USA and the World Government
Map of USA showing states
The USA

- Declaration of Independence 1776
- United States of America was formed by 13 American colonies after the War of Independence from Britain
- Gradually expanded to include 50 states today
- Constitution (a set of basic laws) written in 1787
- USA a federal democratic republic
- Flag: the ‘Stars and Stripes’
- National anthem: ‘The Star Spangled Banner’
The 50 stars on the flag represent the 50 U.S. states and the 13 stripes represent the original Thirteen Colonies that rebelled against the British crown and became the first states in the Union. Nicknames for the flag include "the Stars and Stripes" and "Old Glory", with the latter nickname coined by Captain William Driver, a nineteenth century shipmaster.
The government of the USA

- FEDERAL (national) government (makes and applies laws for all of the USA, eg. War, peace, foreign relations and trade, currency, taxation, education, health, law and order)

- STATE governments (make and apply laws within each of the 50 individual states, eg. local taxation, education, health, law and order)
The Separation of Powers

- In order to prevent corruption or abuse of power by politicians the concept of the ‘Separation of Powers’ is important in the USA

- Neither the Federal Government or the State Governments have absolute power over US citizens (the Supreme Court decides if there is a conflict between laws made by the federal and state governments)

- Also to avoid abuse of power the federal government is divided into 3 parts: Legislature, Executive and Judiciary
The Executive

- The Executive is there to apply the federal laws and govern the country
- It is made up of 3 parts

1. The PRESIDENT

2. The CABINET: SECRETARIES are appointed to run government DEPARTMENTS eg. Defence, Justice, Commerce, Treasury, Education etc...
   (also known as the PRESIDENTIAL BUREAUCRACY)

3. FEDERAL AGENCIES: eg. US postal service, CIA, NASA, FBI, EPA,
The President and his Cabinet
The Pentagon in Washington DC
The Judiciary

• Each state has its courts system but the highest court is the Federal Supreme Court

• Supreme Court is made up of 9 judges appointed by the President (for life)

• Head of the Supreme Court is called the Chief Justice

• The Supreme Court examines laws made by federal and state governments

• The Supreme Court can declare a law unconstitutional if it feels it goes against the basic laws of the constitution
Supreme Court Building in Washington DC
The Chief Justice and the judges of the Supreme Court
The Legislature

- The parliament in the USA is called the ‘Congress’
- Made up of two houses
  - **Upper House**: the **SENATE**
    - 100 senators (serve for 6 years, 2 from each state)
  - **Lower House**: the **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**
    - 435 members (Serve for 2 year terms)
- number from each state based on population in each state
The President

- Elected for 4 year term
- Can serve a maximum of 2 terms
- His/her inauguration takes place on 20th January
- lives in the White House
The White House
The roles of the President

- Head of State
- Party Leader
- Chief Executive (or Chief Administrator in charge of the civil service)
- Commander in Chief (of US Army, Navy and Air Force)
- Foreign Policy Director
- Legislative leader (can suggest new laws and approve or veto laws proposed by Congress)
Passing a new Act or Law

- A bill (a proposed new law) can be suggested by a Senator or Congressman/Congresswoman (sometimes laws suggested by the President)

- Both houses of the Congress set up committees to examine the bill

- If it is approved by the committees it is sent to both houses to be discussed and voted on

- If it is passed by both houses it is then passed to the President who can sign it into law or veto (block) it
The Congress
The Constitution

- Set of basic laws on how USA is to be governed was written in 1787

- ‘We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic
Changing the Constitution

- Can be changed by an amendment which is passed by 2/3 of both houses of Congress and by ¾ of the States
- 27 amendments since 1789
- 19th Women given right to vote (1920)
- 18th Made it illegal to make or sell alcohol—‘Prohibition (1917)
Main Political Parties in the USA

- Two main parties dominate politics in the USA

- **The REPUBLICAN PARTY**

- **The DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

- Democrats generally more liberal while Republicans generally more conservative on issues like divorce, abortion, gay rights etc...

- Republicans seen as more supportive of big business and anxious to limit government spending (eg. on health, education etc...) and to reduce taxation

- Generally Democrats get more support from immigrant community, black community

- Generally Republicans get more support from conservative Christian and rural voters