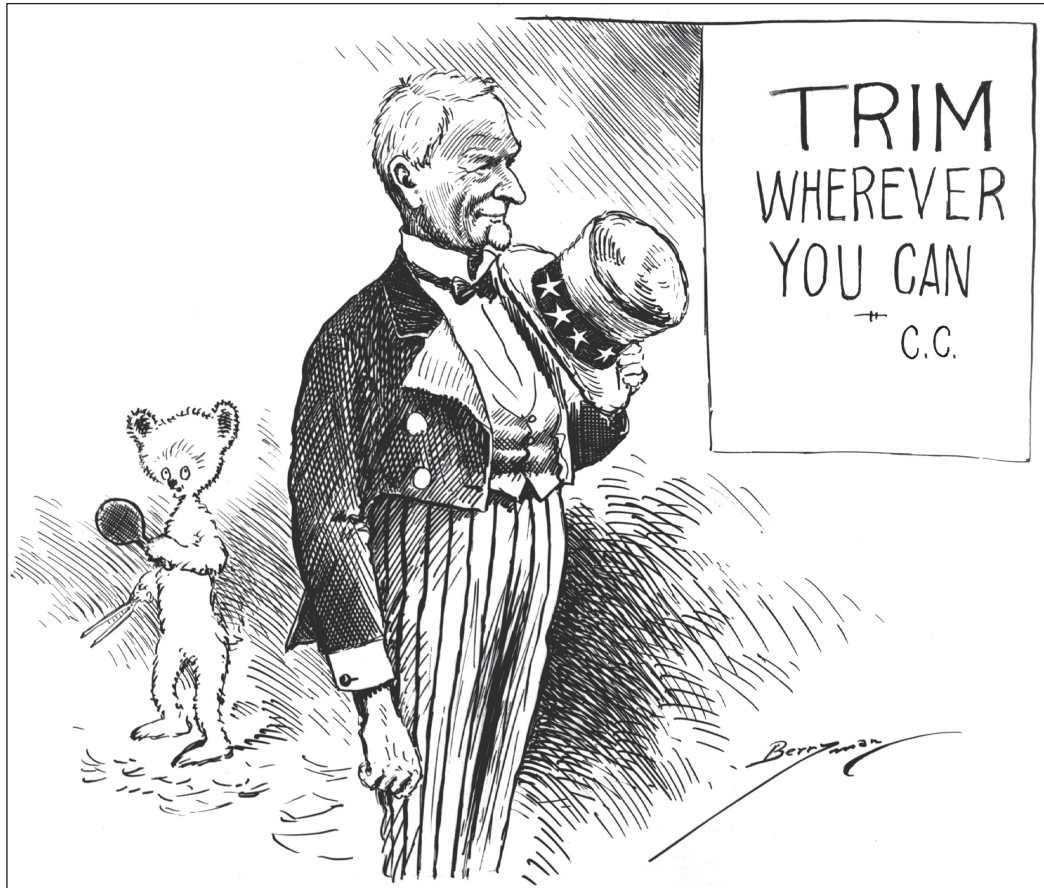
Discussing the Cartoon

1. The man at the desk here was a U.S. president from 1885 to 1889. He was elected again as president in 1892 and served from 1893 to 1897. What is his name?
2. In this cartoon, a large number of people are seeking Cleveland's help in getting government jobs. What in the cartoon indicates that Cleveland was not happy about these office seekers?
3. In the cartoon, Cleveland is signing a bill labeled "Reform of the Civil Service." Can you explain what civil service reform was and why it is important to an understanding of this cartoon?
4. The caption says, "A Business Administration—No Time for Nonsense." Another caption might be, "The President—An Administrator, Not a Party Politician." Which caption fits the cartoon best? With which caption do you agree more? Why?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** In Grover Cleveland's day, the president's role as the leader of his political party meant he often had to find government jobs for thousands of loyal party workers. The distribution of these jobs to party members was known as the spoils system. Cleveland was a strong backer of civil-service reform as a way to put an end to the spoils system. As a group, read more about the civil-service reforms of the late 1800s. In what ways did they end the spoils system? Did they also end the conflict each president faced in trying to be the nation's chief executive while also being the leader of the president's political party? Discuss your group's conclusions with the rest of the class.
2. Find a recent editorial cartoon that deals in some way with the president as the leader of the president's party. As a class, share some of these recent cartoons in a discussion of the problems that presidents still face in trying to balance the demands of their political party with the needs of the nation as a whole.

Cartoon 2



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-12404

Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon from the 1920s shows a famous symbolic figure who is often used to stand for the United States. Can you name this symbolic figure?
2. In the cartoon, Uncle Sam has just been given a close haircut. Next to him is a sign with some words from President "C.C." Can you give this president's full name?
3. The words from "C.C." are "trim wherever you can." These words are not really about haircuts. They are words that sum up Calvin Coolidge's strong ideas about government and the president's role in government. From the cartoon and your knowledge of U.S. history, can you explain what these ideas were?
4. In the 1920s, presidents with Coolidge's views about government were very popular. From what you know about the 1920s, can you explain why that was so? Is this cartoon's view of Coolidge mainly favorable or unfavorable? Why?

Follow-up Activity

1. Debate the wisdom of Calvin Coolidge's ideas about business, wealth, and government in a free society. Coolidge is famous for saying, "The chief business of the American people is business." He also said the following:

History reveals no civilized people among whom there was not a highly educated class and large aggregations of wealth. Large profits means large payrolls. Inspiration has always come from above.

As a class, have a debate about this statement by Coolidge. In the debate, discuss the following questions: What does Coolidge mean when he speaks of "aggregations of wealth," "civilization," and "inspiration"? How does he see these three things as connected? Is Coolidge correct about past civilizations? Is he correct about the United States in the 1920s? Is he likely to be correct about all future societies?

Cartoon 3

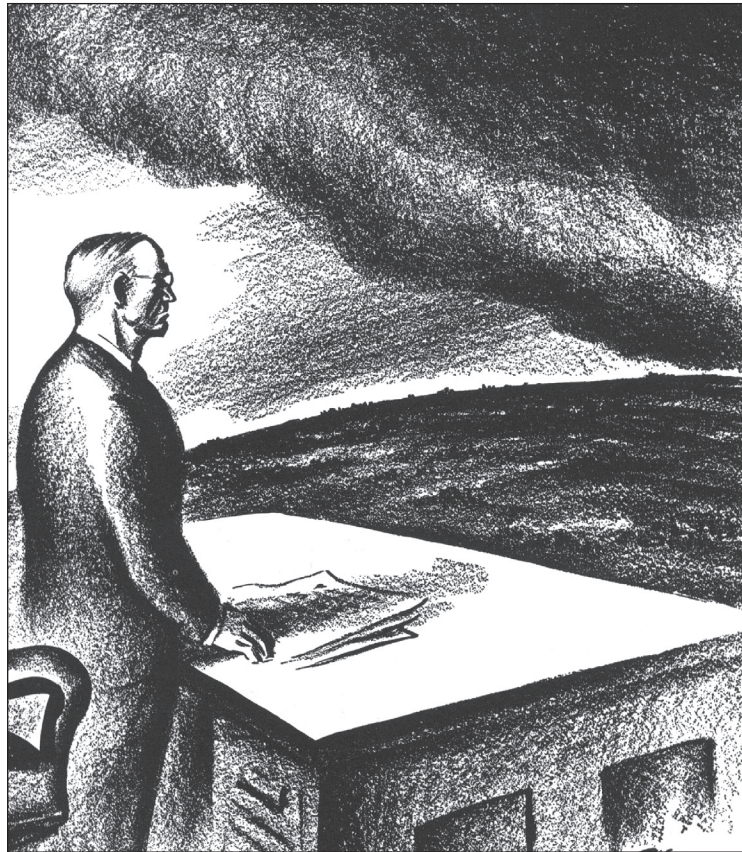


Follow-up Activities

2. Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs led to an enormous growth in the size of the federal government and the power of the presidency in particular. Read more about the administration of one of the following presidents: Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, Lyndon B. Johnson, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton. Write a brief essay as if you were that president, and comment on the above cartoon and on Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency.

Lesson 1 — Executive Branch

Cartoon 4



STRENGTH TO YOUR ARM, MR. PRESIDENT — APRIL 15, 1945

Fitzpatrick in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

Discussing the Cartoon

1. The date on this cartoon is April 15, 1945. From this fact, can you identify the man in the cartoon and explain why he might well have been as worried and concerned as he looks here?
2. In this cartoon, President Harry Truman seems to be looking off into a troubled horizon. Think of the big decisions Truman would face in the months and years just ahead of him. What words describing those decisions or problems would you put on the horizon in this cartoon? Why?
3. This cartoon is about Truman himself, but it is also a view of the U.S. president's role in dealing with the world in 1945. Some historians might say that this cartoon could also be used for every U.S. president since Truman. Why might they say this? Do you agree with them? Why or why not?
4. Do you think this cartoon shows the president's role in dealing with world problems accurately? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

1. When Truman took over as president, he faced a great many problems; some had to do with issues inside the United States, but most had to do with the nation's dealings with the rest of the world. Few people had any idea how good a job Truman would do in dealing with those world problems. Read a biography of Truman. Based on what you read, prepare a brief talk to the class on this cartoon. Explain what you think is and is not accurate in the cartoon's view of Truman.
2. Pretend you are a historian. You have general knowledge of the history of the 1800s and 1900s, but pretend that the *only* evidence you have about the U.S. presidency are the first four cartoons in this lesson. Using these cartoons, write a brief essay on the U.S. presidency and how it changed from the late 1800s to the year 1945. As much as possible, base your statements only on the features of the cartoons and what you think we can learn from them.

Cartoon 5



Karl Hubenthal, Hearst Newspapers

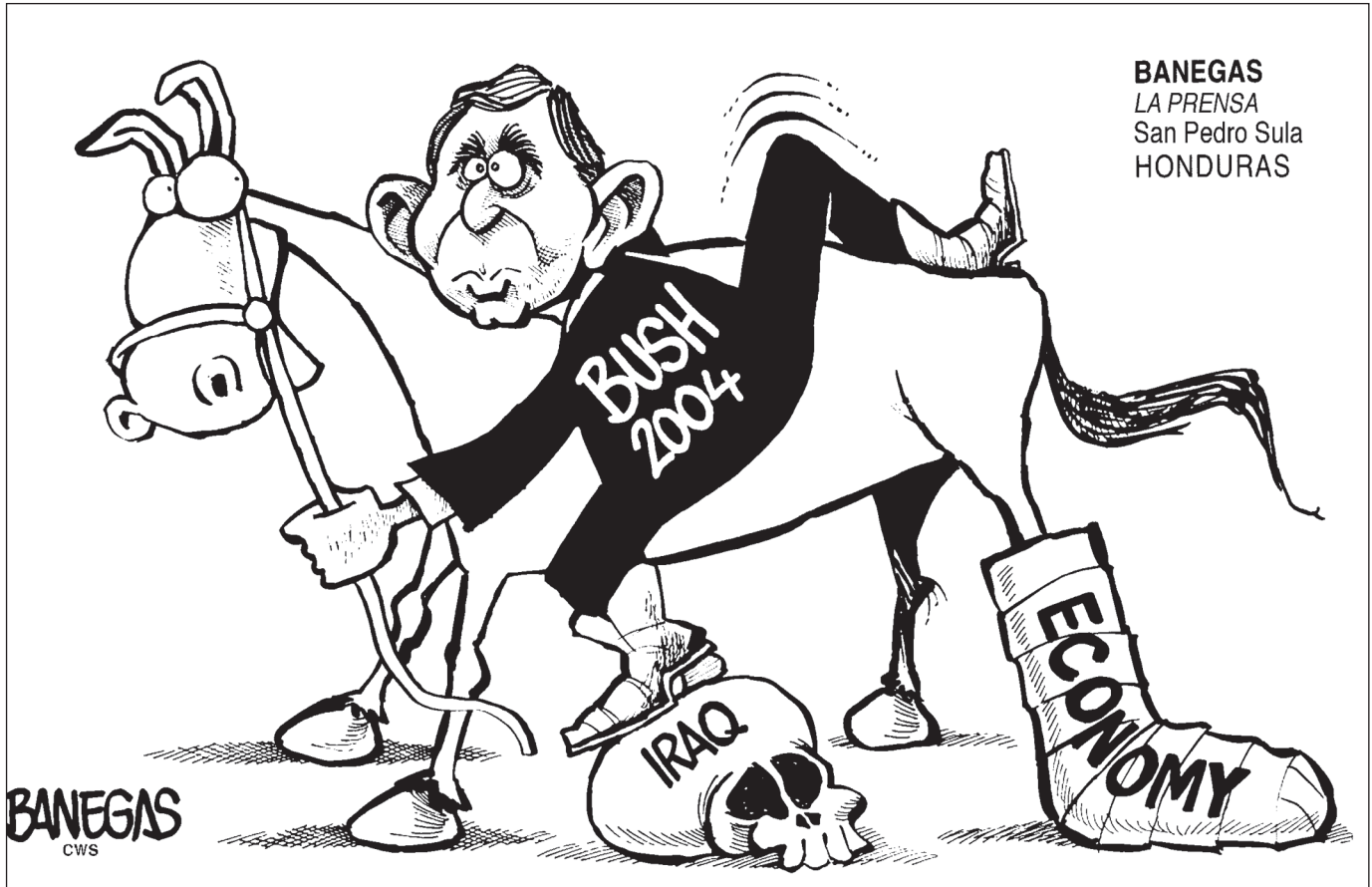
Discussing the Cartoon

1. This November 1980 cartoon shows the winner of that year's presidential election. Name him and his political party.
2. The cartoon portrays Reagan as a huge cowboy. Many editorial cartoons used this cowboy image for Ronald Reagan. From what you know about Reagan and his presidency, why do you think cartoonists so often portrayed him as a cowboy?
3. In the cartoon, Reagan has two "guns." One is an elephant. For what is an elephant usually used as a symbol in editorial cartoons? From your answer, can you explain what happened in the Senate elections in 1980 that made this elephant one of the guns giving Reagan strength as president?
4. The other gun is labeled "Public Mandate for a Change." What does this show about Reagan's popularity? Why would it help a president to have a public mandate for change? Why do you think Reagan had such a strong public mandate in 1980?

Follow-up Activities

1. Many editorial cartoons used a cowboy symbol for Ronald Reagan. Some used it to criticize him, but others used it to praise him. In your library, look through magazines and newspapers from the 1980s for cartoons showing Ronald Reagan as a cowboy. Also see annual editions of *The Best Editorial Cartoons of the Year*, edited by Charles Brooks (Gretna, LA: Pelican, 2004). Make copies of cartoons with the cowboy symbol for Reagan, used favorably and unfavorably. In class, explain your selections. Discuss also what the cowboy symbol shows about Reagan and about the presidency in general.
2. Ronald Reagan and Theodore Roosevelt were two strong presidents who were very popular while in office. Each could appeal directly and with feeling to millions of Americans, using the presidency as what Roosevelt called a bully pulpit. Collect copies of editorial cartoons of each of these two presidents. In class, compare the cartoons, and discuss what they show about the style of each president.

Cartoon 6



Cartoonists and Writers Syndicate

Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon shows one president climbing on a horse in order to run a race. Can you name him and explain what race he was running in the year 2004?
2. The cartoon seems to suggest the president might have trouble in the 2004 elections because of two very big problems, one at home and one having to do with foreign policy. Can you explain?
3. The 2003 war in Iraq was described by President Bush as part of a larger war on terrorism that the United States began fighting after 9/11. Why do you think the plain numbers “9/11” have come to be used as they have to mark the start of that larger war?
4. Some say the war against Iraq was a key success in the war on terrorism. Others say it was a mistake that made it harder to fight the larger war on terror. With which view do you agree more? Why?
5. As of today, how accurate does this cartoon’s prediction seem? Why?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Your group’s job is to make copies of the six cartoons in this lesson and use them in a creative bulletin-board display titled “The Modern Presidency in Cartoons.” Feel free to include other editorial cartoons featuring these or other presidents in your display. However, you must write brief paragraphs to accompany all cartoons, explaining them and tying them together in one complete story about the powers, duties, limitations, and changing challenges facing modern presidents.
2. Read more about one of the six U.S. presidents portrayed in the cartoons in this lesson. Pretend you are that president. Now write a letter to the editor of the newspaper that published the cartoon about you. Describe your reaction to the cartoon. Give your own opinion of the cartoon, and explain why you do or do not think its view of you as president is fair. As a class, create a bulletin-board display using the cartoons and some of these essays.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will learn more about the key powers and duties of the U.S. Congress.
 2. Students will better understand how the legislative branch shares powers with the other branches of government.
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Legislative Branch

Use the following information to help your students better understand the six editorial cartoons making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE CARTOONS*Cartoon 1*

Presidents can do a lot to set an agenda for the nation, but it is the legislative branch (Congress) that actually passes laws and puts the president's plans into effect. In 1994, the Republican Party won a majority of the seats in Congress for the first time in forty years. President Bill Clinton was a Democrat, but the Republicans in Congress still hoped to pass laws putting their ideas, not his, into effect. Many of those ideas had to do with cutting various kinds of government spending. Most Republicans said the government had become too big and too involved in trying to solve all kinds of social problems. It is true that the federal government does spend hundreds of billions of dollars on such programs as Social Security, benefits for veterans, Medicare, or various welfare programs for the poor. The government also helps many large corporations and other wealthy citizens, but this cartoon suggests the Republicans were only interested in spending cuts for the poor (or for the arts), not in cutting programs that help the wealthy, where some really big savings could be made.

Cartoon 2

This cartoon should be discussed and compared with cartoon 6. It takes a very different view of efforts by congressional Republicans to cut the federal budget. It also raises an important question about the relationship between elected officials and the voters who put them in office. How can an elected official do what voters demand when those demands conflict with one another? In the cartoon, the voters tell the Republican elephant that they do indeed want it to cut the deficits (which went way up in the 1980s and early 1990s). There is almost no way to do this without cutting government spending, but the cartoon also depicts the voters as unwilling to accept any cuts in their favorite programs. Voters often complain about the dishonesty of elected officials, but this cartoon suggests the voters are often unrealistic in asking for things without being willing to pay for them.

Cartoon 3

Congress makes most of the basic rules for U.S. society by passing new laws. To become a law, a bill must first get a majority of votes in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Any differences between the House and Senate bills are worked out in a conference committee. The bill to which all finally agree must then be signed by the president to become a law. If the president refuses to sign it (called a veto), it only becomes a law if both houses of Congress pass it again by a two-thirds vote. In this way, the president shares power with Congress in making laws. But the

executive branch as a whole shares rule-making power with Congress in another way. The laws passed by Congress often give offices or agencies in the executive branch the power to create thousands of additional regulations not spelled out in the laws themselves. The Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and dozens of other agencies write thousands of pages of rules and regulations to guide them in enforcing certain laws. This cartoon suggests that government regulation has become far too complex and costly, especially for the nation's millions of small businesses.

Cartoon 4

This cartoon should be compared with cartoon 6. Unlike that cartoon, it is *not* against government regulation. In fact, it takes a dim view of the idea that cutting government regulations is a way to save money. Government rules do cost money (for example, when the rules require businesses to buy special equipment to reduce air pollution), but this cartoon suggests rather forcefully that government regulations also save us money—and other things we value, such as a clean environment. In any case, it is important to keep in mind that Congress itself does not write every government regulation. The laws it passes guide officials as they create many regulations on their own. Congress gets the final say about these rules, but executive branch agencies share this rule-making power with Congress. In recent decades, arguments about this power have grown as the number of rules and regulations has multiplied.

Cartoon 5

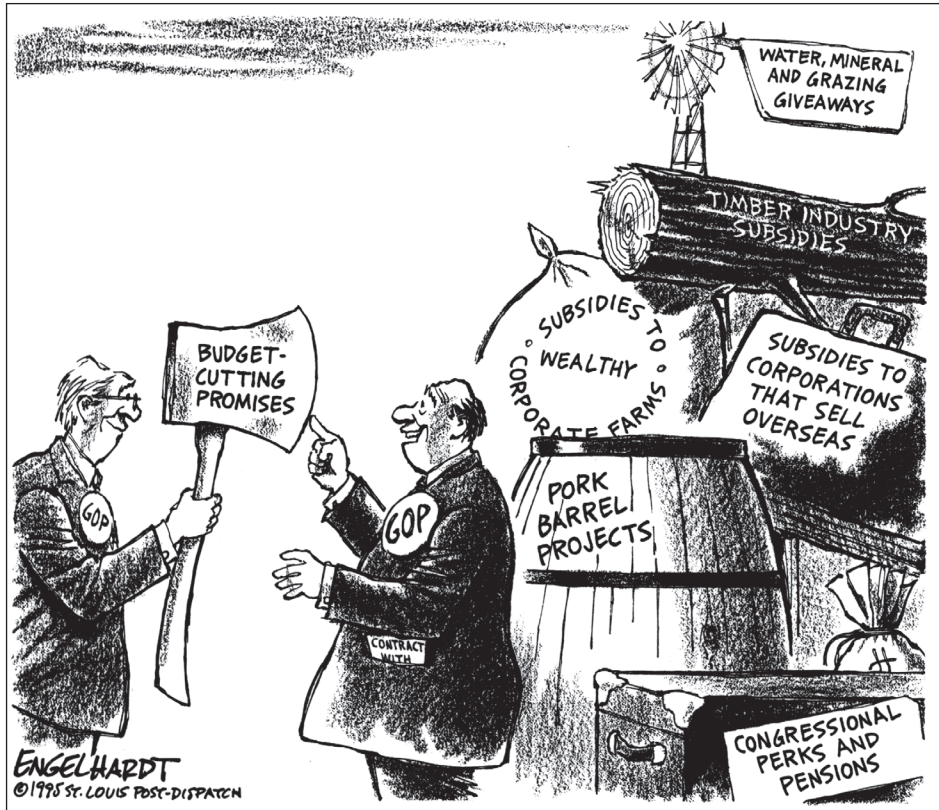
Another area where the executive and legislative branches share power is in making decisions about the use of military force. As we learned in Lesson 1, the U.S. Constitution names the president the commander-in-chief of the armed forces; however, the Constitution also gives Congress the power to declare war. Does this mean that Congress alone has the authority to send soldiers into battle? Few U.S. presidents have accepted that view. They have often taken military action without first getting the approval of Congress. In their view, some threats fall short of full-scale war, while others require a rapid response that cannot wait for congressional action. Yet even when Congress does not formally declare war, it can influence military decisions through its control over defense spending. In 1973, Congress passed the War Powers Resolution to try to define the military roles of the president and Congress more carefully. This resolution gives Congress the right to withdraw forces that the president sends into a conflict after a certain period of time. All the presidents since 1973 have had big doubts about whether the War Powers Resolution is constitutional. This cartoon suggests that some conflict between Congress and the president over defense may be unavoidable.

Cartoon 6

Powerful corporations, labor unions, environmental groups, and other organizations spend millions of dollars each election helping members of Congress they like. Does this money give such groups too much control over our elected representatives? Congress has passed several campaign finance laws to limit the way candidates can raise and spend money from such donors, but do these laws work as they ought? Should, or *can*, such influence ever be eliminated entirely anyway? This cartoon suggests that even the reformers in Congress need campaign donations and will work hard to raise them no matter what.

Lesson 2 — Legislative Branch

Cartoon 1



‘Oooh, That’s Sharp — Let’s Try It On Some Poor Kids, Old Folks and Elitist Cultural Snobs First.’

© 1995 Engelhardt in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Reprinted with permission.

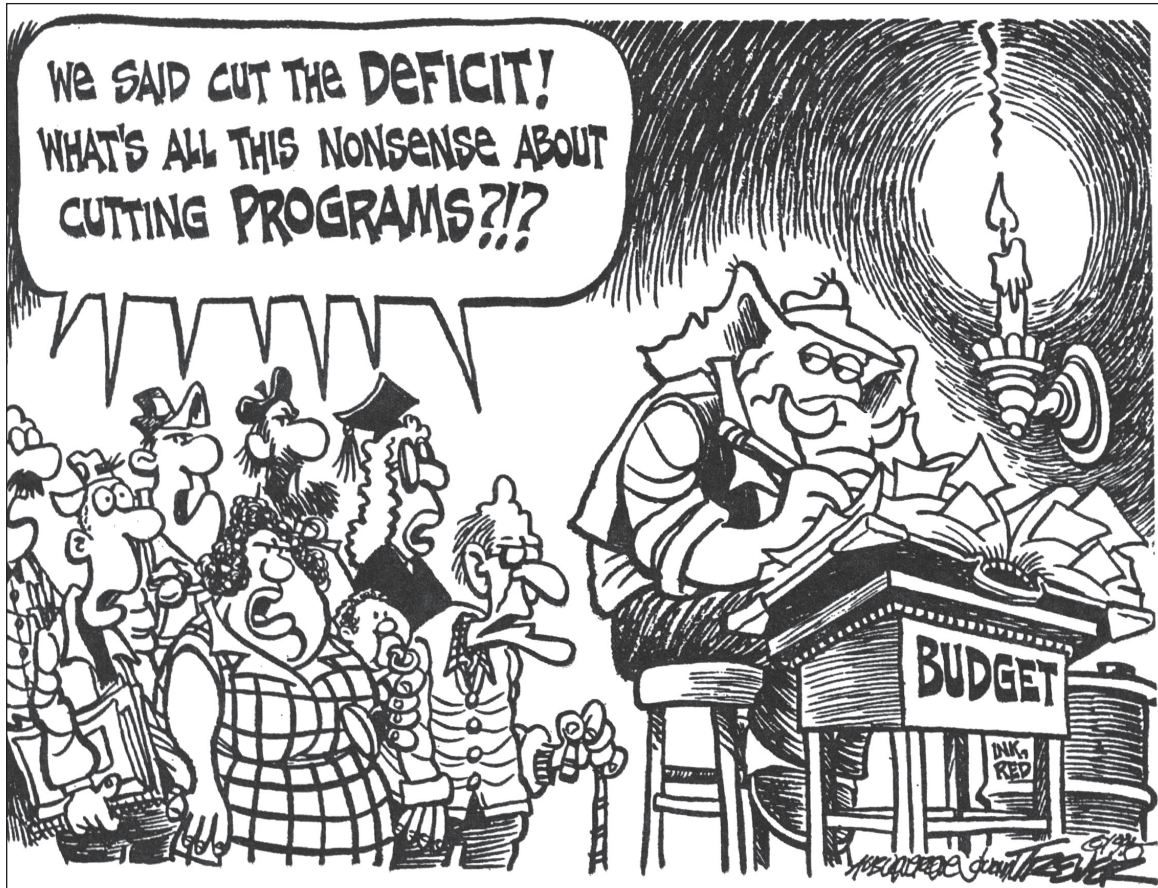
Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon shows two members of Congress with a sharp axe labeled “Budget-Cutting Promises.” Can you explain the “GOP” button each lawmaker is wearing?
2. This cartoon was published in 1995. In 1994, the makeup of Congress had changed in a big way. From the GOP buttons, can you explain this big change in Congress?
3. Congress makes the nation’s laws. Many of these laws involve spending billions of dollars that the federal government collects each year in taxes. What word on the axe is used for the government’s big plan for raising and spending money each year?
4. Many government programs give amounts of money, or subsidies, to help various industries or groups of well-off individuals. Other programs help the poor and elderly. Which group of programs does this cartoon think the GOP lawmakers in 1995 most wanted to cut? Do you agree or disagree with this view of GOP lawmakers? Why?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** As a group, learn more about the kinds of spending programs listed on the barrels, boxes, and bags to the right of the two Republican lawmakers in the above cartoon. These barrels are all forms of government help to corporations and other well-off or powerful individuals. Your librarian should be able to help you locate newsmagazines and other sources that will describe examples of such programs. As a group, find an example of one program or law that fits each label you see to the right of the lawmakers in the cartoon. Discuss also whether any or all of these programs serve a useful public need. Present your findings and your group’s views to the entire class.
2. In the above cartoon, the phrase “elitist cultural snobs” refers in part to an argument in Congress about funding the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Find out more about this argument. In a brief talk in class, explain the phrase “elitist cultural snobs” and lead a discussion about the NEA.

Cartoon 2



John Trever, Courtesy Albuquerque Journal

Discussing the Cartoon

1. Like the last cartoon, this one is also about the Republican's plans to cut the federal budget. In this cartoon, a big elephant is shown going through the federal budget looking for ways to cut spending. This elephant stands for the Republicans in Congress. For what larger group or groups do you think the people on the left in the cartoon are supposed to stand?
2. The citizens on the left seem to want Congress to cut the deficit. Why do think so many Americans want to see the federal deficits go down? Are they right to worry about these deficits? Why or why not?
3. While these voters want the deficits to go down, they also do not want any programs cut. Could deficits go down without any cuts in government-spending programs? Is it reasonable for these people to ask Congress to cut the deficits without cutting spending? Explain your answers. What point about government spending is the artist who drew the cartoon trying to make? Do you agree or disagree with him? Why?

Follow-up Activities

1. Compare this cartoon with this lesson's cartoon 1. Together, the two cartoons comment on Republican plans just after they won control of Congress in 1994. Pretend you are one of the Republican lawmakers who joined Congress as a result of an election victory in 1994. Write a letter to the editor about both of these cartoons. In it, explain what you do and do not agree with in each cartoon. Now pretend you are a Democrat in Congress at that time and write a similar letter to the editor commenting on both cartoons.
2. Look closely at the way the elephant in the above cartoon is drawn. Now look closely at the way the people on the left in the cartoon are drawn. How does the artist's way of drawing these figures help the cartoon make its point? As a class, discuss the way these figures are drawn and whether this aspect of editorial cartooning is a fair way for an artist to make a point or express a view.

Cartoon 3



Gulliver in reverse!

Dick Locher, © Tribune Media Services Inc. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted with permission.

Discussing the Cartoon

1. In this cartoon, a huge giant is using rope to tie down a tiny figure labeled "Small Businessman." The caption for the cartoon is "Gulliver in reverse!" Briefly, sum up the story of Gulliver and explain why it might make sense to call the drawing you see here "Gulliver in reverse."
2. In this drawing, the huge fists tying down the small businessman are labeled "Big Government laws, regulations and paperwork." Can you think of some government regulations that affect small businesses in a major way?
3. The cartoon shows government rules and paperwork as huge fists holding down the small businessman. What point about such rules and paperwork does this help the cartoon to make? How does the Gulliver story add to the point the cartoon makes?
4. Do you think this cartoon is fair in its view of the government and its rules and regulations? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activity

1. Invite two or three local small-business owners to your class to talk about what they do to make a living and how government rules and regulations affect their businesses. Show them this cartoon and ask them to comment on it. Then ask them to describe how they are affected by any or all of the following federal agencies:
 - Food and Drug Administration
 - Environmental Protection Agency
 - Occupational Safety and Health Administration
 - Securities and Exchange Commission
 - Small Business Administration
 - Consumer Product Safety Commission

Take careful notes on the comments these business owners make. Later, invite one or more officials from some of the above federal agencies to talk to the class about the work they do. Show them the cartoon, read some of the remarks of the business owners, and ask them to respond. As a class, discuss the views of both groups of visitors.

Cartoon 4



Signe Wilkinson, Cartoonists and Writers Syndicate

Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon's view of government rules and regulations is quite different from that of the last cartoon. Here, a young man is opening a safe. Inside is a bag of money labeled "Savings from Ending Regulations." Can you explain why it often costs businesses and individuals money to follow many of the government's regulations?
2. In this cartoon, the world is full of factories pouring smoke into the air. How does the cartoon make it clear that this smoke is causing some big problems?
3. The cartoon suggests that the smoky, poisoned air is connected to the ending of certain regulations. What kinds of regulations do you think the artist who drew the cartoon had in mind?
4. What point is this cartoon making about the "savings" from ending those regulations? Do you agree with this point? Why or why not? Do you think government regulations always, sometimes, or never save more money than they cost? Explain your answer.

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Compare this cartoon with this lesson's cartoon 3. In your group, take turns role-playing a discussion among the young man in the above cartoon and the small businessman and huge giant in the previous cartoon. Each group member should take a turn playing each of the three roles. In these role-playing exercises, the three figures should explain what they are doing in the cartoons, and they should try to convince the others to see things their way. After practicing the role-playing exercise, perform it in front of the class and lead a discussion about the two cartoons.
2. Pretend you are the artist who drew this cartoon. Write a brief letter to the artist of this lesson's cartoon 3. Explain why that artist should think about the ideas in your cartoon. Now pretend you are that other artist and write a second letter replying to your first one.

Lesson 2 — Legislative Branch

Cartoon 5



William Costello, Courtesy Lowell Sun

Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon shows an imaginary scene in which several of the nation's founders are arguing about the new constitution they are writing. In what year did the nation's founders actually meet to write the U.S. Constitution that we still live under today?
2. The man on the left in the cartoon is using words from the part of the Constitution describing the power of Congress to declare war. The man on the right is not using words from the Constitution, but, in a way, what he says is also a part of the Constitution—though presidents do not specifically have the power to declare war. Can you explain in what way or ways he is right in what he is saying about U.S. presidents?
3. The cartoon suggests that the Constitution is not clear about who can send U.S. soldiers into battle. Do you think this is so? Why or why not?
4. Do you think it would be better or worse for the nation if Congress alone had the power to send U.S. soldiers into battle? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activity

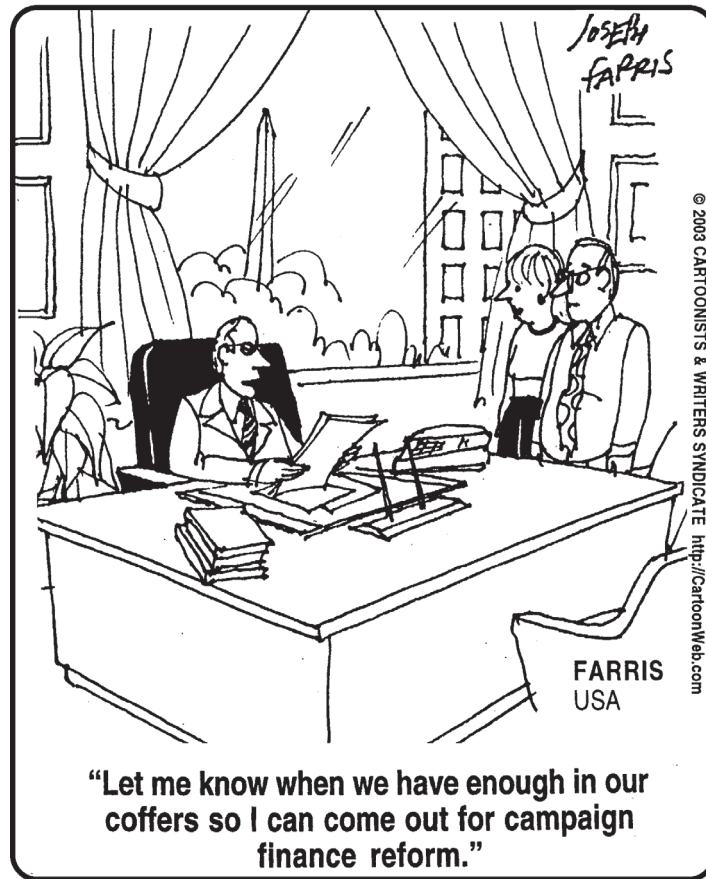
1. **Small-group activity:** Your entire class should divide into small groups. Each group's task will be to study one of the following conflicts in which U.S. soldiers have been involved:

- World War II (1941)
- The Korean War (1950)
- The Vietnam War (1960s)
- The Persian Gulf War (1991)
- The Iraq War (2003)

Do some research into the decision or decisions that led to the sending of U.S. soldiers into these conflicts. (The dates next to each conflict indicate when U.S. soldiers were first sent into the battle.) Specifically, find out what part the president played in these decisions and what part Congress played. Summarize your findings for the entire class and use them in a discussion about what the proper role of the president and Congress should be in making decisions to use military force.

Lesson 2 — Legislative Branch

Cartoon 6



Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon is about the campaign-finance reforms of 2002 and the role of money donations in elections, including congressional elections. What is meant by the term "campaign-finance reform"?
2. Campaign-finance laws limit how much each donor can give to a candidate. The 2002 law also bans most soft-money donations. What is "soft money"?
3. The law also bans special-interest groups from running certain so-called issue ads in the weeks before an election if the ads mention a candidate. What do you know about such ads? Opponents say this ban unfairly limits freedom of speech. Others say it only limits money used for ads, not speech itself. With which view do you agree more? Why?
4. This cartoon suggests that lawmakers who back campaign-finance reform do not really want it for themselves. How does it make that point? Do you think this is fair to most lawmakers? Do you think campaign finance reform is fair? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** Today, many Americans worry about the huge amounts of money it takes to run for election to Congress. They say lawmakers spend too much time raising this money from rich donors or powerful special-interest groups. They say these big donors unfairly influence the way lawmakers vote on many important issues. Others say it is good for lawmakers to listen to what various special-interest groups want. They say this is one way of finding out what matters most to various groups of voters. These critics also say the 2002 campaign-finance law actually helps incumbents and hurts challengers in many congressional elections. For this reason, some even call the law an "incumbent protection act." To debate this issue, find recent articles and editorial cartoons on campaign-finance reform. Look for news articles and cartoons that deal with the issue from many different points of view. Post these with your own comments in a bulletin-board display called "Campaign Finance Reform: Pro and Con."

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will learn more about the key powers and duties of the federal courts.
 2. Students will better understand how the judicial branch shares powers with the other branches of government.
-

Judicial Branch

Use the following information to help your students better understand the six editorial cartoons making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE CARTOONS*Cartoon 1*

The judicial branch of government consists of the U.S. Supreme Court and the other federal courts. Many of the nation's Founders viewed the judicial branch as the least important of the three branches of government. After all, the Supreme Court can pass no laws, and it depends on other parts of the government to see that its orders are carried out. Yet the Supreme Court *is* very powerful, and, in recent decades, its importance has grown in a number of ways. Part of its power comes from the independence of the justices who make it up. Supreme Court justices and other federal judges are appointed by the president, but they can hold their jobs for life. This means they never have to worry about what any other elected official thinks of their decisions, including the president who appointed them. This cartoon comments on that fact. It was published shortly after the court ruled against laws limiting the number of terms a legislator could be elected to office. Term limits became very popular in many states in the early 1990s. This cartoon seems to criticize the court for ignoring popular opinion on this issue. It also implies that the court might not ignore public opinion so easily if its members did not have life terms themselves.

Cartoon 2

Actually, the nation's founders *wanted* the Supreme court to be unaffected by public opinion. Why? The answer may have to do with the court's most important power, its power of judicial review. This is its power to declare federal laws, state laws, and acts of government officials unconstitutional, which means those laws or actions go against the Constitution and cannot be allowed. The court has altered the nation's history several times through its power of judicial review. This cartoon focuses on one such time, during the Great Depression of the 1930s. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs were an effort to end the hard times of the 1930s and get the country's economy growing again, but the court ruled some key New Deal programs unconstitutional. In doing so, the court's independence helped it to go against a very popular president in order to enforce its own understanding of what the Constitution allowed.

Cartoon 3

As it turned out, the Supreme Court in the late 1930s did change its views about the New Deal. First, Roosevelt threatened to add several new justices to the Court. He was unable to do this, but soon the court began ruling in favor of his programs anyway. This suggests that the Court does sometimes pay attention to public opinion, especially when

the public has strong feelings about an issue. That may be the point of this cartoon, which is about the emotional issue of abortion. In its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, the Supreme Court made abortion legal everywhere in the United States. Since then, pro-choice groups, those who favor the right to abortion, have spoken out in support of the court's decision. Pro-life groups, those against abortion, have spoken out just as strongly against *Roe v. Wade*. Meanwhile, the court has made several new decisions about abortion, allowing some restrictions on it but still keeping it legal. This cartoon shows the court carefully steering a course between the two sides in this debate, trying not to anger either side. Not everyone would agree, however, that the court has paid much attention to public opinion in its abortion decisions.

Cartoon 4

One important task of the court is to make decisions about the way our democratic government as a whole works. For example, it makes decisions defining the powers of the president, Congress, or state versus national governments. It also sometimes decides certain political matters, such as how legislative districts are to be drawn. This cartoon comments on one issue regarding such districts. In the 1990s, several states redrew the boundaries of certain congressional districts so that a majority of the voters in them would be African American. Those favoring such majority-black districts said they would help more African Americans get elected to Congress, but others said it was wrong to draw districts according to race. In recent years, the Supreme Court and other federal courts have been very critical of these majority-black districts.

Cartoon 5

Individual rights have been another big concern of the Supreme Court in recent decades. Many of its rulings have strengthened the rights of people accused of crimes. Other rulings have protected the individual's right to freedom of speech and press. A large number of rulings have had to do with religion. These rulings have caused especially heated arguments. In part, these conflicts happen because the First Amendment to the Constitution says two things about religion that sometimes seem to conflict. The First Amendment says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This means there can be no law setting up a government-approved religion, *and* that government cannot prevent people from practicing their own religions. The biggest arguments about putting both ideas into practice have to do with public places, especially public schools. This cartoon and the next take opposing views on whether to allow organized prayer in schools. In general, the court has not allowed such prayer. This cartoon makes fun of the court's strict rulings against allowing students to pray in class. It suggests that the court has carried its worries about an "establishment of religion" much too far. Many of those who agree say the schools should at least allow silent prayers, because these do not interfere with others who may have different beliefs.

Cartoon 6

This cartoon takes a very different view of the school-prayer issue. It suggests that it is the job of the parents, not the schools, to teach children religious principles. Those who agree often add that any effort by the schools to teach religion forces schools to choose some religious ideas over others. In any case, this cartoon and cartoon 5 should be discussed together in order to explore all sides of this difficult question.

Cartoon 1



Siers, the *Charlotte Observer*, NC

Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon shows a citizen asking another to sign a special petition. What is a petition?
2. This petition is a way for citizens to get a chance to vote on a term-limits plan. Voters in many states in recent years have voted in favor of term limits for members of Congress or for state legislators. In general, what changes would term limits make in the way legislators are chosen?
3. This term-limits proposal is not for legislators, but for Supreme Court justices. How are Supreme Court justices chosen now, and for how long are they allowed to serve?
4. The Supreme Court has ruled against term-limits proposals and refused to allow them to go into effect. What point about these rulings do you think this cartoon is trying to make? What more general point about the Supreme Court is it trying to make? Do you agree or disagree with the cartoon? Why?

Follow-up Activity

1. In May, 1995, the Supreme Court ruled against term limits for members of Congress. It said that the Constitution lists the qualifications for members of Congress and that these can be changed only by a constitutional amendment, not resolutions voted on in each state. This ruling came at a time when term limits were very popular in many states. Columnist David Broder said this about the ruling:

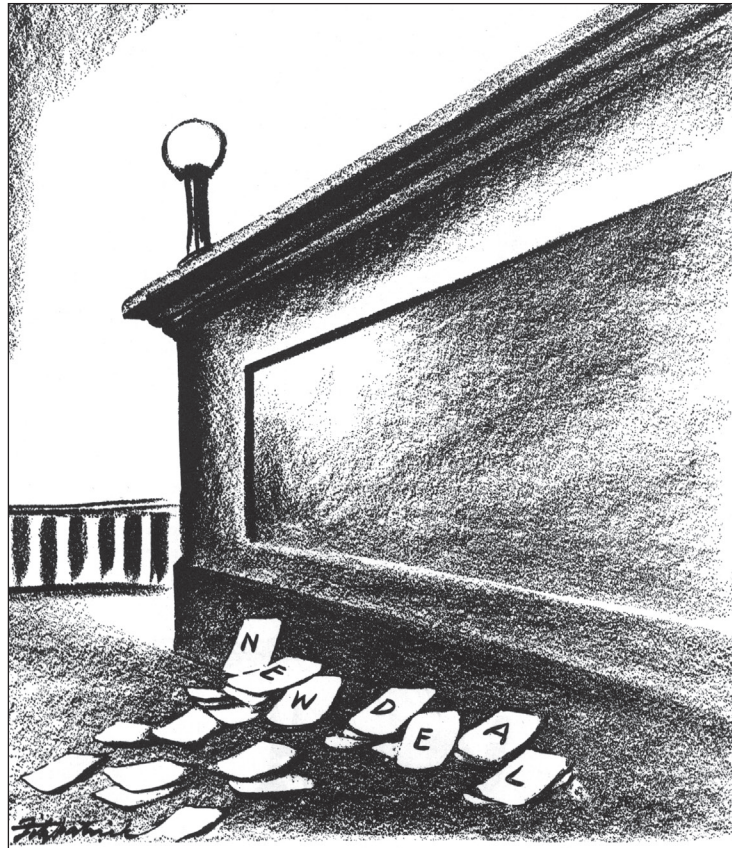
Thank God this is not a court that bows to the populist conceit that every untested idea that enjoys a momentary vogue should override the fundamental principles of the Constitution.

Write a brief essay answering these questions:

- What does Broder mean by “populist conceit,” and why is he glad the Court did not bow to it?
- What would Broder think about this cartoon?
- What would the artist who drew the cartoon say about the above words from Broder?

Lesson 3 — Judicial Branch

Cartoon 2



A SCATTERED DECK

Fitzpatrick in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon is about the Supreme Court and some decisions it made in 1935 and 1936. The decisions had to do with President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Why do you think Court decisions about the New Deal would have been so important?
2. Specifically, the court found that two key New Deal programs were unconstitutional. From this cartoon, and from what you know about the Supreme Court, can you guess what effect this ruling had on these two New Deal programs?
3. These decisions by the Supreme Court are an example of its power of judicial review. With this power, the court can decide whether a law does or does not agree with the U.S. Constitution. If the law does not agree—that is, if it is unconstitutional—it can no longer be enforced. Do you think this is a good power for the Supreme Court to have? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

1. The Supreme Court found two key New Deal laws unconstitutional—the National Industrial Recovery Act and the Agricultural Adjustment Act. Read more about one of the court rulings on these two laws. The cases are *Schechter Poultry Corporation v. United States* (1935) and *United States v. Butler* (1936). In class, briefly describe the case you chose. Then explain what Roosevelt meant when he said about these two rulings, “We have been relegated to the horse-and-buggy definition of interstate commerce.” Finally, explain why you agree or disagree with Roosevelt's view.
2. Congress does have a right to change the size of the Supreme Court if it wishes. Roosevelt wanted to do this in 1937 in order to get a friendlier court, but the public strongly opposed this idea. Congress also refused to do it. Was Roosevelt right to suggest this? What, if anything, would make it right for a president to ask Congress to change the size of the Supreme Court? As a class, debate this idea.

Cartoon 3



Dick Locher, © Tribune Media Services Inc. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted with permission.

Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon shows the Supreme Court justices steering a boat between two dangerous mines. The mines stand for the two sides in a very bitter debate that has been going on in this nation for years. Briefly, what is that debate about, and for which side in it does each of the mines stand?
2. The Supreme Court came to be at the center of arguments about abortion in 1973. That was when it made its ruling in the case of *Roe v. Wade*. Briefly describe what the court decided in that case.
3. Since 1973, the court has decided several other cases having to do with abortion. In the cartoon, the court is carefully steering between the two sides in the debate. This suggests that, in making abortion decisions, the court has been trying to please both sides at once. Do you think the court has done this, or do you think it has simply been following what it believes the Constitution says? Explain your answer.

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Do some research into the arguments by pro-choice and pro-life groups over Supreme Court decisions on abortion. Find at least one pro-choice article or pamphlet containing views on the Supreme Court and its abortion decisions. Now find one pro-life article or pamphlet that does the same. As a group, decide how each of these two sides would view this cartoon. Summarize these views and discuss them with the rest of the class in as fair and accurate a manner as possible.
2. Usually, not all the justices agree on any given Supreme Court decision. Learn more about at least one current justice who agrees with the *Roe v. Wade* abortion decision and one who does not. Read more about the views of each justice on this decision. Based on what you read, create a short dialogue between these two justices as if they were both in this boat steering their way between the two mines.

Lesson 3 — Judicial Branch

Cartoon 4



Jim Borgman. Reprinted with special permission of King Features Syndicate.

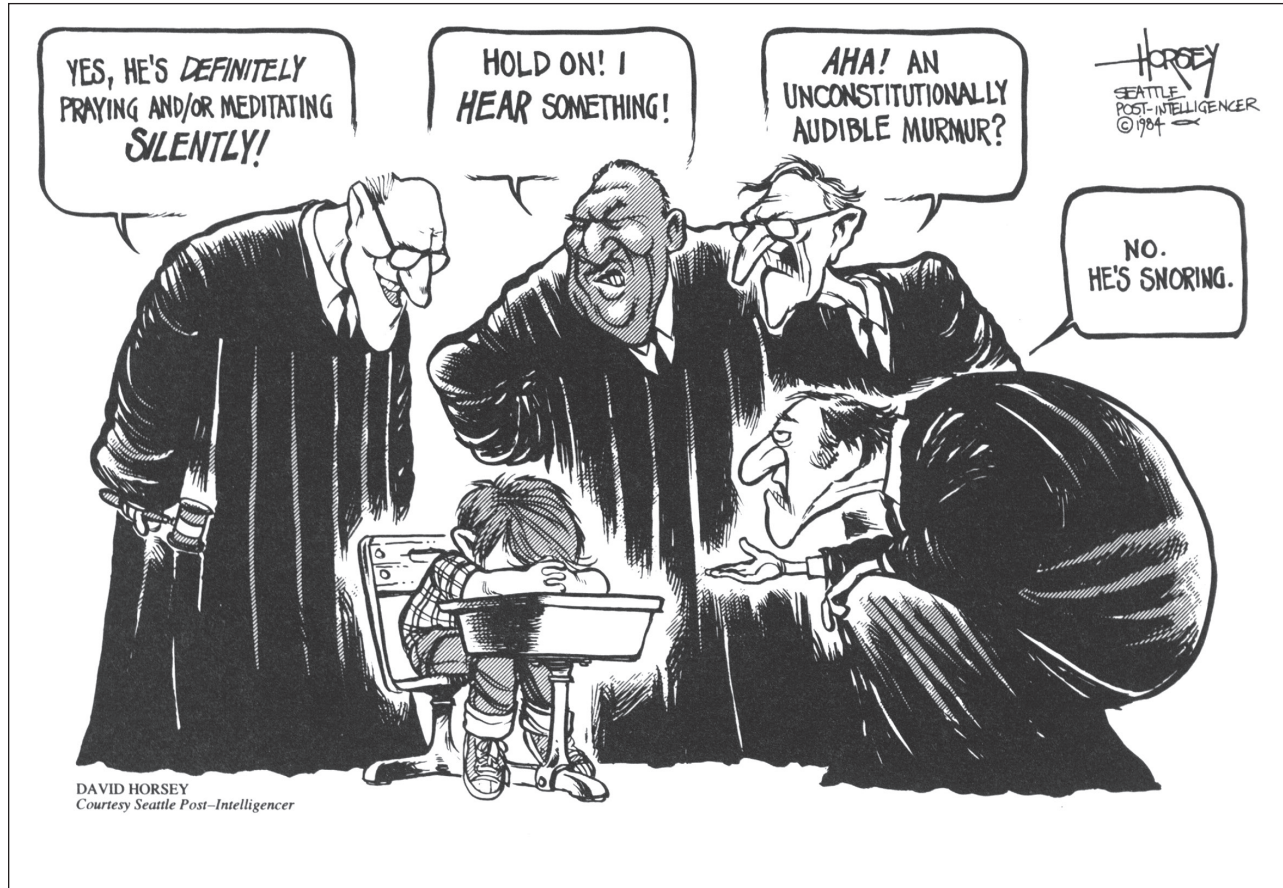
Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon shows an “artist” called Dr. Rorschach. Dr. Rorschach was a psychiatrist who created complicated inkblots in order to learn what patterns or objects people might see in them, but this inkblot is actually a congressional district. What is a congressional district?
2. Every so often, the boundaries of such districts are redrawn. This is called redistricting. What might be some reasons for redrawing a district’s boundaries?
3. The twisted shape you see here is meant to make fun of certain districts redrawn in recent years so as to be majority-black districts. What do you think majority-black districts are?
4. Why do some people favor majority-black districts? What point about such districts do you think this cartoon makes by showing the strange shape you see here? The Supreme Court has mainly not approved such districts when it has heard cases about them. Why do you think that is so? Do you approve of such districts? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

1. Arguments about majority-black congressional districts were in the news a good deal in 1995 and just after. Ask your librarian to help you locate articles on such districts. Find articles that show maps of some of the districts. Make copies of these maps and share them in class in a discussion about majority-black districts. Use ideas from the articles to summarize points for and against allowing such strangely shaped districts.
2. Many history textbooks show a famous cartoon of a district in Massachusetts in the early 1800s. The cartoon is labeled “The Gerry-mander.” Your librarian should be able to help you locate history books including a picture of this cartoon. Read more about it. Then write a brief essay comparing this cartoon with the one above. Describe how the issues behind each cartoon are or are not alike.

Cartoon 5



David Horsey, Courtesy Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Discussing the Cartoon

1. In this cartoon, some Supreme Court justices are hovering over a schoolchild. They are trying to see if the child is doing something. They are afraid he might be doing something they think is unconstitutional. What is it they fear he might be doing?
2. One of the justices hears “an unconstitutionally audible murmur.” This means he hears the child praying out loud. Do you agree that it would be unconstitutional for schools to let students pray out loud? Why or why not?
3. Another justice is angry because the child is praying silently. Do you think it would be wrong to allow children to do this in school? Why or why not?
4. What point about school prayer do you think this cartoon is trying to make? How does the cartoon make that point? What point is it making about the Supreme Court? How does it make that point? Do you agree with the point of view this cartoon expresses? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activity

1. The issue of school prayer is one of several religious issues that the Supreme Court has dealt with in recent years. All of them involve the following words from the First Amendment to the Constitution:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

Create an imaginary dialogue among the justices in this cartoon. First, have them discuss the phrase “establishment of religion” in the words from the First Amendment. Have them explain what this phrase has to do with their wanting to stop this child’s school from letting him pray. Then have the justices explain why they think stopping school prayer is *not* “prohibiting the free exercise” of religion, which the First Amendment also bans. Share some of the imaginary dialogues in a class discussion about this cartoon.

Cartoon 6



Jim Borgman. Reprinted with special permission of King Features Syndicate.

Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon shows a family complaining about federal court decisions against school prayer. The father first says the country's morals "have been on a down hill slide" since these decisions. What do you think he means? Do you think there is any truth to his statement? Why or why not?
2. The father then says that "this country was founded on religious principles." Do you think this is so? What are your reasons for this view?
3. The bottom two panels of the cartoon seem to make fun of the father for his views. In what way do they make fun of him? The father blames the schools for his child's lack of knowledge about religion. Who does the cartoon suggest is really to blame for this?
4. At one point, the father says his child "has the right to pray." Do you think his real concerns are about his child's rights? Do you think his child's rights *should* be his real concern? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

1. Compare this cartoon with this lesson's cartoon 5. Both are about school prayer, and both are also about Supreme Court decisions on school prayer. But are the cartoons actually about the same issue? Write an essay comparing the two cartoons. Describe the opinion each cartoon takes toward school prayer and the Supreme Court's school prayer decisions. Then either agree or disagree with the following statement: The artists who drew these cartoons are actually worried about two very different things. Finally, decide which cartoon you agree with most, and explain why.
2. Some people say the Supreme Court has done a good job in recent decades of strengthening all the rights protected by the first ten amendments to the Constitution (the Bill of Rights). Others say the court has expanded these rights far beyond what is good for the nation as a whole. Using these two cartoons, have a class discussion and debate about this big argument.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will learn more about several kinds of checks and balances in our federal system.
 2. Students will debate the relative advantages and disadvantages of this system of checks and balances.
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Checks and Balances

Use the following information to help your students better understand the six editorial cartoons making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE CARTOONS

(The U.S. Constitution gives each branch of the federal government several powers that enable it to check or limit the power of the other two branches. The cartoons in this lesson illustrate several of these checks and balances.)

Cartoon 1

This cartoon is about the Watergate scandal that finally forced President Richard Nixon to resign. The scandal came to center on secret tape recordings made in the White House. These came to light during Senate hearings on the 1972 burglary at the Democratic Party's headquarters in the Watergate hotel in Washington, DC. Soon, Judge John Sirica also asked for the tapes to see if Nixon had ever talked about the burglary. At first, the president refused to give up the tapes. Finally, in July 1974, the Supreme Court ordered him to turn them over. The tapes proved that Nixon had helped to cover up the truth about the burglary. Because of the independence of the the judicial and legislative branches, and Congress's impeachment powers, Nixon resigned.

Cartoon 2

The Supreme Court usually acts independently of the other two branches, but, these branches do have ways to check the court. One of the most effective checks is the part the other two branches play in choosing new Supreme Court justices. First, the president gets to nominate a new justice—that is, the president makes a choice known. Then the Senate must also approve the nominee. Before it does this, a small group of senators (the Senate Judiciary Committee) holds hearings and questions the nominee. This cartoon comments on the bitter Senate hearings some nominees have faced in recent years. It also makes clear that all three branches of the federal government check one another in this process.

Cartoon 3

Through its rulings on specific cases, the Supreme Court interprets the U.S. Constitution and explains why it does or does not allow specific laws and other government decisions. The court's word is final on this, except that the Constitution itself can be changed. Such a change, called an amendment, can be proposed by a two-thirds vote in both houses of Congress or by a convention called by two-thirds of the state legislatures. To pass the amendment, three-fourths of the state legislatures or of special state conventions must then vote for it. Clearly, it is not easy to pass new amendments. According to this cartoon, that is a good thing. The cartoon comments on calls for an amendment to ban the act of destroying the American flag. It suggests that such a ban would limit freedom of

speech and lead to other more serious limits on our rights. The cartoon also suggests that it would be wrong to clutter the Constitution with many unimportant new amendments.

Cartoon 4

As we saw in earlier lessons, the Congress and the president both have a say in decisions about the use of military force. Therefore, each of them can “check” the other when it comes to warfare. This cartoon is based on the fact that they can also check each other when it comes to making peace. The president and his advisers can make peace treaties and other kinds of treaties with foreign governments; however, for any treaty to become law, it must first win a two-thirds vote in the Senate. In 1919, after World War I, President Woodrow Wilson worked hard to win the Senate’s support for the Treaty of Versailles, which ended the war and set up a League of Nations. But Americans seemed to want to turn away from the problems of the world. In 1920, the Senate refused to ratify, or agree to, the treaty. This cartoon accuses the isolationists in the Senate of betraying the president and putting future peace in jeopardy.

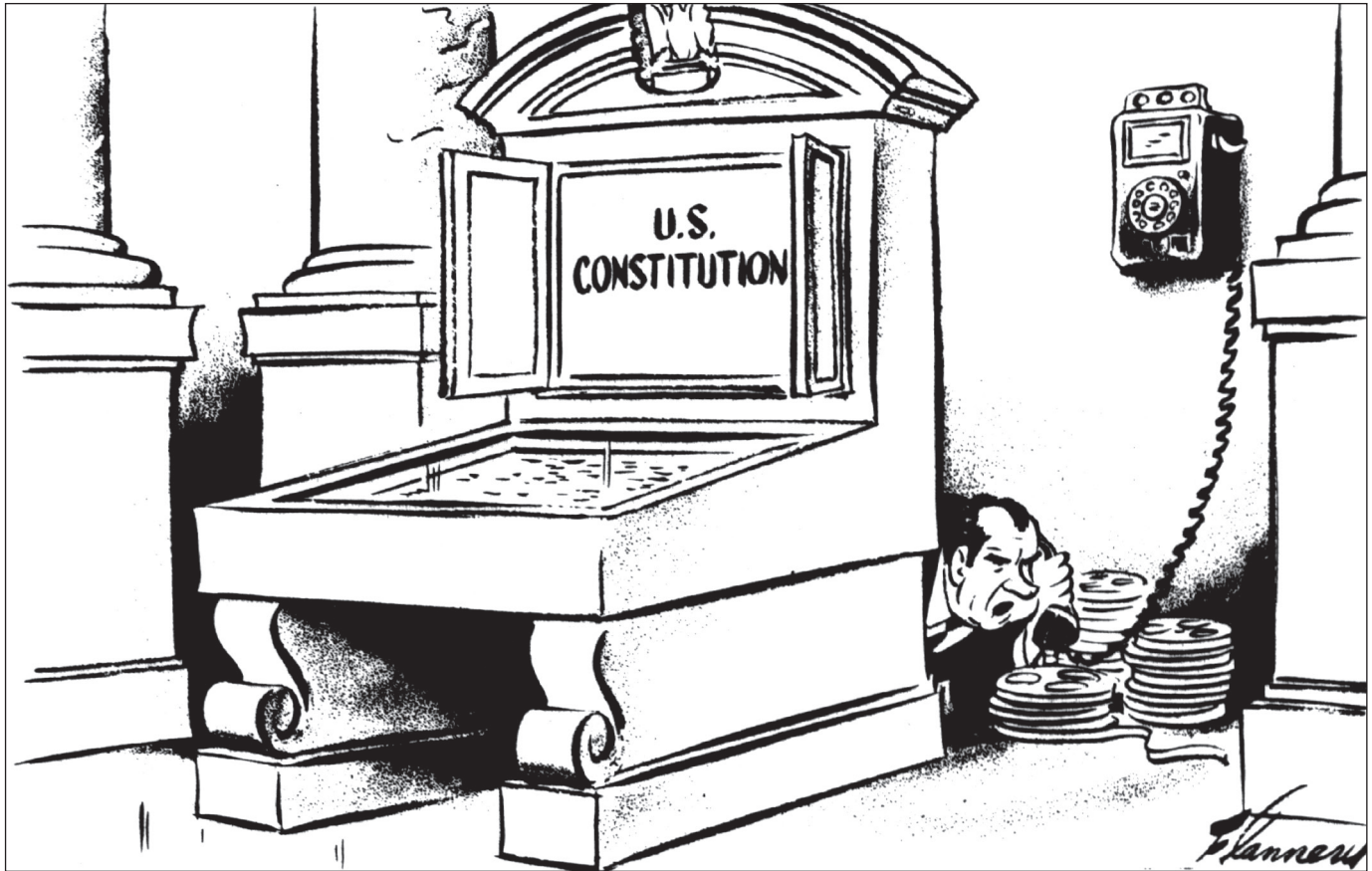
Cartoon 5

In the 2000 presidential election between Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore, the Democrats challenged the official vote in Florida and called for hand recounts in four counties where confusing ballots had been used. This led to a crisis, because Florida’s vote would decide who had enough electoral votes to win. Several court cases finally led the Florida State Supreme Court to call for hand recounts of so-called undervotes in all counties. (Undervotes were ballots in which no clearly marked choice for president could be seen.) Meanwhile, the Florida state legislature moved to name its own slate of electors in time to meet a December 12 deadline. In the end, the U.S. Supreme Court overruled the Florida court. In a 7–2 vote, it said the Florida court’s recount plan violated the U.S. Constitution’s guarantee of “equal protection” because the plan had no uniform standard for evaluating the ballots. By a 5–4 vote, it also said there was no time left to come up with a new recount plan. George W. Bush, who had won the earlier official state recount, thus became president. This battle pitted the U.S. Supreme Court against the Florida State Supreme Court. In addition, the Florida legislature’s action meant it would also clash with the Florida State Supreme Court. A variety of checks and balances thus decided the outcome of this presidential-election crisis.

Cartoon 6

This cartoon comments critically on the 2002 campaign-finance law. That law banned “soft-money” donations to political parties. These were donations meant to benefit the parties in general, not any specific candidate. “Hard” money is money given directly to candidates to help them in their campaigns. It already was strictly limited well before 2002. The new law also banned various special-interest groups from running certain kinds of so-called issue ads in the weeks before an election if the ads mentioned a specific candidate. Many critics say this ban unfairly limits free-speech rights. They hoped the Supreme Court would agree; however, in late 2003, the court upheld this part of the law as well as its soft-money ban and its other provisions. In other words, the court upheld a law passed by Congress and signed by the president. Yet in doing this, it still exercised a “check” on these branches—it had the final say on whether the law was constitutional.

Cartoon 1



“And I’m Standing Behind My Constitutional Rights too, Your Honor.”

Tom Flannery, Courtesy *Baltimore Sun*

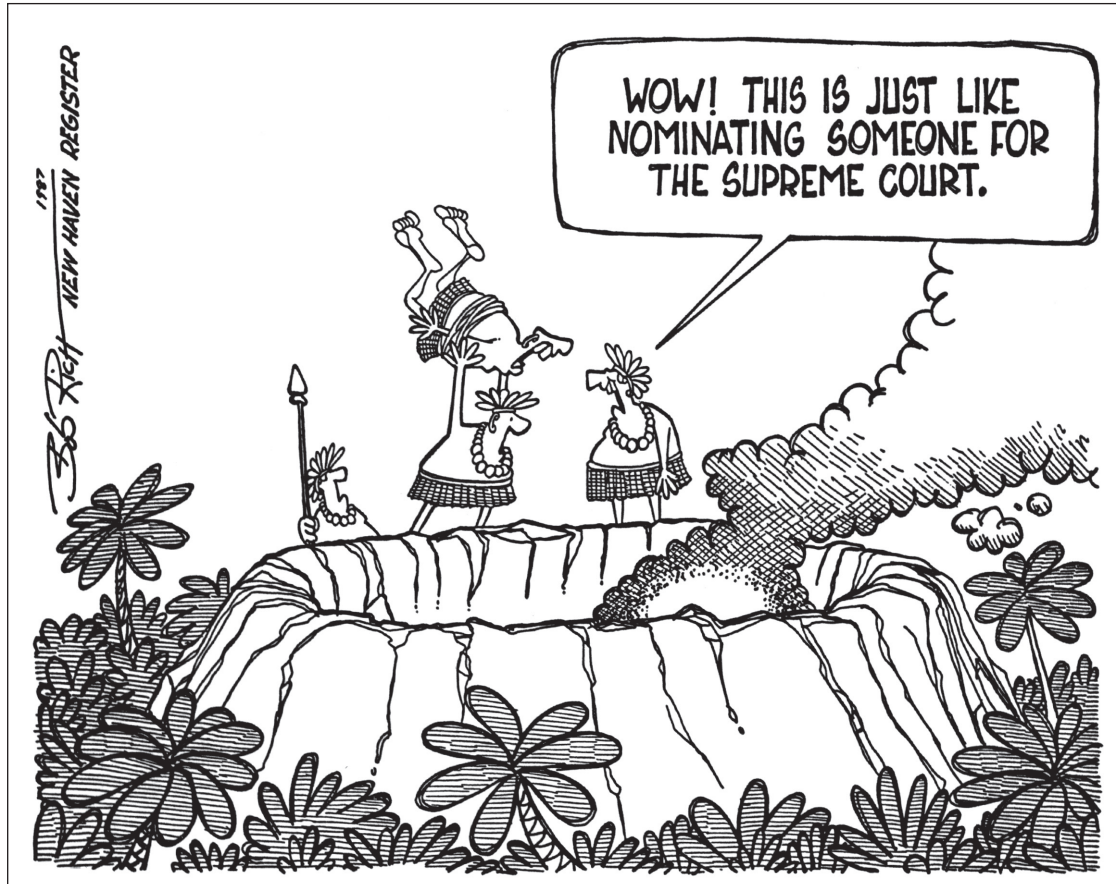
Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon shows a former U.S. president hiding behind a display of the U.S. Constitution. Can you name this president and his dates in office?
2. Richard Nixon was the only president to resign from that office. He did so because of a scandal known as Watergate. Explain briefly what you know about that scandal.
3. The cartoon shows Nixon talking to a federal judge. At the time, the judge was demanding that Nixon give him some tape recordings. Based on what you know about Watergate, can you explain why Nixon might not have wanted to do this?
4. Nixon at first said that, as president, he did not have to obey the judge. What did the Supreme Court finally decide about this claim by President Nixon? What point do you think this cartoon makes about Nixon’s claim that the Constitution gave him the right not to hand over the tapes? Do you agree with the point? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

1. This cartoon illustrates the way the judicial branch can check the power of the president, but the Watergate scandal proved that Congress also has ways of checking an abuse of power by a U.S. president. Read more about the way the Watergate scandal unfolded between June 17, 1972, and August 9, 1974, when Richard Nixon finally resigned. Based on your reading, list all of the ways that both Congress and the federal courts acted to check executive-branch power throughout the course of the scandal. Sum up your findings in a brief report to the class.
2. Using its impeachment powers, Congress was once nearly able to force one other president, Andrew Johnson, from office. Read more about Johnson’s impeachment and trial in 1868. Pretend you are a newspaper editor in 1868 just after Johnson’s trial in the Senate. Write an editorial explaining why you think the impeachment process in that case did or did not work as well as it should have.

Cartoon 2



Bob Rich, Courtesy *New Haven Register*

Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon shows some people in a jungle sacrificing a man by throwing him into a volcano, but the cartoon is actually about the way we nominate someone for the Supreme Court. What does it mean to nominate someone, and what individual first nominates each new Supreme Court justice?
2. Along with the president, one part of Congress also plays a part in choosing Supreme Court justices. Can you explain?
3. In recent years, Supreme Court nominees have often had a very hard time getting approved. What part of the nominating process has been the hardest for them?
4. What point about the choosing of a Supreme Court justice do you think this cartoon is making? Why do you think the arguments about Supreme Court nominees have been so bitter in recent years?

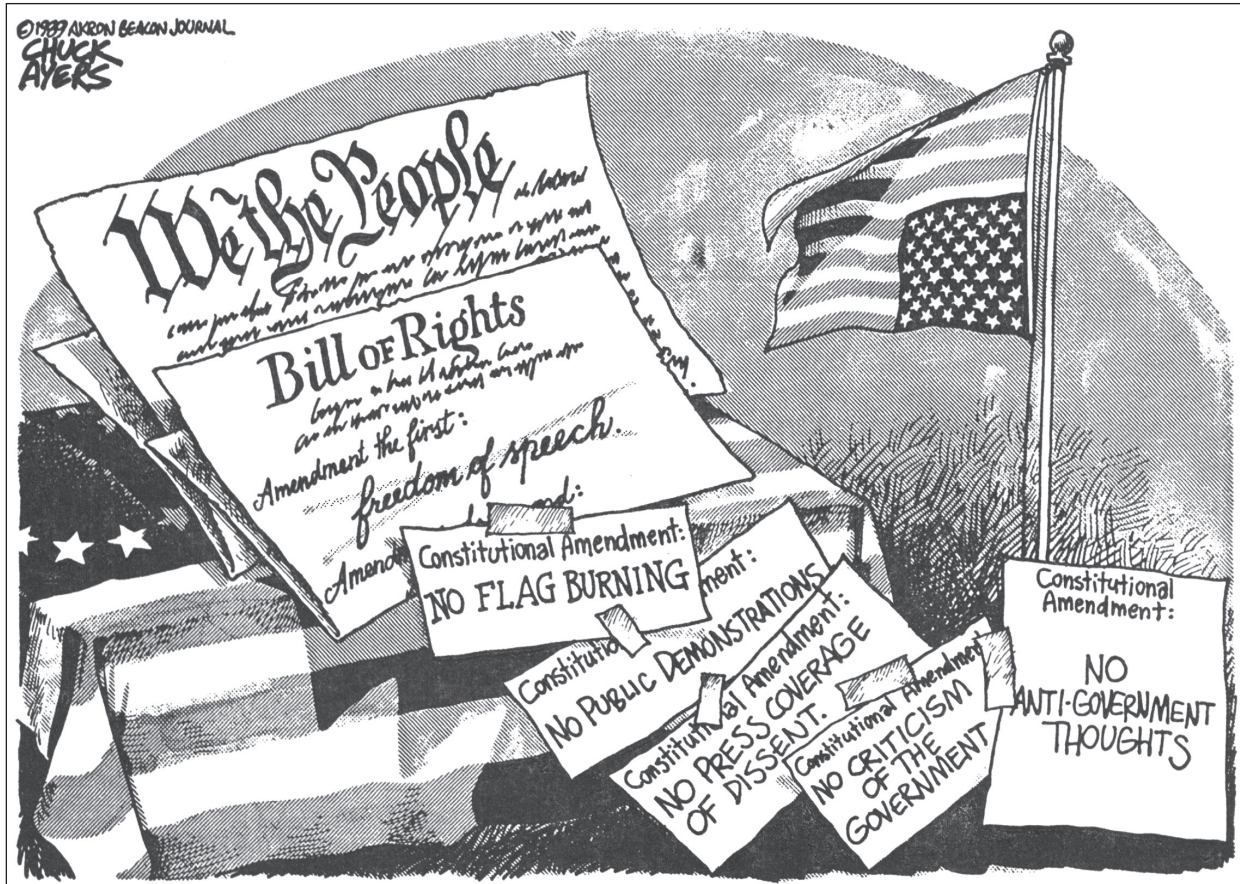
Follow-up Activity

1. Read more about the hearings held for one of the following Supreme Court nominees:

- Clarence Thomas
- David Souter
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg
- Neil Gorsuch

In a brief essay, summarize the nomination process for the nominee you have chosen to study. Describe the hearings for the nominee and the debates about the nomination in the Senate itself. Also describe the press coverage of the process and other factors that seem important. Focus your essay on this cartoon. That is, explain how all the key aspects of the nomination process in this one case did or did not fit with the view of the process as shown in the cartoon.

Cartoon 3



Chuck Ayers, Courtesy Akron Beacon Journal

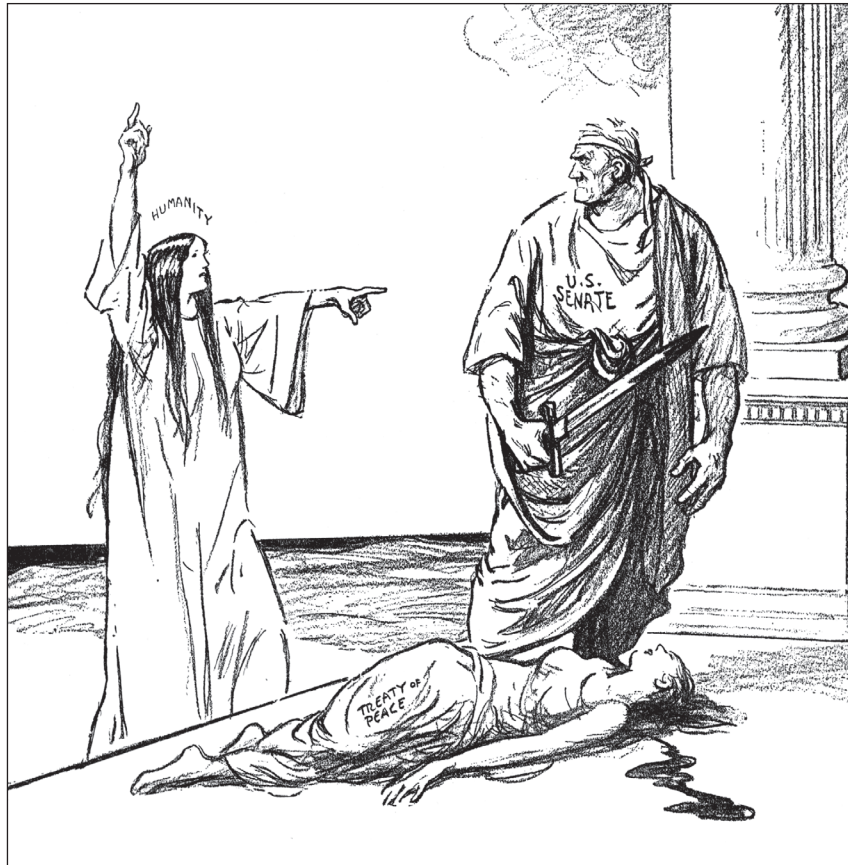
Discussing the Cartoon

1. The top two papers shown in this cartoon are actually parts of the same important document. What is that document, and what part of it is usually referred to as the Bill of Rights?
2. In the cartoon, several other pieces of paper are attached to the Constitution and Bill of Rights. These are proposed amendments to the Constitution, but only one of them has actually been suggested in recent years. Which one?
3. The Supreme Court has said that laws against destroying the U.S. flag go against one part of the Bill of Rights. From the cartoon, can you guess which part?
4. Because of the court's decision, many people have favored an amendment to outlaw destruction of the flag. Why would this be a way to get around the Supreme Court's decision?
5. What fears does the artist who drew this cartoon have about such an amendment? Do you share his fears? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** In this cartoon, a number of imaginary amendments have been attached to the one on flag burning. In recent years, many people have actually proposed an amendment to ban flag desecration (purposefully destroying or damaging the flag to make a point or show disrespect). Several other amendments have also actually been proposed in recent years, and these have often made headlines. They could have been listed here instead of the imaginary ones you see. Learn more about such actually proposed amendments. Alter the cartoon to list some of them. Then explain these amendments to the class, debate them, and discuss how your substituting of them in the cartoon does or does not change its meaning in any way.

Cartoon 4



Rollin Kirby, *The World*

THE ACCUSER

Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon is about a famous peace treaty with which the United States never agreed. The part of the treaty that caused the largest arguments was the part setting up a so-called League of Nations. About what war was this peace treaty, and in what year did that war end?
2. The U.S. president at the time was a strong supporter of this peace treaty. Can you name him?
3. The cartoon shows the Senate as a murderer who has just killed this peace treaty. Explain why the figure is labeled “U.S. Senate” and not “U.S. Congress.”
4. In this cartoon, a figure labeled “Humanity” is pointing at the Senate in anger and blame for the crime that has been committed. Why do you suppose the artist who drew the cartoon chose to label this figure “Humanity” and not “the American people” or “the United States”? Do you agree or disagree with the artist’s view of what the Senate did? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

1. Using your library, find one book or article describing the fight between Woodrow Wilson and the Republican leaders in the Senate over the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. The Treaty of Versailles ended World War I, and it is the peace treaty shown in the above cartoon as a murdered woman. In your reading, pay attention to the efforts the president made in support of the treaty and the reasons so many senators opposed it. Now write a brief essay on this fight over the treaty. In the essay, take a stand for or against the point of view expressed in the above cartoon. How fair do you think the cartoon is to the Senate? Why?
2. The cartoon shows the Senate as a Roman assassin. Both the peace treaty and humanity are shown as women. Why do you think the artist chose these particular symbols? How do these symbols help the cartoon to make its point forcefully? Do the symbols make the issue of the treaty clearer and easier to understand? Why or why not?

Lesson 4 — Checks and Balances

Cartoon 5



Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon is about the 2000 Florida election crisis. This cartoon really only focuses on the way that crisis began, on election day, November 8, 2000. Can you explain?
2. The problems with ballots led Al Gore to call for hand recounts in four largely Democratic counties. George W. Bush opposed this. Why do you think each candidate took the stand he did on the idea of a hand recount of these ballots?
3. The crisis in Florida lasted about a month. It led to the Florida State Supreme Court's ruling ordering the state to recount so-called undervotes in all counties. What exactly were these undervotes?
4. The crisis ended when the U.S. Supreme Court overruled the Florida Supreme Court. In other words, this was a clash between the federal judicial branch and a state court. What did the U.S. Supreme Court decide and why? Do you think it decided the case correctly? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** This cartoon touches on only one aspect of the 2000 Florida election crisis. As a group, look through a large selection of cartoons on the crisis. You can find twenty-five pages of such cartoons in *Best Editorial Cartoons of the Year* (Gretina, LA: Pelican, 2001), 15–40. Select approximately ten cartoons. Try to find cartoons that deal with all of the key aspects of the crisis—such as the ballot problems, the nature of the hand recounts that did occur, the positions taken by each side in various local and state courts and before the Supreme Court, the concurring and dissenting views on the case from various Supreme Court Justices, and so on. Each group member should write brief paragraphs explaining one or two of the cartoons you select. Post copies of the cartoons and your explanations of them on the bulletin board. You can call your display “Florida 2000: Did the Checks and Balances Work?”

Lesson 4 — Checks and Balances

Cartoon 6



Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon is about the 2002 campaign-finance law. To understand the cartoon, you need to understand how soft-money and hard-money donations differ. Can you explain the difference?
2. The campaign-finance law of 2002 included many rules about political donations. Notice the phrase “the corrupting influence” on each bag here. This phrase should help clarify why many people felt the law was needed. What do you think the phrase means?
3. The law bans many forms of soft money, but according to this cartoon, the law does not go far enough. Can you explain? Do you agree or disagree with the cartoon’s point about this? Why?
4. Like any law, the 2002 campaign-finance law was passed by Congress and signed by the president. Yet in the cartoon, it is the Supreme Court that has ordered the parties to switch from soft to hard money. Why is the Supreme Court shown as the cause of this change?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** The campaign-finance law of 2002 banned various special-interest groups from running certain kinds of so-called issue ads in the weeks before an election if the ads mentioned a specific candidate. Several groups that usually disagreed had worked together to oppose this ban. Two such groups were the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the National Rifle Association (NRA). Find out why each group opposed the issue ad ban. Find out also why the Supreme Court upheld the ban. As a group, organize a debate in class on this topic, with half your group taking the ACLU and NRA position and the other half defending the Supreme Court’s majority opinion.
2. Of the six cartoons making up this lesson, choose the one that you think best gets across the idea of checks and balances. In a class discussion about the entire lesson, defend your choice. As a class, vote to see which cartoon was seen as most helpful in understanding the idea of checks and balances.

Answers to Factual Questions

(Answers provided only
to questions requiring a
single correct answer)

Lesson 1

- Cartoon 1** Question 1: Grover Cleveland
- Cartoon 2** Question 1: Uncle Sam
Question 2: Calvin Coolidge
- Cartoon 3** Question 1: Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- Cartoon 4** Question 1: Harry Truman
- Cartoon 5** Question 1: Ronald Reagan, Republican
Question 3: The elephant is a symbol for the Republican Party; in the 1980 elections, Republicans won control of the Senate.
- Cartoon 6** Question 1: George W. Bush, running for reelection as president
Question 2: Not enough jobs and the 2003 war in Iraq
Question 3: The numbers stand for September 11, 2001, the day of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, DC.

Lesson 2

- Cartoon 1** Question 1: "GOP" stands for "Grand Old Party," another name for the Republican Party.
Question 2: The Republicans won majorities in both House and Senate.
Question 3: Budget
- Cartoon 5** Question 1: 1787
- Cartoon 6** Question 1: Laws limiting how candidates and parties raise and spend money for elections
Question 2: Donations meant to benefit the parties in general, not any specific candidate

Lesson 3

- Cartoon 1** Question 1: A list of citizens seeking a political or legal change of some sort
Question 2: They limit the number of terms lawmakers may run for office
Question 3: They are nominated by the president with the approval of the Senate. They can serve for life.
- Cartoon 3** Question 1: Abortion; pro-choice people favor abortion rights, pro-life people oppose abortion
Question 2: That abortion was, with some limitations, a constitutionally protected right
- Cartoon 4** Question 1: The area represented by a single lawmaker
Question 3: A district with an African American voting majority
- Cartoon 5** Question 1: Praying in school

Lesson 4

- Cartoon 1*** Question 1: Richard Nixon, 1969–1974
Question 4: The court ordered Nixon to turn over the tapes.
- Cartoon 2*** Question 1: To nominate means to make a choice; the president nominates each new justice.
Question 2: The Senate must approve the president's choices.
Question 3: Senate Judiciary Committee hearings
- Cartoon 3*** Question 1: The U.S. Constitution; the Bill of Rights is its first ten amendments.
Question 2: The one labeled “no flag burning”
Question 3: The First Amendment
Question 4: The court cannot overrule parts of the Constitution itself.
- Cartoon 4*** Question 1: World War I; 1918
Question 2: Woodrow Wilson
Question 3: The Senate, not Congress, must approve all treaties by a two-thirds vote.
- Cartoon 5*** Question 1: Confusing ballots led to claims that some people's votes had not been properly recorded.
Question 3: Ballots on which no choice for president could be clearly detected
Question 4: It ruled that the proposed hand recounts would use no single clear standard and would therefore violate the equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution.
- Cartoon 6*** Question 1: Soft-money donations are mainly those meant to benefit the parties, not any specific candidate; hard-money donations mainly help specific candidates in specific election campaigns.
Question 4: For the law to go into effect, the court had to rule on suits challenging its constitutionality.

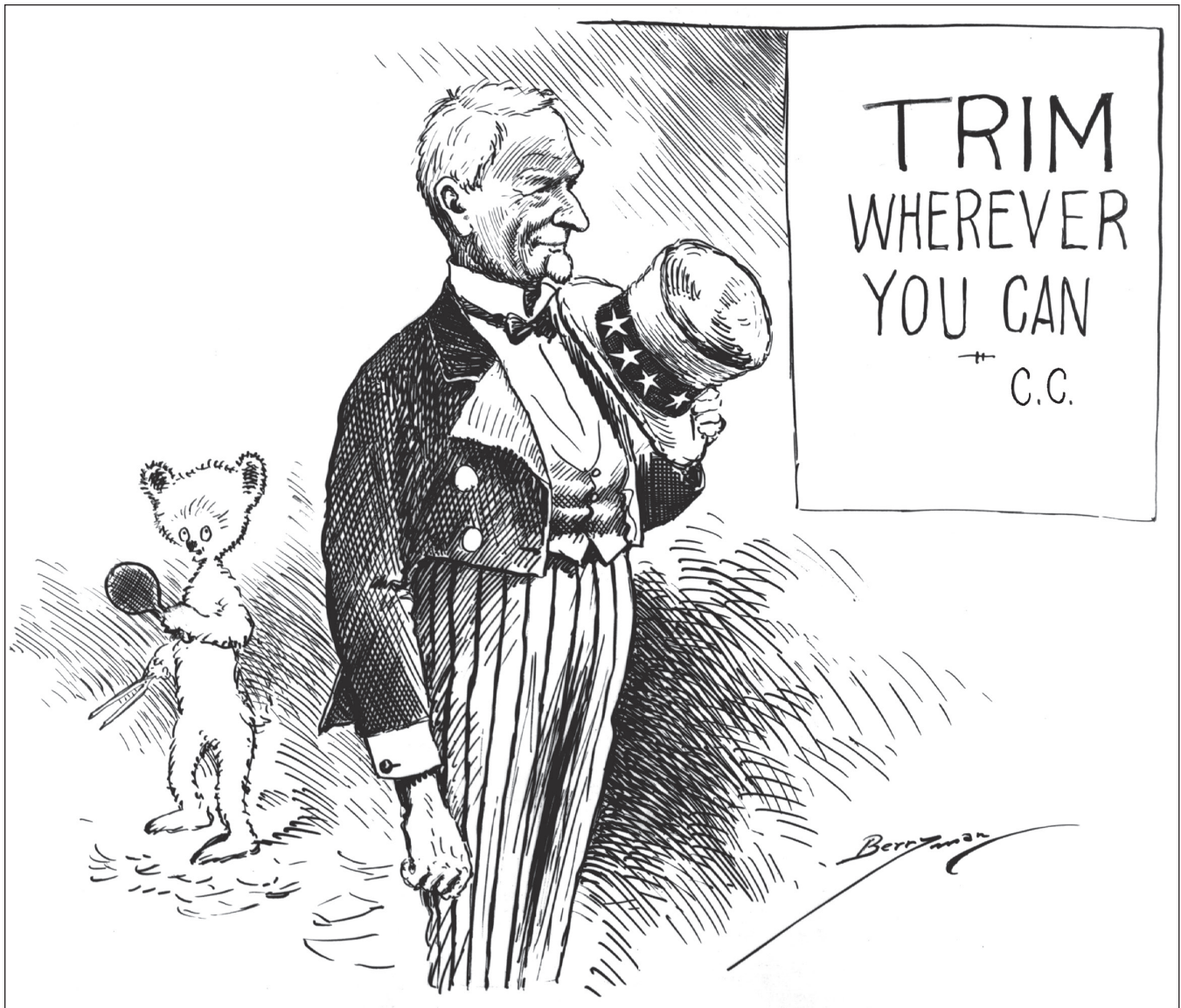
Appendix

Executive Branch Cartoon 1



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-10344

Executive Branch Cartoon 2



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-12404



43

Executive Branch
Cartoon 4



STRENGTH TO YOUR ARM, MR. PRESIDENT — APRIL 15, 1945

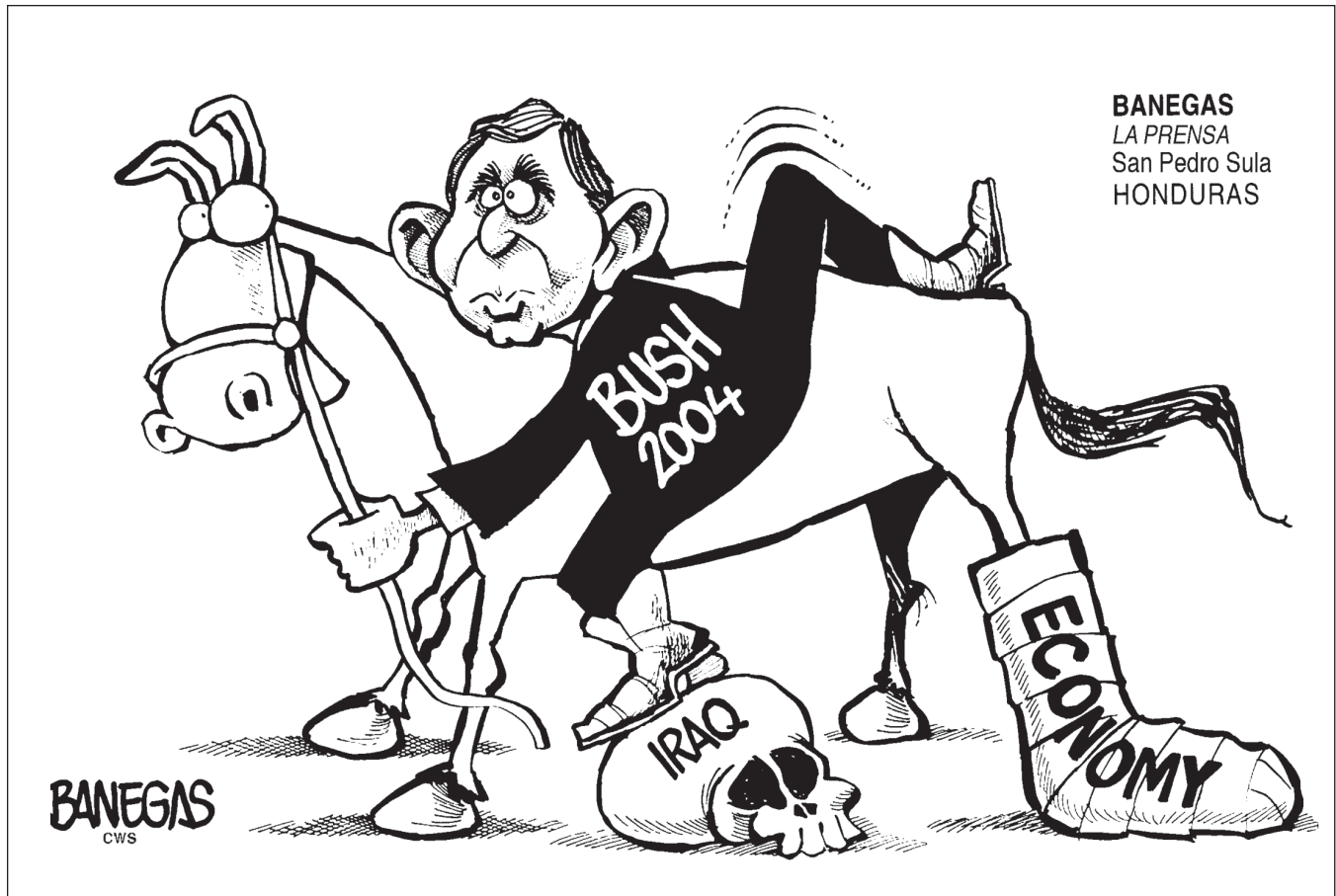
Fitzpatrick in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

Executive Branch Cartoon 5



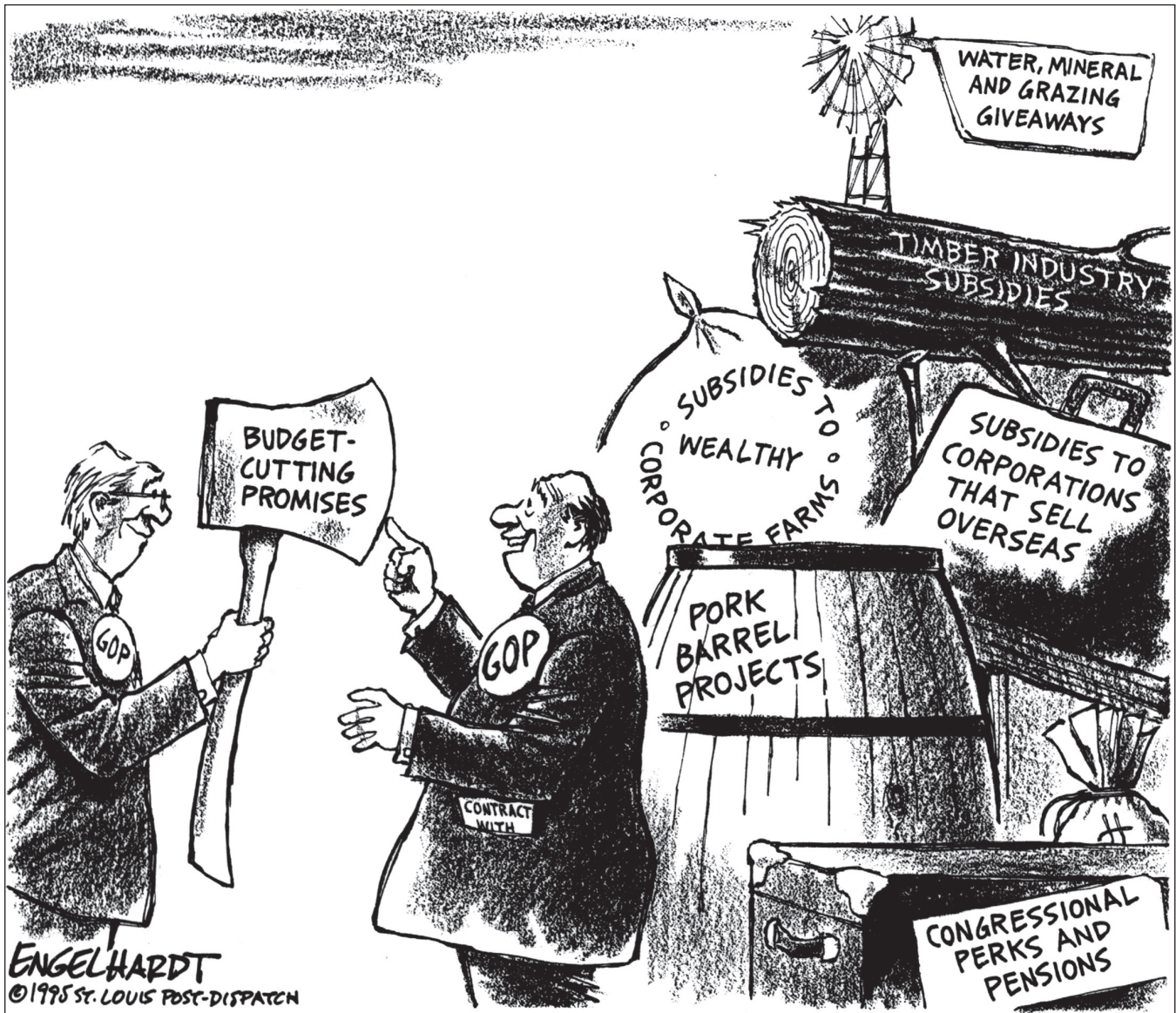
Karl Hubenthal, Hearst Newspapers

Executive Branch
Cartoon 6



Cartoonists and Writers Syndicate

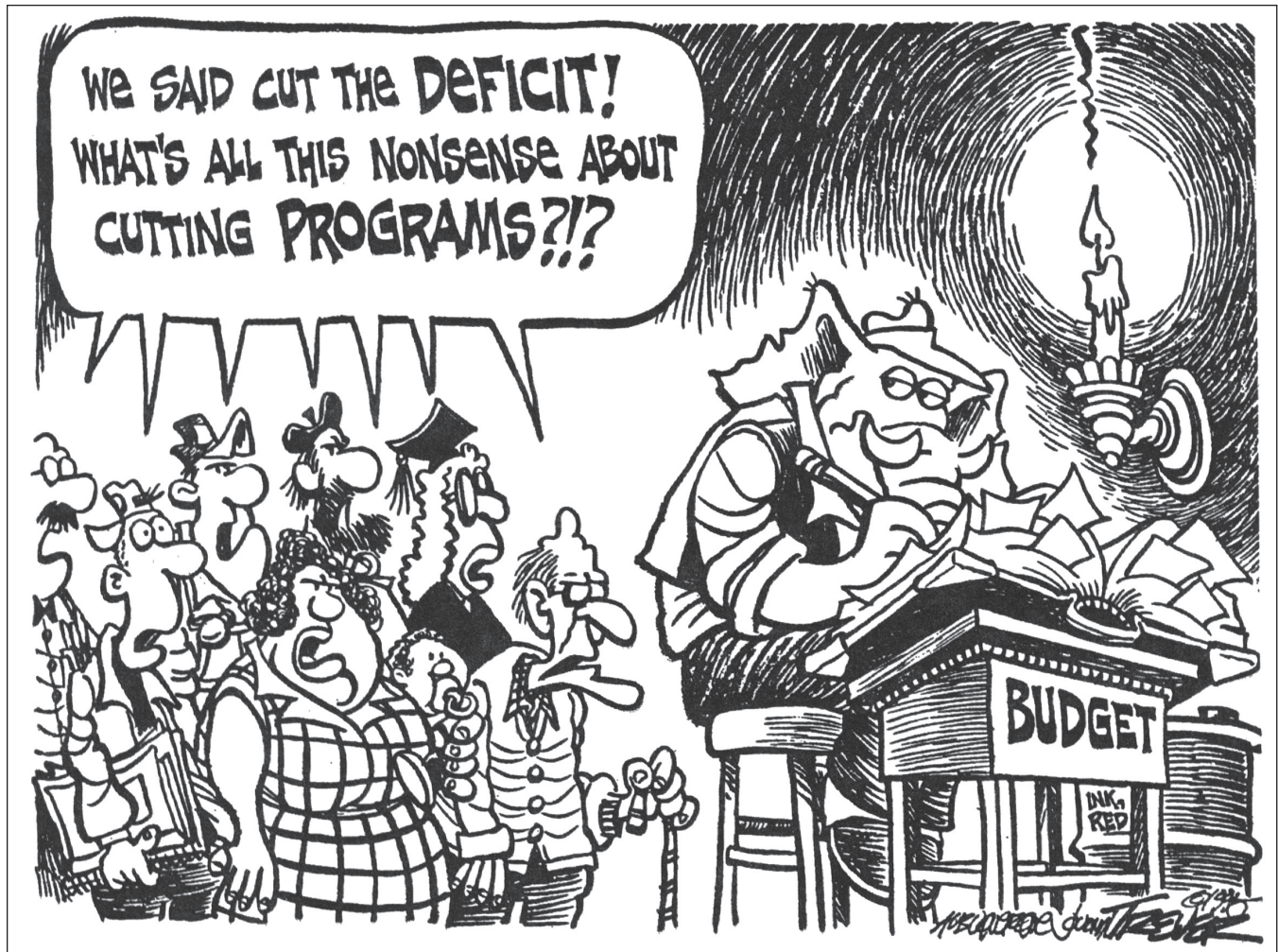
Legislative Branch Cartoon 1



**‘Oooh, That’s Sharp — Let’s Try It On Some Poor Kids,
Old Folks And Elitist Cultural Snobs First’**

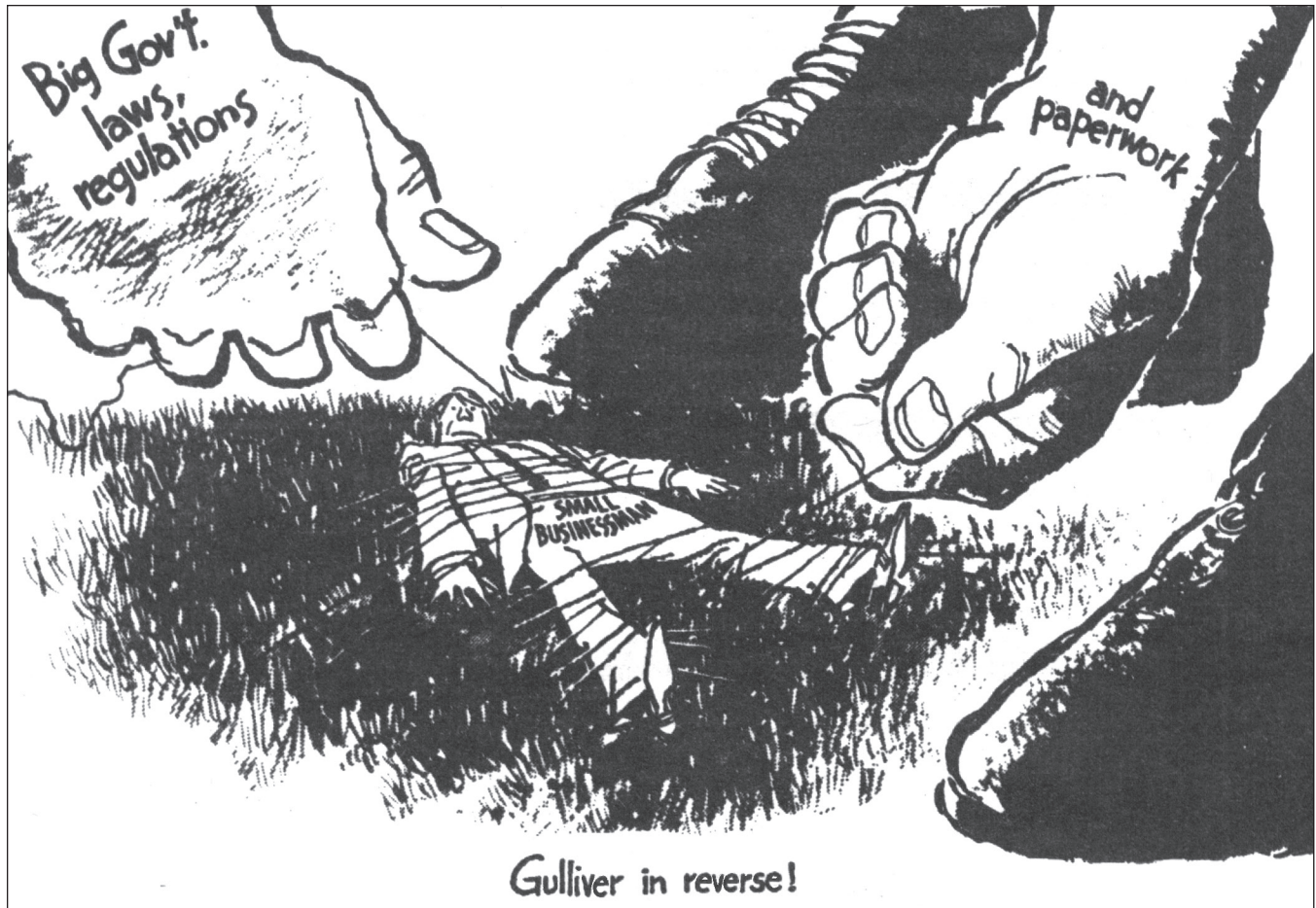
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Legislative Branch Cartoon 2



John Trever, Courtesy *Albuquerque Journal*

Legislative Branch Cartoon 3



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Legislative Branch Cartoon 4



Signe Wilkinson, Cartoonists and Writers Syndicate

Legislative Branch Cartoon 5



William Costello, Courtesy Lowell Sun

Legislative Branch
Cartoon 6



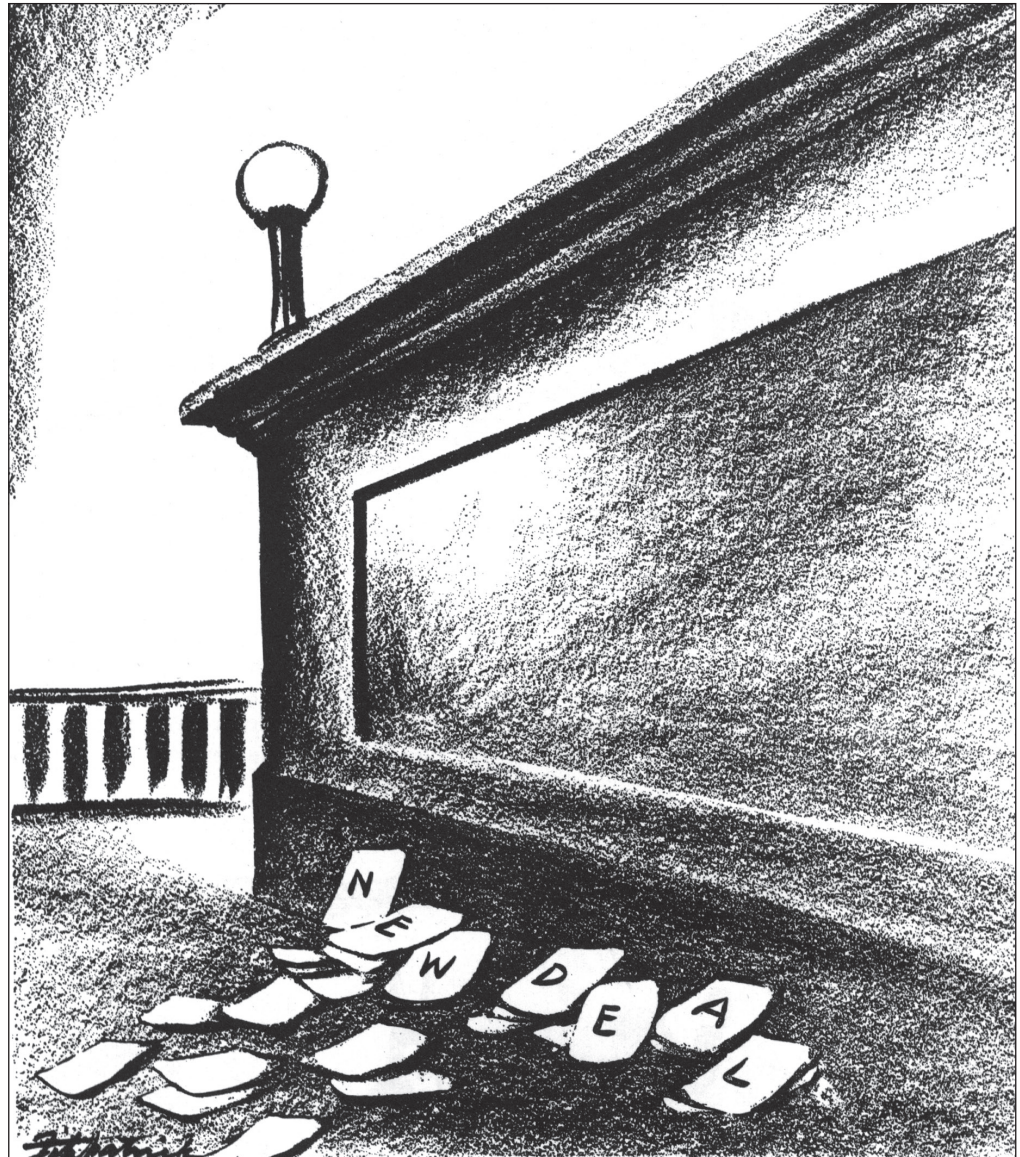
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Judicial Branch Cartoon 1



Siers, the *Charlotte Observer*, NC

Judicial Branch Cartoon 2

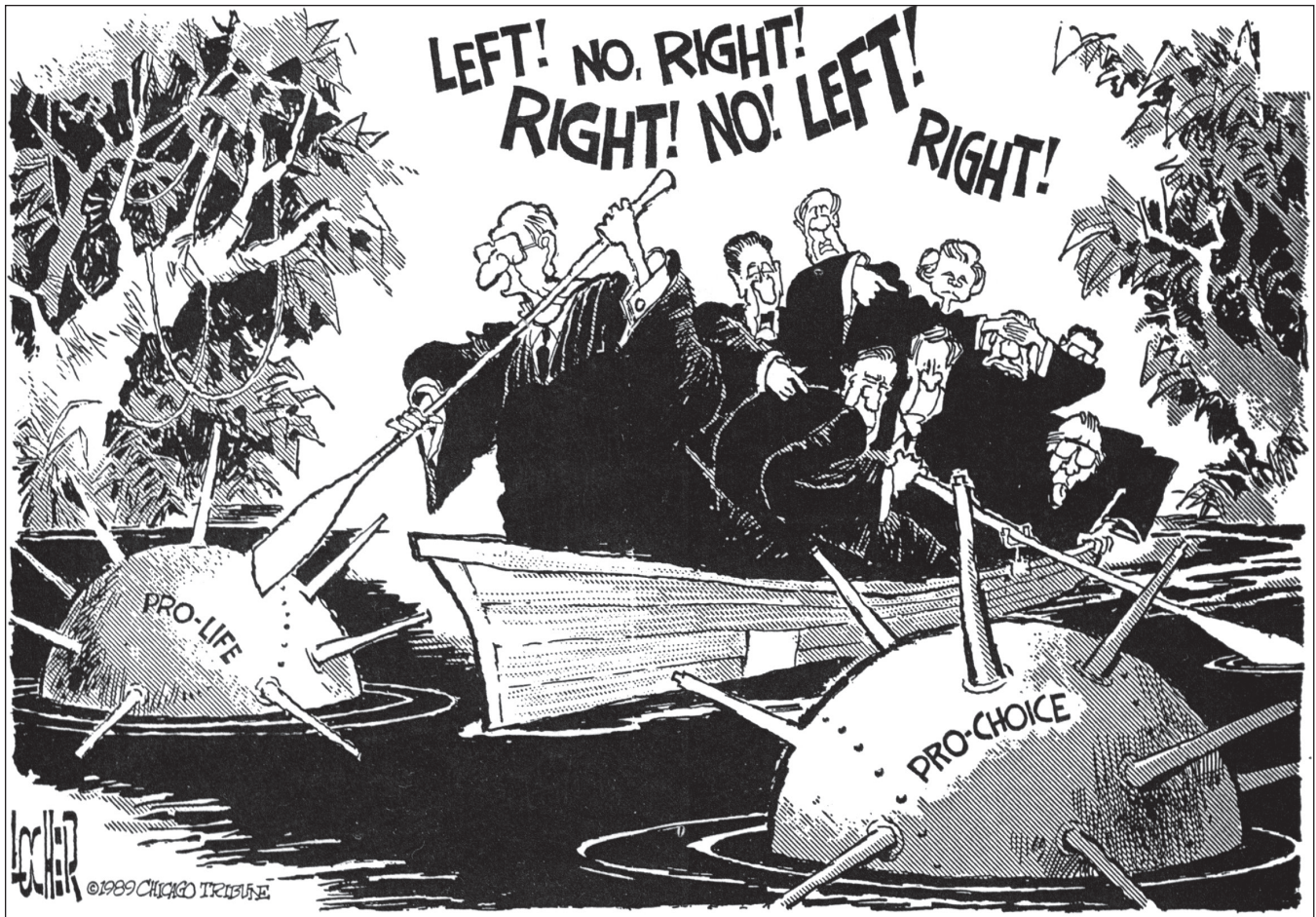


A SCATTERED DECK

Fitzpatrick in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

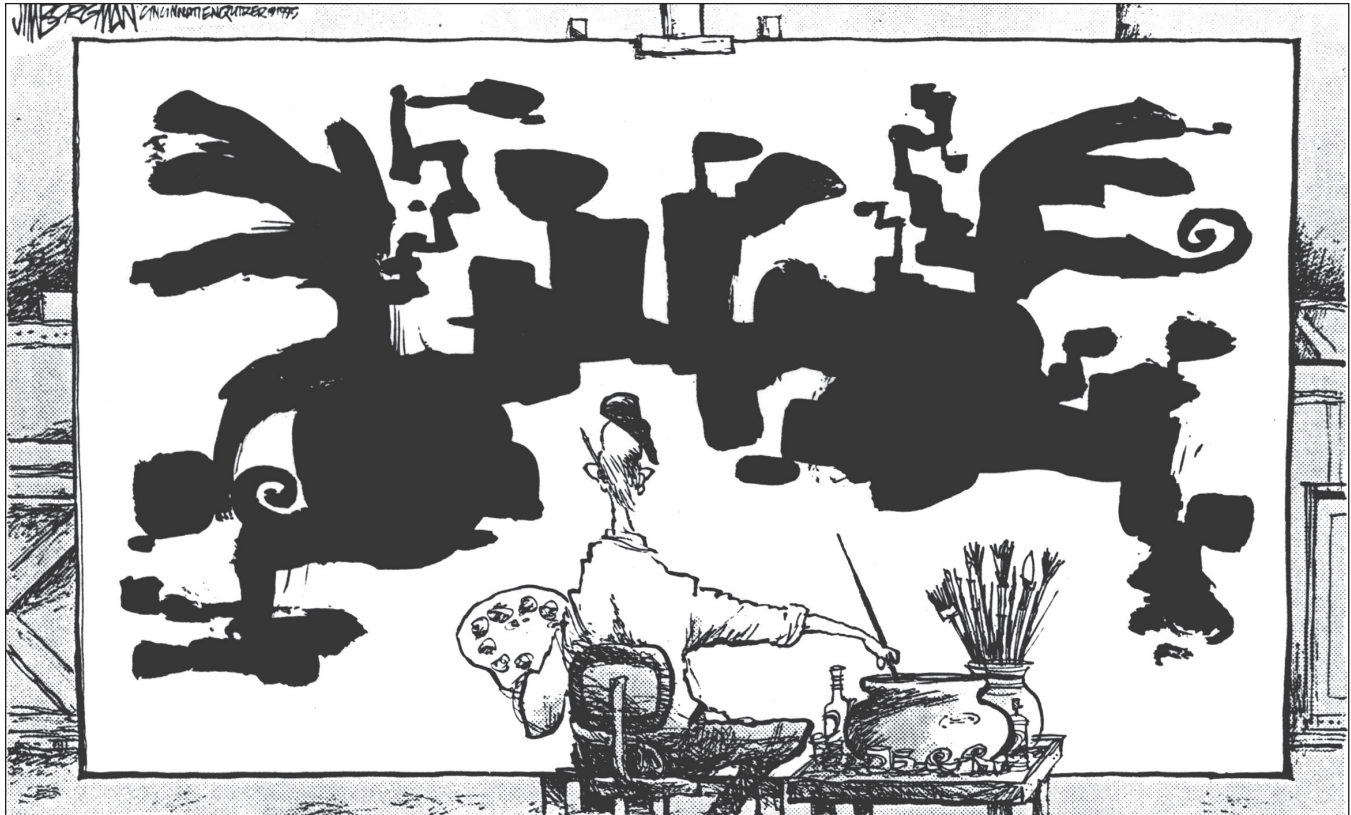
Judicial Branch

Cartoon 3



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Judicial Branch Cartoon 4



**IN HIS LATER YEARS DR. RORSCHACH DABBLED IN
CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING.**

Jim Borgman. Reprinted with special permission of King Features Syndicate.

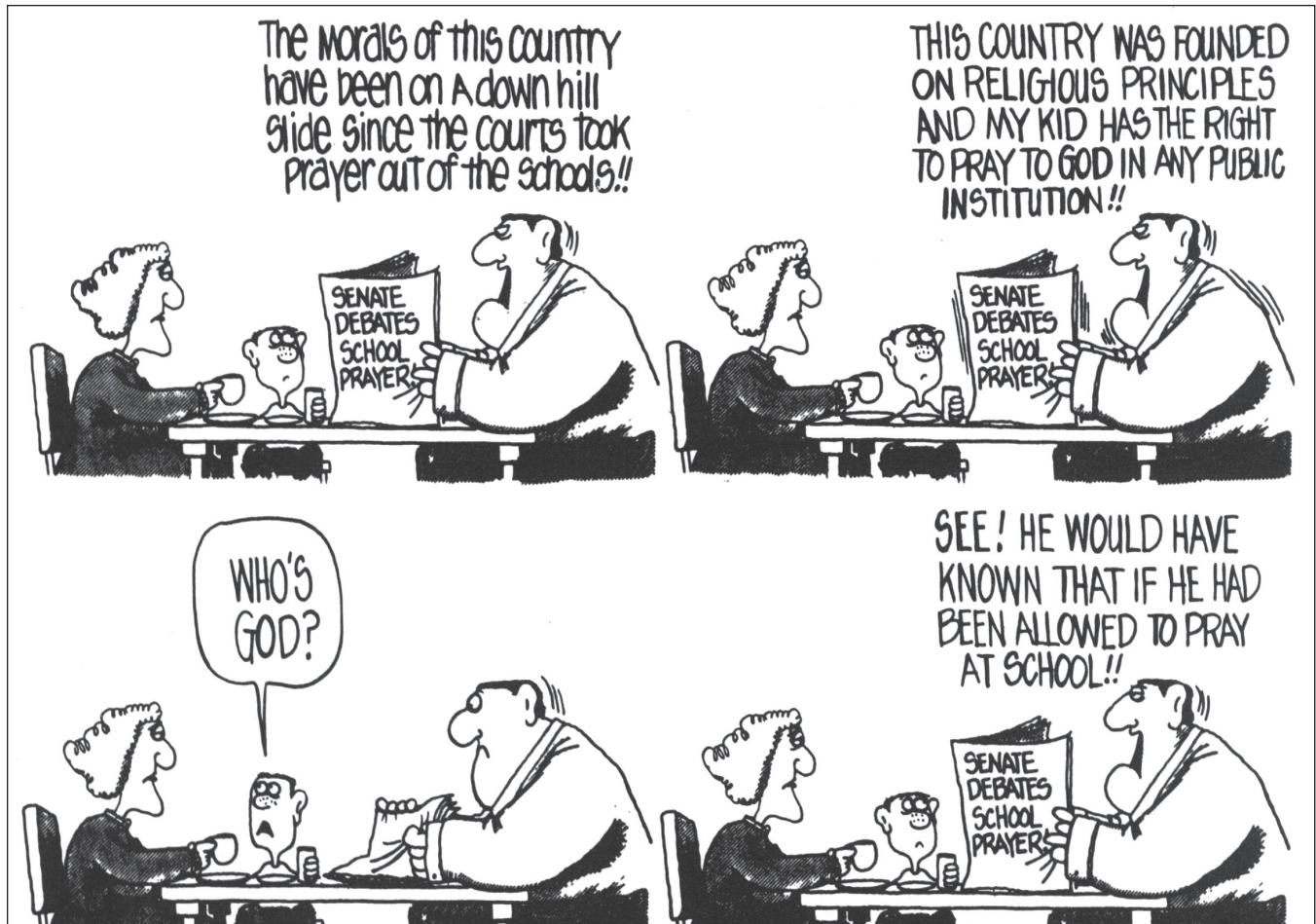
Judicial Branch Cartoon 5



David Horsey, Courtesy *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

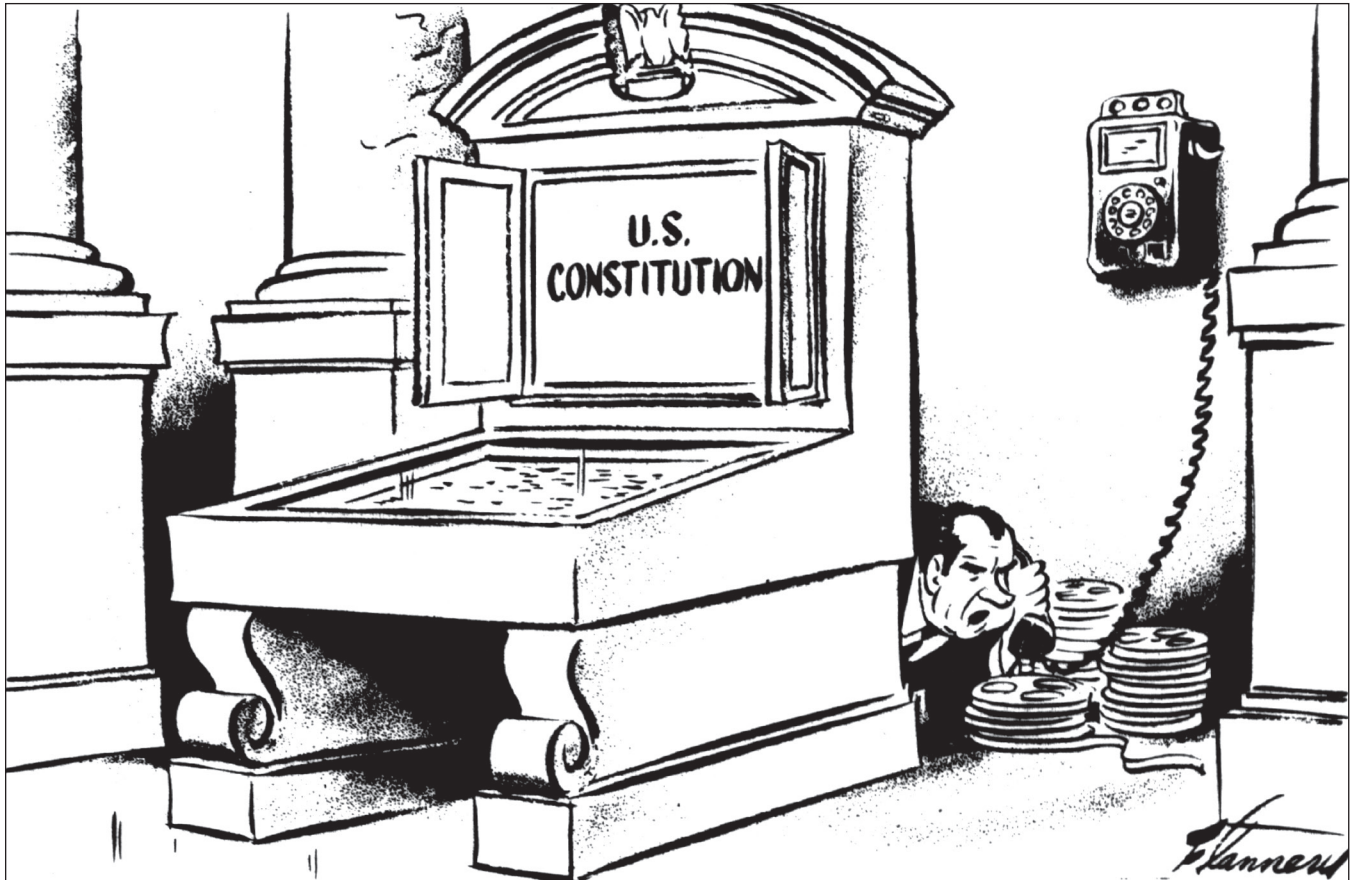
Judicial Branch

Cartoon 6



Ed Gamble. Reprinted with special permission of King Features Syndicate

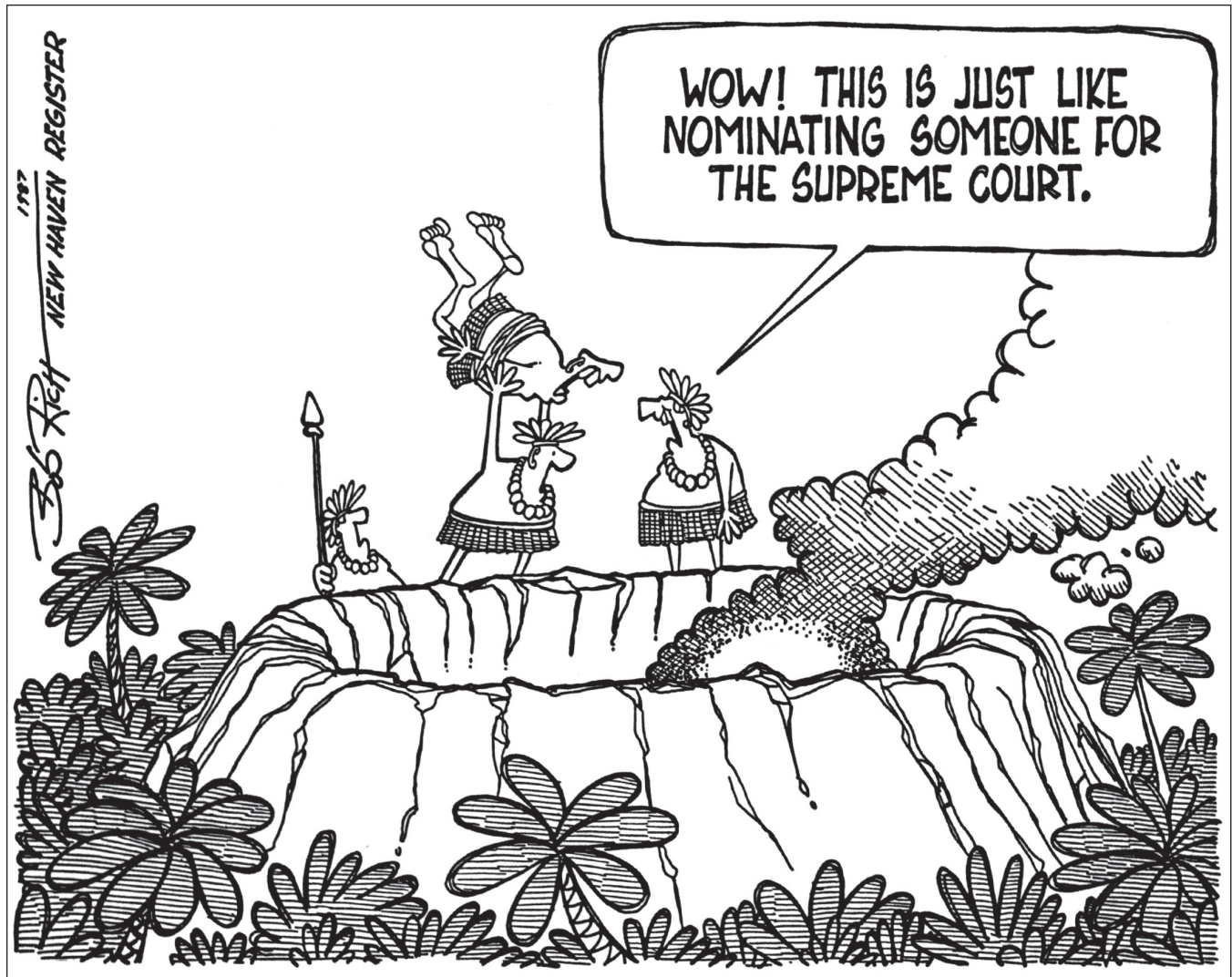
Checks and Balances Cartoon 1



“And I’m Standing Behind My Constitutional Rights too, your Honor.”

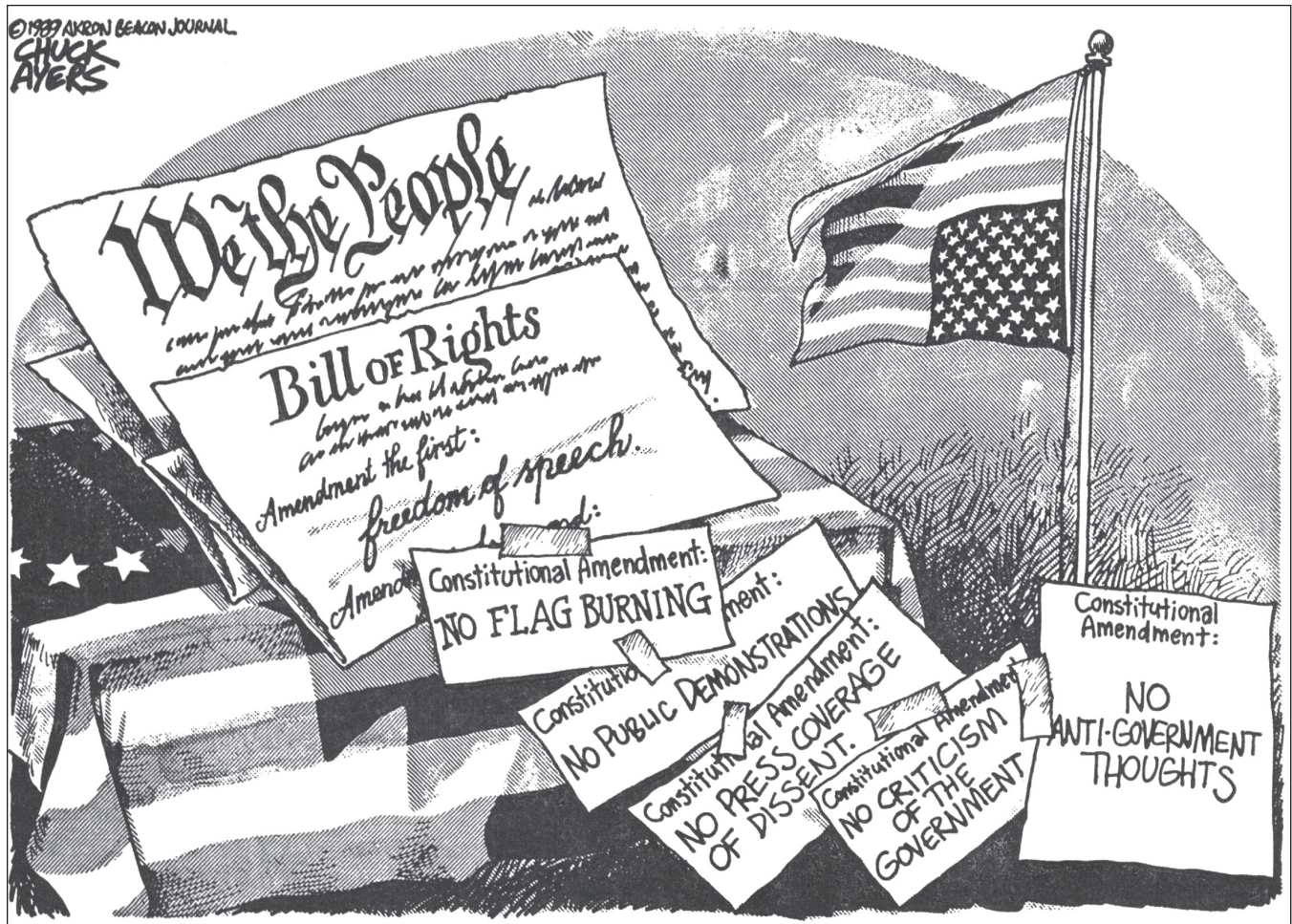
Tom Flannery, Courtesy *Baltimore Sun*

Checks and Balances Cartoon 2



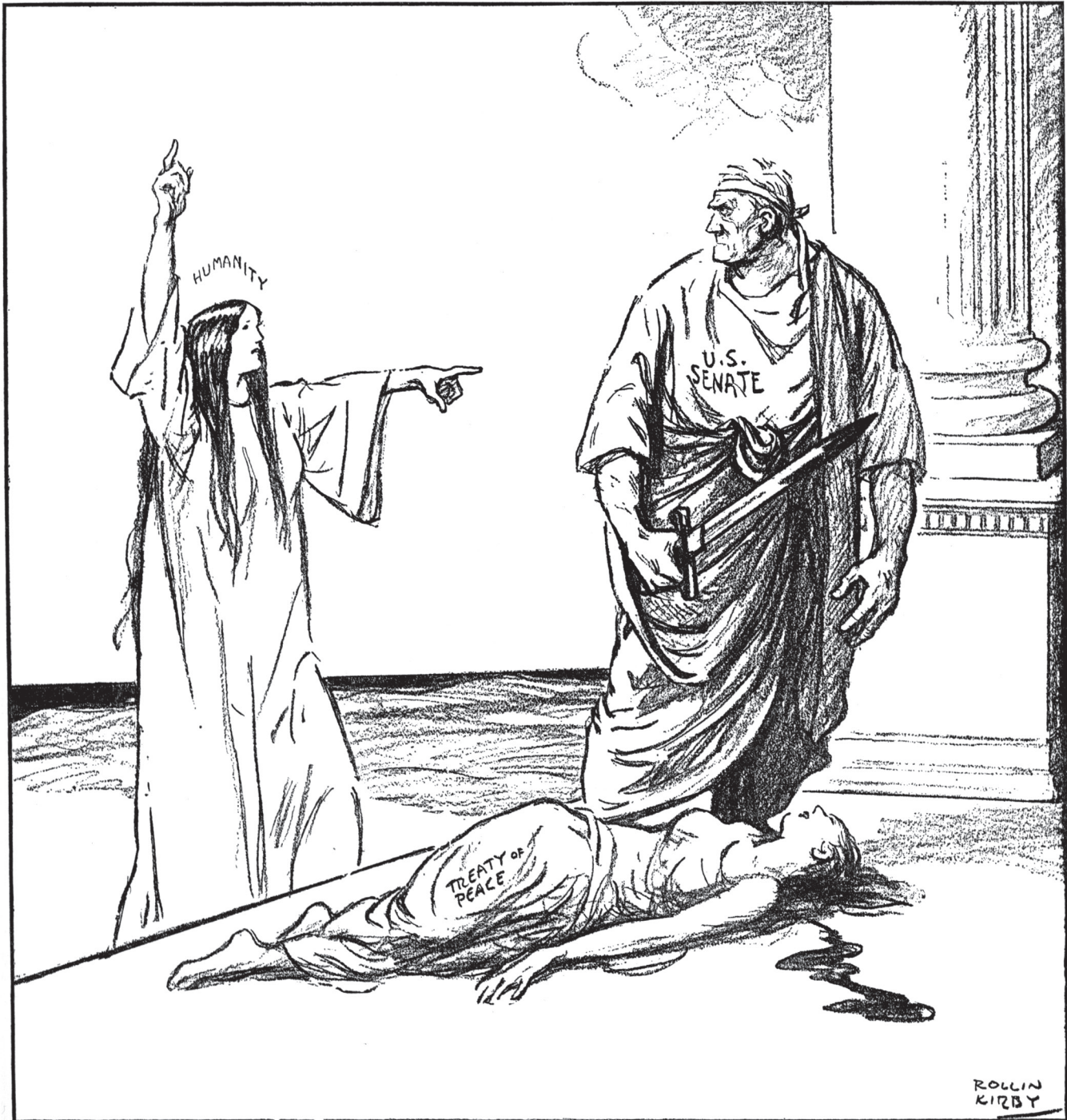
Bob Rich, Courtesy New Haven Register

Checks and Balances Cartoon 3



Chuck Ayers, Courtesy Akron Beacon Journal

Checks and Balances Cartoon 4



Rollin Kirby, *The World*

Checks and Balances Cartoon 5

GABLE

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Toronto

CANADA



Checks and Balances

Cartoon 6

