

A2 American politics

Lesson 5

Link: History

Washington, DC and the government

Washington, DC is the capital of the USA. It was named after the first American President, George Washington [→ p. 99]. The "DC" means District of Columbia and was named after Christopher Columbus. It is an elegant city on the Potomac River, and it doesn't have any skyscrapers. In the centre there is a big park called the National Mall.

Washington has large monuments dedicated to Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. Jefferson was one of the authors of the Declaration of Independence while Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery. The Washington Monument is the tallest monument in the city. It is an obelisk with a lake in front of it.

The three most important buildings in Washington DC – the US Capitol, the Supreme Court and the White House – are home to the three branches of the American government – the legislative branch, the judicial branch and the executive branch. The US Capitol stands on Capitol Hill, right at the centre of the city's street grid. The US parliament meets here to make laws. The parliament is called Congress. It has two sections – the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Supreme Court is the home of the judicial branch. Nine judges meet here. They make the final decision in difficult law cases.

However, the most famous building in Washington is certainly the White House. It gets over 5,000 visitors every day. This is where the President lives and works. He is head of the executive branch. The job of the executive branch is to enforce the laws. The President is helped by a group of 15 advisors called the Cabinet.

branches: rami grid: griglia enforce: applicare, fare rispettare

1 Read the text and answer the questions.

- 1 What is the National Mall?
- 2 Why was Thomas Jefferson important?
- 3 Which American President abolished slavery?
- 4 What does the Washington Monument look like?
- 5 What is Congress and where does it meet?
- 6 What does the executive branch do?

Did you know?

In Italy the names of streets are often the names of famous people or events, but in central Washington the "names" of most of the streets are letters of the alphabet (e.g., C Street SW) or numbers (e.g., 4th Street NW). Diagonal avenues have the names of states (e.g., California Street).

The US Capitol



The Supreme Court

