The two legislative bodies in the USA are the House of Representatives and the Senate. The two bodies together are known as Congress.

There are 435 members of the House of Representatives. According to the US Constitution, a Representative must be at least 25 years of age, have been a citizen of the United States for seven years, and, when elected, be a resident of the state in which the Representative is chosen.

A senator must be 30 years of age, a citizen of the United States for 9 years, and must reside in the state he or she represents at the time of election. Each state elects two senators who serve a six-year term. In the history of the Senate up to 2001 there had been over 1864 senators, but only thirty-one women!

The chief function of Congress is the making of laws. In addition, the Senate has the function of advising and consenting to treaties and to certain nominations by the President.

Besides the Legislative branch, composed of the House and Senate, there is also the Executive Branch, consisting of the President, Vice-President and Departments.

The US President has considerable powers, and is the equivalent of the Prime Minister in the British or Italian system. But the President’s powers are in some ways limited, for example by Congress. In fact, the writers of the American Constitution deliberately created a system in which no branch has too much power. Nevertheless, the American President is an extremely “visible” figure for the general public, thanks partly to the mass media and partly to America’s predominance in world affairs. In practice, the US President is the most powerful person in the world.

The third branch is constituted by the Judicial, composed of the federal courts and the Supreme Court. The judicial branch can declare Executive acts as unconstitutional.

Fonti bibliografiche:
Christopher Williams, Viewpoints, Loffredo Editore.