

# Powers of Congress

SECTION 1

## THE SCOPE OF CONGRESSIONAL POWERS

### TEXT SUMMARY

Article 1 of the Constitution describes Congress and grants it specific powers, which are called **expressed powers**. The Constitution also states the powers denied to Congress. Those powers of Congress not

listed in the Constitution but needed to carry out its expressed powers are **implied powers**. It also has **inherent powers** by its very nature as a national government's legislative branch.

Arguments about Congress's power began with the writing of the Constitution. The **strict constructionists** wanted the States to keep as much power as possible. They believed that the best government is

one that governs least. Congress should use only its expressed powers and the implied powers needed to carry out its duties.

The **liberal constructionists** wanted a broad, or liberal, interpretation of the powers of Congress. They believed that a good government is an active one. Early on, the liberal constructionists won out. Congress has since acquired more powers than the Framers could ever have imagined.

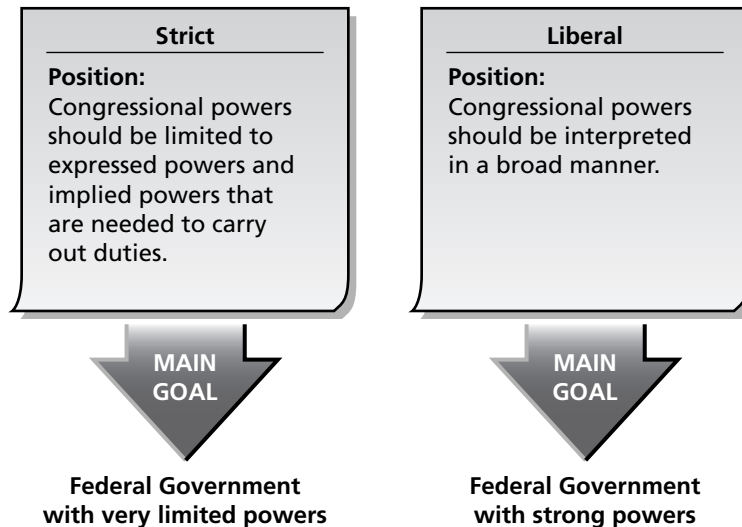
Events such as wars and economic crises have contributed to the growth of national power. So also have improvements in communication and transportation. Americans have generally agreed with, or come to **consensus** about, the scope of powers assumed by Congress.

### THE BIG IDEA

The Constitution gives Congress certain powers, but liberal interpretation has given Congress great scope.

### GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Strict v. Liberal Constructionists

Americans came to a consensus that favored a liberal construction of the Constitution.



### REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the expressed powers of Congress?
2. **Diagram Skills** How did the positions of strict constructionists and liberal constructionists differ?