

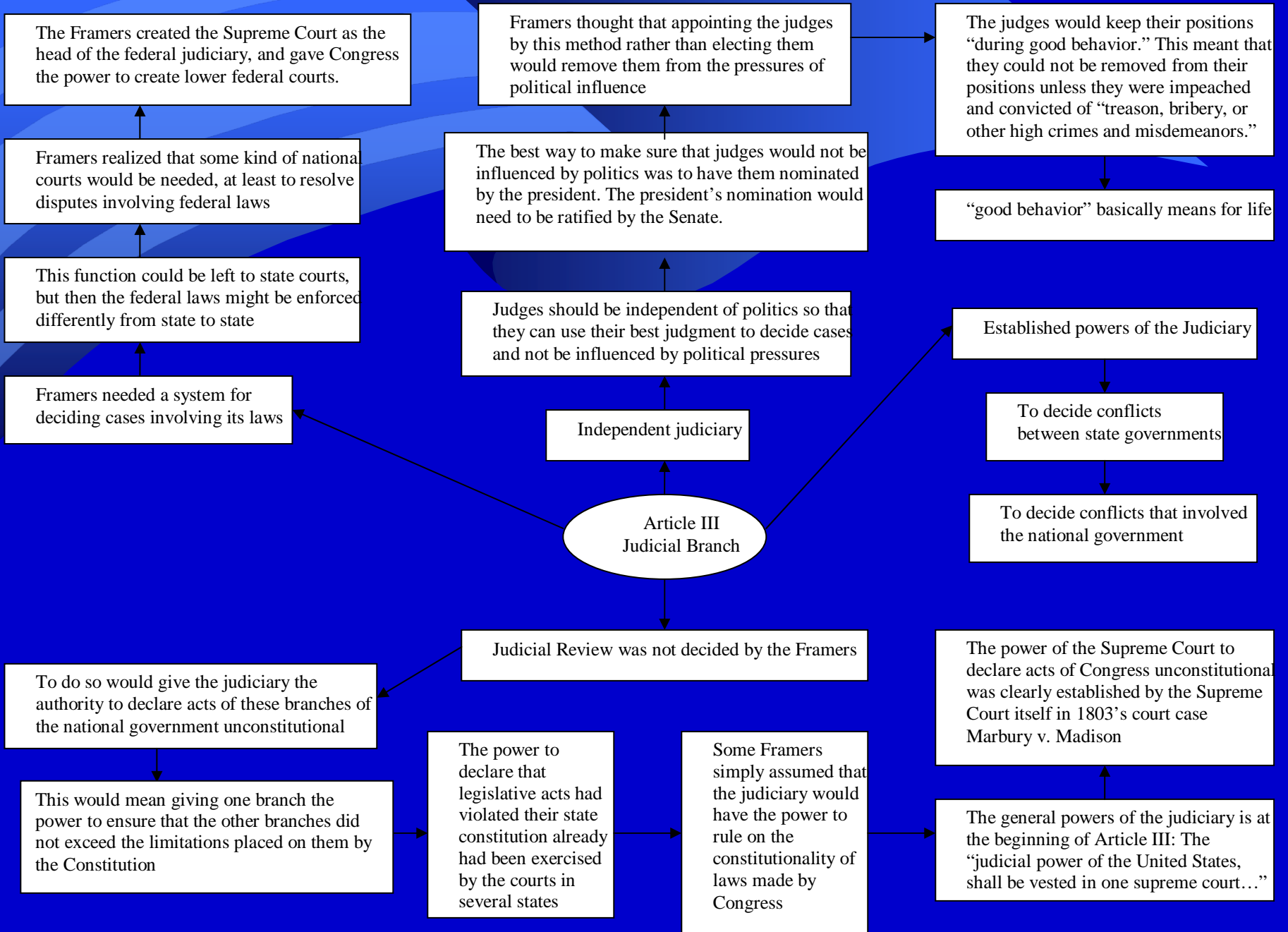
State and Federal Court Systems

- **Standard: 12.4.5**

Discuss Article III of the Constitution as it relates to judicial power, including the length of terms of judges and the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.

Federal Court System

- **Original Jurisdiction:** *Lowest court's authority over an issue*
- **Appellate jurisdiction:** *Authority over appeals from lower courts*



The Framers created the Supreme Court as the head of the federal judiciary, and gave Congress the power to create lower federal courts.

Framers realized that some kind of national courts would be needed, at least to resolve disputes involving federal laws

This function could be left to state courts, but then the federal laws might be enforced differently from state to state

Framers needed a system for deciding cases involving its laws

Framers thought that appointing the judges by this method rather than electing them would remove them from the pressures of political influence

The best way to make sure that judges would not be influenced by politics was to have them nominated by the president. The president's nomination would need to be ratified by the Senate.

Judges should be independent of politics so that they can use their best judgment to decide cases and not be influenced by political pressures

Independent judiciary

Article III
Judicial Branch

The judges would keep their positions "during good behavior." This meant that they could not be removed from their positions unless they were impeached and convicted of "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors."

"good behavior" basically means for life

Established powers of the Judiciary

To decide conflicts between state governments

To decide conflicts that involved the national government

Judicial Review was not decided by the Framers

To do so would give the judiciary the authority to declare acts of these branches of the national government unconstitutional

This would mean giving one branch the power to ensure that the other branches did not exceed the limitations placed on them by the Constitution

The power to declare that legislative acts had violated their state constitution already had been exercised by the courts in several states

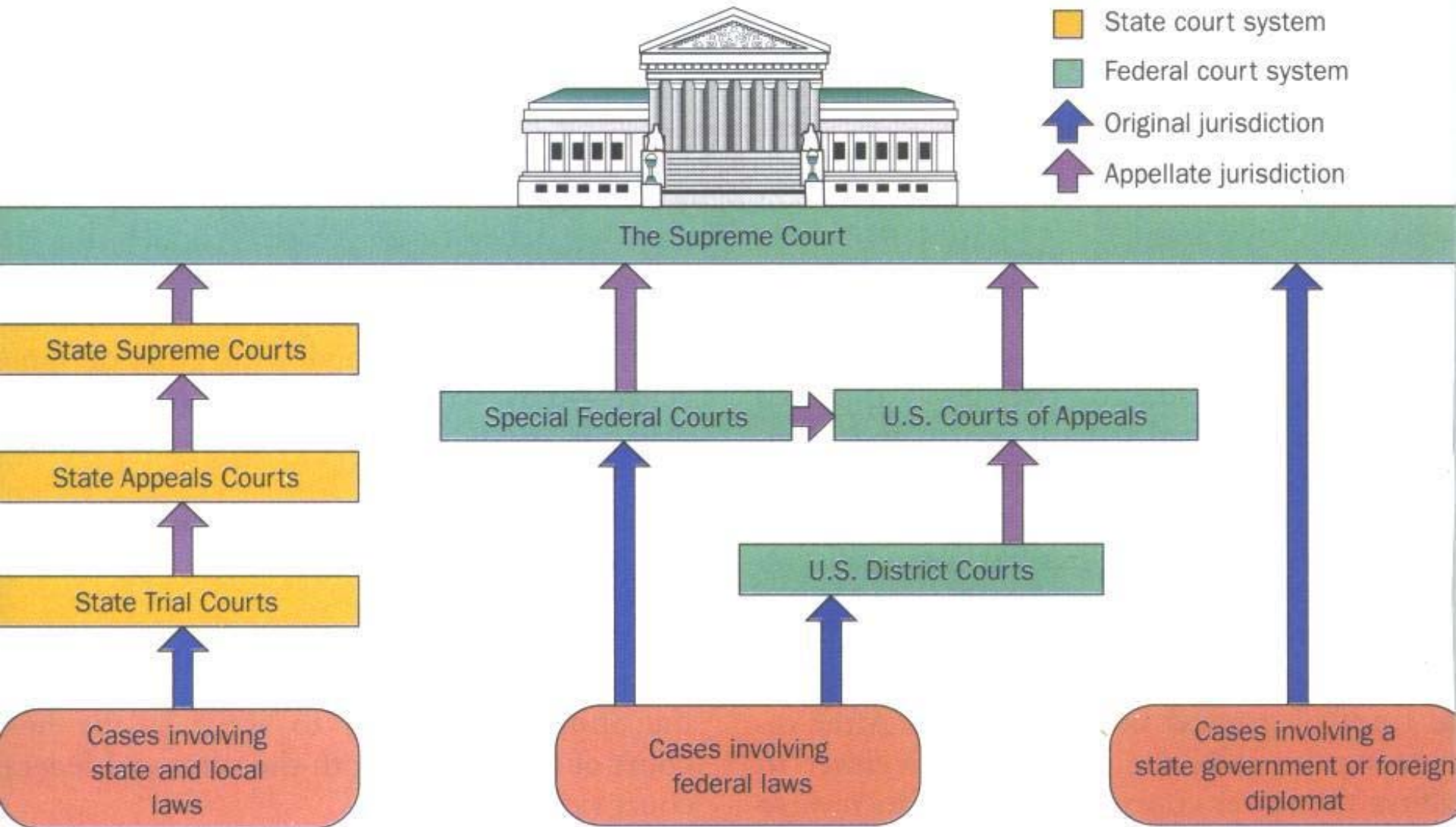
Some Framers simply assumed that the judiciary would have the power to rule on the constitutionality of laws made by Congress

The power of the Supreme Court to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional was clearly established by the Supreme Court itself in 1803's court case Marbury v. Madison

The general powers of the judiciary is at the beginning of Article III: The "judicial power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme court..."

State and Federal Court Systems

The State and Federal Court Systems



State Court Structure



State Supreme Court

Death Penalty appeals,
Disciplinary cases involving
judges or lawyers

State Appeals Court

Appeal their trial court decisions

Superior Courts

58 Trial Courts (1 in each county)

All criminal cases, All civil cases, appeals of small
claims and other civil cases worth \$25,000 or less,
Appeals of misdemeanor cases

State Court can consider cases where:

- Divorce and child custody
- Probate and inheritance
- Real estate
- Juvenile matters
- Criminal charges
- Contract disputes
- Traffic violations
- Personal injury

Federal Court Structure



Supreme Court

(Court of last resort;
decides constitutional
issues)

Federal Appeals Court

(Court of appellate
jurisdiction)

Federal District Court

(Court of original jurisdiction)

Specialty Courts: US Claims Court, Bankruptcy
Court, Tax Court (Courts of original jurisdiction)

Federal Court can only consider cases where:

- There is a real legal problem. They cannot make decisions about hypothetical cases
- The plaintiff was in some way legally harmed by the defendant
- The law the two parties are arguing about was meant to deal with the problem they are having
- The court legally has the power to solve the problem
- The issue the two parties are arguing about is still a problem that matters.

State and Federal Court Systems

Cases Heard by Federal Courts

- Cases that raise constitutional questions
- Cases involving federal laws, such as treason and tax evasion
- Cases in which the federal government is the defendant
- Disagreements between states
- Disagreements between people from different states when more than \$10,000 is in dispute
- Cases involving a foreign government and a state
- Cases involving treaties signed by the United States
- Cases involving American ships at sea
- Cases involving ambassadors and other foreign representatives

Federal Court System

- The Supreme Court selects the cases it wishes to hear.
 - In only rare instances does the Supreme Court have original jurisdiction
 - Cases involving two or more states
 - Cases involving the U.S. and a state government or foreign ambassadors or diplomats.
- Most cases before the Supreme Court involve appeals from lower courts or cases the justices believe involve significant constitutional issues.

Why does the U.S. need federal courts?

- Federal Courts are specified in the Constitution
- They deal with issues whose nature is beyond the state and local level and are of a national concern or interest.

Why does the U.S. need appellate courts?

- Appellate Courts serve as places where court decisions in question may be challenged.

Why does the U.S. need A Supreme Court?

- The Supreme Court serves as the interpreter of the Constitution
- It is the court of last resort
- Needed to settle disputes between states or ones in which foreign governments or citizens may be involved



Where Would The Case Go????

Which court would each
scenario likely fall under?

Employees of Chester Carpet Company Sued
their employer for failing to make pension
contributions as required by the Federal
Employee Retirement Income Security Act

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**Federal District Court because it
relates to federal law**

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U.S. Appeals Court because that is the next step up the pyramid from Federal District Court

Joe was arrested for burglary. He was tried and convicted in a municipal court but appealed his case based upon a question of the validity of eyewitness accounts.

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State Appeals Court because the issue was not a federal case initially

The state appeals court refused to overturn a conviction of Alex for murder. He decided to appeal to a higher court.

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State Supreme Court would be the next higher authority

Frances is being deported for lack of a proper visa. She sues the Department of Immigration.

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Federal District Court because it involves a federal issue

Frederick is suing his former employer for back pay.

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State court because no federal issue is involved

Mr. Smith believes he was not hired by a fast food restaurant because of his age. He sues the restaurant

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Federal District court because it does involve a federal issue

Joe Running-Eagle represents a tribe of American Indians who were denied mineral rights for their reservation, as provided in an agreement with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He sues for compensation in the name of the tribe

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Either U.S. Federal District Court or U.S. Court of Claims depending upon the wishes of the plaintiffs lawyer

Harriet felt that she was discriminated against on an application for a federal civil service test. She sued the U.S. Civil Service Commission in a federal district court but lost her case. After losing a second time in the federal appeals court, she has decided to appeal again.

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**She has no where to go except the
U.S. Supreme Court**

John and his family believe they were served tainted food at a nearby restaurant. They sue the owner of the restaurant.

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Municipal or state courts

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Federal District Court because of the status of the Justice department.

Arnold sued several manufacturers of asbestos because he claimed he had contracted asbestiosis as a result of direct exposure to their products.

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Federal District Court because of the likely hood of involving federal legislation and individuals of several states.

Bernice wishes to challenge the Internal Revenue Service's disallowance of a tax deduction she considers legitimate.

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If she chooses to go to court before paying, she would likely go to Tax Court; an alternative would be to pay the amount in dispute and then sue for a refund in U.S. Court of Claims or a Federal District Court

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This is a federal case because of the nature of the issue and would go to a Federal District court.

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The farmers would probably seek relief in the U.S. Court of Claims