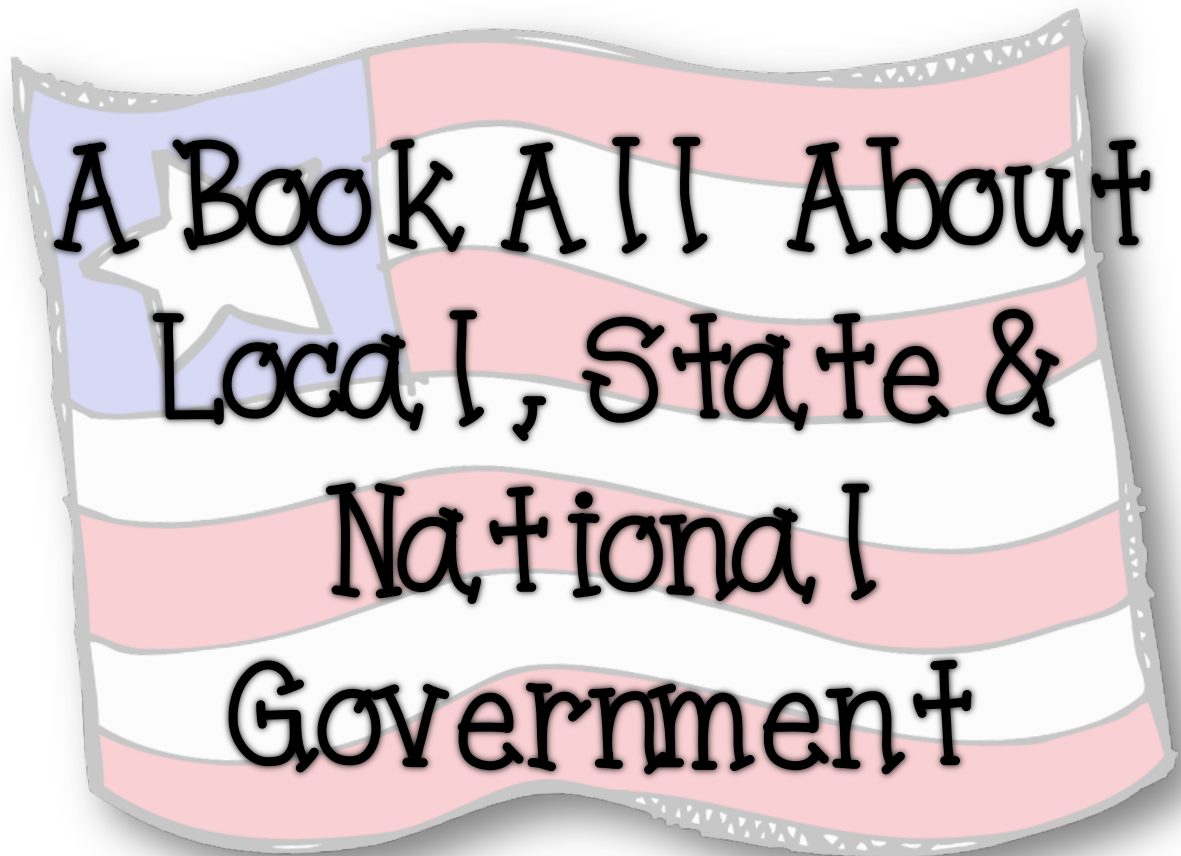


United States Government



Name

Why Do We Need Government ?

A government is a group of elected citizens who solve problems and make laws for a community. There are three main reasons why we need a government: to keep order, to manage disagreements, and to protect people and their property.

To Keep Order

The government makes laws about how citizens should behave and makes sure laws are obeyed. Laws help people know what to do and what not to do. Many laws are made to keep people safe. Can you think of some laws that are made to keep you safe ?

To Manage Conflicts

A conflict is a disagreement. Have you ever had a conflict with a classmate ? Did your teacher or an adult help you to solve the conflict ? Just like your classroom, when people live together in a community, there are always some conflicts. Like the adult who helped you, sometimes a conflict is settled by a judge in a courtroom. The judge listens to both sides of the argument and the judge tells the people what they must do to get along.



To Protect People and Property

Community governments protect the public, or all the people. They set up police and fire departments to keep both citizens and property safe.



Community Government & Services

Community Governments keep citizens safe, but they also provide many services. A **government service** is work that is done by the government for everyone in a city or town.

Safety

All cities and most towns have police and fire departments to keep citizens safe. A **department** is a part of a government with a special job to do.



Public Education

The government provides a public education for all children, so they can attend a school for free! Many communities also have a public library so people can continue to learn even when they leave school.

Health

Some communities have health departments to make sure the community is a healthful place to live. Large communities have a hospital to care for sick or hurt people. Many communities have clinics, where doctors and dentists help citizens stay healthy.



Community Government & Services

(continued)

Parks & Recreation

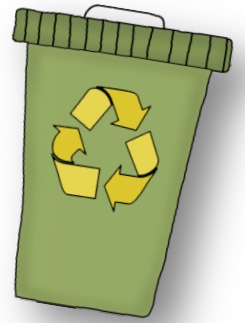
Many communities have parks and public gardens. A city's Parks & Recreation Department maintains many places for citizens to enjoy their free time, such as swimming pools, basketball courts, biking trails and so much more!



Public Works

The Public Works

Department of a community government provides services to meet day-to-day needs. The Public Works Department takes care of garbage and recycling. It makes sure that the community has clean water. They also make sure the roads are acceptable for cars to drive on.



Taxes & Services

All of these government services cost money. Most of the money for government services comes from taxes that citizens living in the community pay. Anyone who owns land or a building in the community must pay a **property tax**. Also, every time you buy something, you have to pay **sales tax**. So you have to pay a little bit more than the price tag says. If you buy a shirt for \$10, you may have to pay \$10.70 including tax. Paying taxes may not be fun, but without them our government would not be able to provide important services!

The Three Branches of Government

Most democratic governments are made up of three branches, or parts, each with a different job to do. The parts are called branches because like the branches of a tree, they are separate but connected!

One part of the government is called the legislative branch. This branch makes laws. Another part is called the executive branch. This branch sees that laws are obeyed.

The third part is called the judicial branch. This branch decides whether laws are fair. It also decides whether they have been carried out fairly.





Each part of the government tries its best to work together so our government can work as smoothly as possible!



Levels of Government

In the United States, there are several levels of government. Community, State and the National government all do certain things. All makes laws and collect taxes from citizens. All use tax money to provide services.

Each level of government also has its own **responsibilities**, or special jobs. Community governments provide services such as fire protection and garbage collection. The state governments provide driver's licenses, care for state parks and build highways. The national (federal) government deals with matters that affect the entire country

Local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town or City Council• Mayor or City Manager
County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board of Supervisors or Commissioners• County Courts
State 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative - Senate & House of Representatives or Assembly• Executive - Governor & State Departments• Judicial - State Supreme Court & Local Courts
National 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative - Senate & House of Representatives• Executive - President & Cabinet• Judicial - Supreme Court

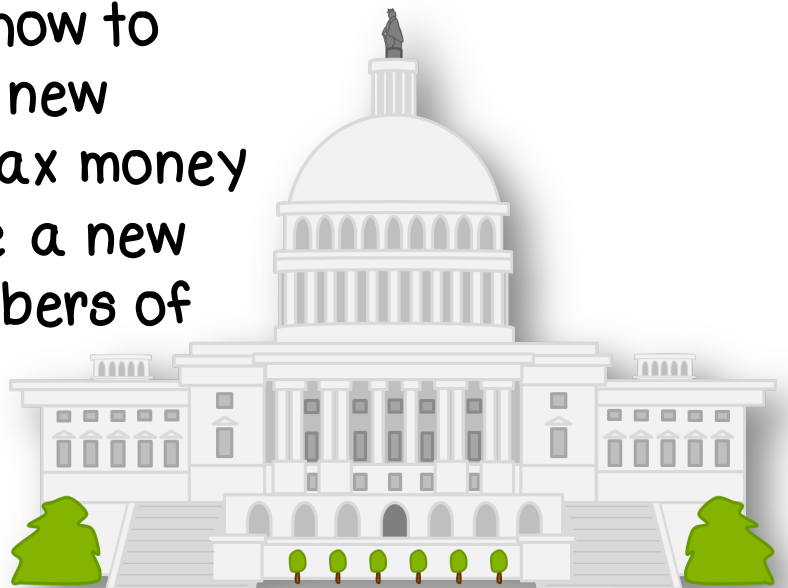
All About Congress

Congress is the legislative branch of the national government. It decides on new laws for the nation. Congress has two parts, the Senate and the House of Representatives. A **representative** is a person chosen or elected to act or speak for others.

Members of the Senate and the House are elected by the citizens of the United States. They work to solve national problems.

Each of the 50 states, no matter how many people live in it, has two members in the Senate. The number of members a state can have in the United States House of Representatives depends on its population.

The members of the Senate and House work in the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. The members of each group discuss problems and vote on how to solve them. They write new laws and decide how tax money should be used. Before a new law can pass, the members of both the Senate and the House must agree on it. Then the President must sign it.



All About the President

The President of the United States leads the executive branch of the national government, which enforces the laws of the whole country. The

Constitution says that the most important responsibility of the President is to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed" or carried out.

The President also has other very important jobs. He communicates with citizens, leads the military and works with leaders of other nations. A law must be approved by the President too! If the members of Congress cannot come to an agreement, sometimes he will speak to them and encourage them to work together.

The President of the United States lives and works in the White House, located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C.

The people of the United States elect a President every four years. President Obama, our current President, is the 44th man to hold the office.

As of now, the US has only elected males to the office. Maybe one day we will elect the first female President!

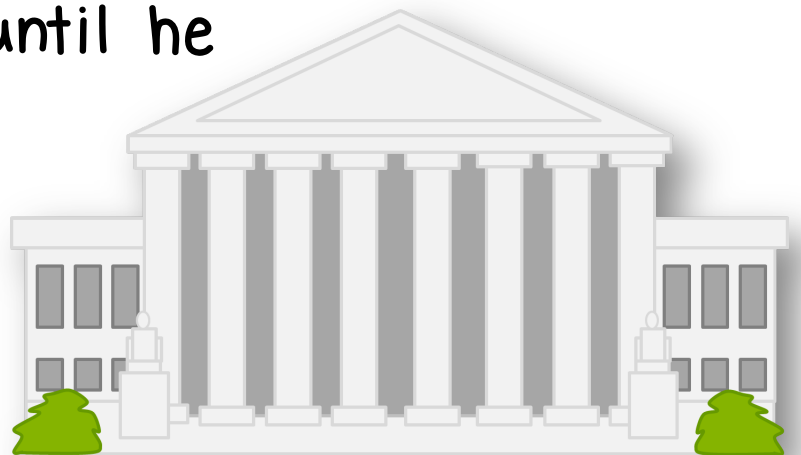


All About the Supreme Court

The courts make up the judicial branch of the national government. The Supreme Court is the highest, or most important, court in the United States. Nine judges, called justices, serve on the Supreme Court. Their leader is the chief justice.

The justices on the Supreme Court study laws that have been made by the legislative branch. When cases are brought to the Supreme Court, they decide whether the laws have been used fairly.

Supreme Court justices are not elected. They are appointed, or named, by the President and must be approved by the Senate. A Supreme Court justice may serve for the rest of his or her life or until he or she retires.



Checks and Balances



Do you see how our government was built so one person or group of people cannot have too much power? Each branch has ways to check the other branches and keep a balance of power.

For example, the president may veto a law passed by Congress. Congress can override that veto with a vote of two-thirds of both houses. Another example is that the Supreme Court may check Congress by declaring a law unconstitutional. The power is balanced by the fact that members of the Supreme Court are appointed by the president. Those appointments have to be approved by Congress

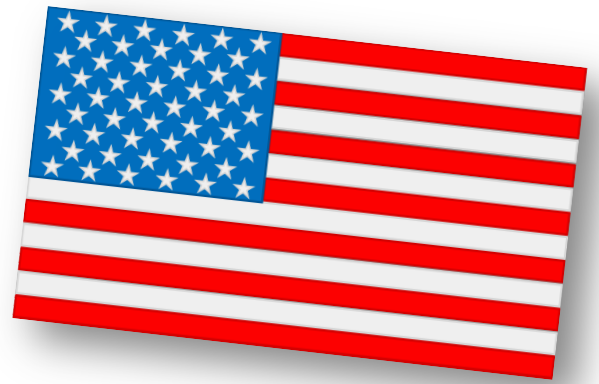


Symbols of our Nation

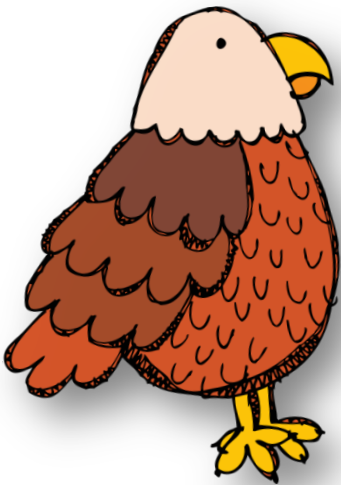
American Flag

The U.S. flag has undergone many changes since the first official flag of 1777.

Currently, the flag contains 50 stars, one for every state in the nation. The 13 red and white stripes represent the original thirteen colonies.



Bald Eagle



The bald eagle was made the national bird of the United States in 1782. The image of the bald eagle can be found in many places in the U.S., such as on the Great Seal, Federal agency seals, the President's flag, and on the one-dollar bill. The bald eagle was chosen because it symbolized strength, courage, freedom, and immortality.

Great Seal

The Great Seal reflects the beliefs and values that the Founding Fathers wanted to pass on to future generations. The Great Seal can be seen on the back of a one-dollar bill. The seal is only attached to certain documents, such as foreign treaties and presidential proclamations.



Symbols of our Nation

(Continued)

The Liberty Bell

The Liberty Bell rang when the Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence and has become the symbol of freedom in the United States. The bell weighs about 2000 pounds and is made mostly of copper and tin. Today, the Liberty Bell hangs in Philadelphia at the Liberty Bell Pavilion on Market Street for all to see and is still gently rung each July 4th



Uncle Sam



Uncle Sam, a figure symbolizing the United States, is portrayed as a tall, white-haired man with a goatee. He is often dressed in red, white, and blue, and wears a top hat. The most famous picture of Uncle Sam appeared on an Army recruiting poster. The poster was designed in World War I, and was used again in World War II. The caption reads "I Want You for U.S. Army."