STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

What is USA's 3 layered Judicial system?

International Relations

25 Dec 2030

U.S. Federal Court System – Explained

The United States has a three-level federal court system that handles cases involving federal laws, constitutional issues, and disputes between states or citizens of different states.

1. U.S. District Courts (Federal Trial Courts)

Role:

- These are the trial courts of the federal system.
- This is where cases begin.
- Key Functions:
- Hear criminal cases involving federal laws
- Hear civil cases involving federal statutes or disputes between states/foreign citizens
- Examine evidence, hear witnesses, and deliver verdicts

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Structure

- 94 district courts across the U.S.
- Each state has at least one district court.
- Example: If someone challenges a federal policy (like a visa rule or environmental law), the case usually starts here.

2. U.S. Courts of Appeals (Circuit Courts)

Role:

- Review decisions made by district courts.
- Decide whether the law was correctly applied, not whether the person is guilty or innocent.
- Key Features:
    - 13 Courts of Appeals

- 11 regional circuits
- 1 D.C. Circuit (very powerful, handles many government cases)
- 1 Federal Circuit (specialized cases like patents)

What They Do?

- Hear appeals when a party believes the lower court made a legal error.
- Do not conduct trials or accept new evidence.
- Can uphold, reverse, or remand a lower court's decision.

Example:

If a federal judge allows or blocks a government policy, the losing side can appeal to a circuit court.

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3. U.S. Supreme Court

Role:

- Highest court in the country.
- Final authority on interpretation of the U.S. Constitution.

Key Points:

- Hears only a small number of cases each year (around 70–80).
- Selects cases that have national importance or conflicting lower court rulings.
- Its decisions are final and binding nationwide.

In Simple Terms

District Court = trial court

Court of Appeals = reviews legal errors

Supreme Court = final authority