

State Government

State Constitution

Find a copy of your state's constitution. When was it written? When was it adopted? Choose a key phrase or passage from your state's constitution and copy it here.

[illegible]

In the Early Days

When did your state become a state? What process did it go through to become a state?

When did your state adopt its current form of government?

Who was your state's first governor?

What's In a Name

Before we go any further exploring state government, it's important to note some differences in terminology you will encounter as you study various states. Many states refer to the "lower house" as the House of Representatives, but it is also called the Assembly and the House of Delegates. In this study, references to state representatives are meant to include the members of the lower house, regardless of official title.

How Does State Government Work?

Do all states have a Senate and a House of Representatives? If not, why not?

How many senators serve in your state Senate? How long does each serve? Who are they? What are the requirements for serving as a state senator?

How many representatives serve in your House of Representatives? Who are they? How long does each serve? What are the requirements for serving as a state representative?

How often are elections for state senators and representatives held?

How are districts in your state defined for the Senate and the House of Representatives?

State Job Descriptions

What are the roles and responsibilities of your state leaders? Write a job description for each of the following positions. Also explain the key differences between the job of senator and the job of representative. There are some ideas to get you started on the following pages.

- ♦ Governor
- ♦ Lieutenant Governor
- ♦ State Senator
- ♦ State Representative
- ♦ State Attorney General

Governor and Lieutenant Governor

Here are a few of the areas state governors have influence over:

- ♦ Education
- ♦ Health care
- ♦ Veterans affairs
- ♦ Employment opportunities
- ♦ Employment regulations
- ♦ Emergency preparedness and response
- ♦ Nursing homes
- ♦ State forests and parks
- ♦ Natural resources
- ♦ Child protective services
- ♦ Law enforcement
- ♦ Election funding
- ♦ Transportation and regulations
- ♦ Public assistance
- ♦ State budget
- ♦ Immigration
- ♦ Implementation of, and limits to, federal rulings such as the definition of marriage
- ♦ Laws protecting the unborn



State Senator

- ♦ Appropriations
- ♦ Consumer protection
- ♦ Professional licensing
- ♦ Transportation
- ♦ Issues regarding care for the elderly and the young
- ♦ Agriculture
- ♦ Banking and insurance
- ♦ Hunting, gaming, fishing
- ♦ Labor and industry
- ♦ Public health and welfare
- ♦ Education
- ♦ Environmental issues

State Representative

- ♦ Transportation and regulations
- ♦ Public assistance
- ♦ Taxes and tax exemption
- ♦ Firearm regulations
- ♦ Vehicle regulations and registrations
- ♦ Environmental issues
- ♦ Hunting and fishing regulations
- ♦ Educational funding and grants
- ♦ Child protective services
- ♦ Election and campaign regulations
- ♦ Liquor regulations
- ♦ Tourism and recreation

State Attorney General

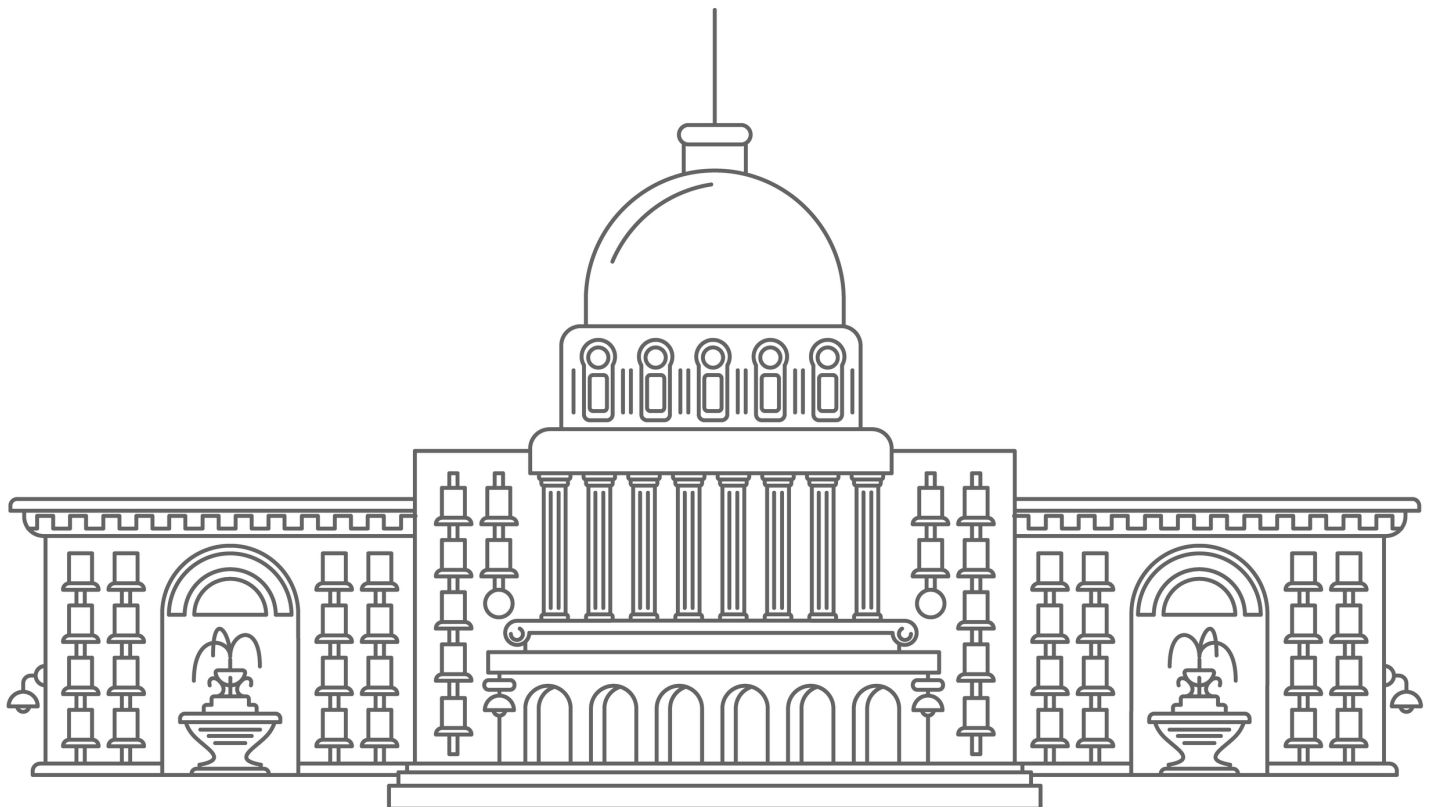
- ♦ Investigate and prosecute crime
- ♦ Oversees certain law enforcement task forces
- ♦ Involved in dealing with elder abuse
- ♦ Consumer protection
- ♦ Identify theft cases
- ♦ Cyber bullying
- ♦ Illegal drug concerns
- ♦ Civil rights issues

Head Count

Make a list of the number of senators each state's upper house has. Which state has the most? Which one has the least? Create a graph showing this.

Make a list of the number of representatives each state's lower house has. Which state has the most? Which state has the least? Create a graph showing this.

With each election, the number of officials each party has in each house can change. Look at the final composition of both your state's Senate and its House of Representatives following each election for the past twenty years. What percentage of control of each house has each party had following the election?



Extension Activities

Art:

Study the architecture and artistry of one of the buildings that is involved in your state's legislature. Either create your own piece of artwork inspired by a portion of it or write a short report exploring its artistic elements.

Health:

Identify one health threat or potential health threat that your state faces or has faced in the past such as the chemical effects of certain agricultural products, the potential health impact of coal mining, industry-related health issues, diseases spread more easily in densely populated areas, etc. Write a report or create a presentation showing how your state has addressed it in the past or needs to address it in the future.

