



Key Terms

“during good behavior”—phrase in Article 3 of the U.S. Constitution that denotes terms for judges appointed to federal courts. Federal judges have lifetime appointments provided they maintain “good behavior.”

Impeachment (of federal judges)—a constitutionally expressed power of Congress to file formal charges against a civil officer of government for crimes committed while in office. The House of Representatives files the charges, while the Senate conducts a trial. Federal judges may be impeached for “treason, bribery, and other high crimes and misdemeanors.” As of 2014, there have been 61 federal judges or Supreme Court justices who have faced impeachment proceedings.

Judiciary—system of judicial authority in a government; courts and judges, collectively.

Judicial independence—the concept that the judiciary needs to be kept away from the other branches of government. That is, courts should not be subject to improper influence from the other branches of government, or from private or partisan interests.

Judicial selection—method by which a state selects judges, including election and appointments.

Retention election—judicial election in which an appointed judge faces a “yea” or “nay” vote to maintain the appointment, or remain in office.