Q16 – Name the three branches of government.

DOUGLAS GINSBURG, Federal Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit:
The federal government has three branches:

The legislative branch – the Congress.

The executive branch – the president.

And the judicial branch – the courts, where I work.
Why three branches? To protect your liberty.
When the Framers drafted the Constitution, most of the world's people were ruled by kings and queens, or emperors. One all-powerful man – or woman. To prevent tyranny, the Framers divided power among three branches. That separation of power was key to the protection of the people's liberties.
The legislative branch writes the laws. The executive branch enforces the laws. And the judicial branch decides whether a person has violated the law, and whether the Congress or the president has violated the Constitution.
Limiting each branch of government to one function limited its powers – and therefore also its ability to abuse power. The Framers built in another safeguard of liberty: how each branch is composed.
Members of the House of Representatives are elected by the citizens in their district. Senators are elected by everyone in their state. Only the president and vice president are elected by all the citizens of the country.
Federal judges are not elected by anyone. They are nominated by the president and approved by the Senate.
Separate branches of government, with different ways of choosing the members, is another way of protecting our liberty. And protecting liberty is what the Constitution is all about.