

In the past, people decided it made sense to form groups to increase their safety and share resources. By doing this, people gave up some of their individual freedom to be part of the group. Each group had to create rules to follow and some way to enforce those rules. A **government** is the people who make decisions and set rules for a group of people. There are many types of governments. One person can be subject to several different governments at the same time.

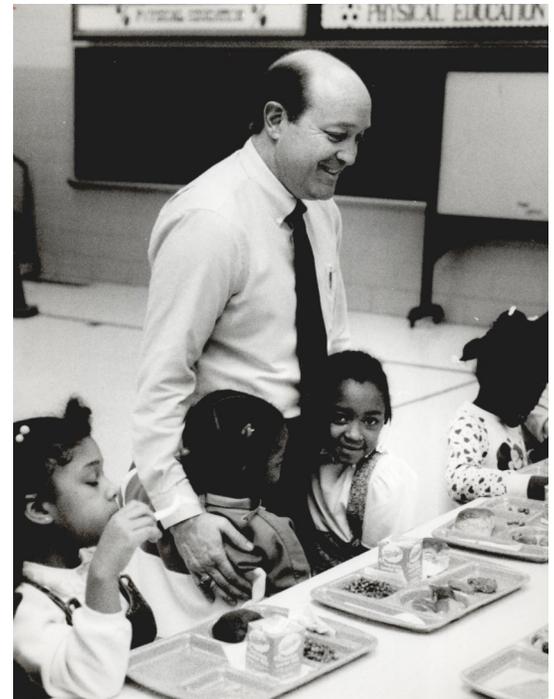
The idea of giving up some freedom to be a part of a group with rules is called “the social contract.” A political philosopher named John Locke developed this idea in the 1600s.



A superintendent governs over schools in a school district (image courtesy CNN).



A teacher “governs” a classroom (2012.201.B0093.0164, OPUBCO Photography Collection, OHS).



A principal “governs” a school (2012.201.B0099.0515, OPUBCO Photography Collection, OHS).

Types of Governments

Authoritarian Governments

Some governments are run by one powerful person or a small group of people in a country. These types of governments are called **authoritarian** because the people must serve the government. Because of this, authoritarian governments frequently do not respect the **rights** of individuals. Sometimes, an authoritarian government may give the appearance of being something other than authoritarian. For example, they may hold elections, but those in control of the government will make sure they keep the actual power. Before the United States was founded, most countries were ruled by authoritarian governments.



Nicolae Ceaușescu was the dictator of Romania from 1965–89 (image courtesy *Biography*).

Democratic Governments

Not all governments are authoritarian. In some countries, the people decided that the government should serve the people instead of the other way around. These governments are called democracies. There are many different kinds of democracies; most are responsible for creating an environment that promotes the **common good**. The common good is the idea that governments can try to make decisions that help most of the people in the group. Within a democracy, who is authorized to make decisions, in what ways the government is responsible to the people, and the kinds of choices people have vary widely. In most democracies, the



The Durant City Council is a representative democratic government body (image courtesy the City of Durant).

ideas of rights and liberties is important. A right is something a person should have access to just because they are human. A **liberty** is a form of freedom that no government should take from an individual. The rights a person has simply because they are human are called, “**natural rights**.” Democratic governments tend to respect individual rights and liberties to a greater degree than authoritarian governments. At times, democracies may not respect the rights of a **minority** group because they are designed to follow the will of the **majority**.

The US Constitution begins with the phrase, “We the People” to make clear that the people of the United States are where the government’s power lies, and that the government exists so that we can govern ourselves.

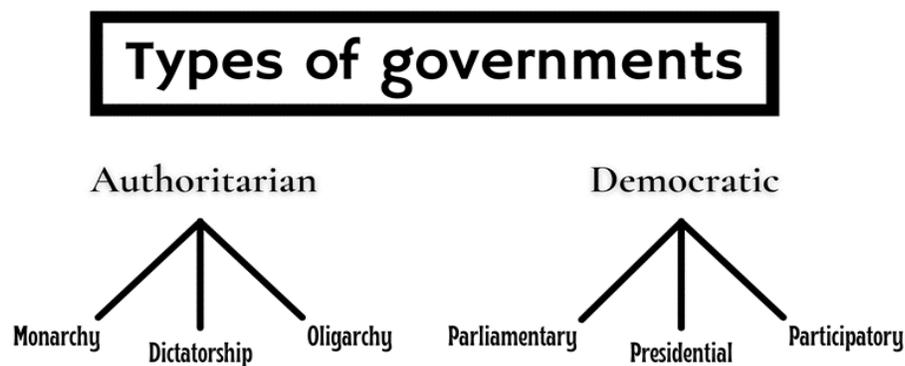


Students demand equality in Oklahoma, 1963
(20246.38.84.5, John Melton Collection, OHS).

Some governments are organized according to a set of rules that must be followed. The rules explaining how a government must operate are called a **constitution**. A constitution can also include protections for individual rights and liberties for all people, including minority groups. Governments that follow their constitution and laws closely respect the “**rule of law**.” Governments that follow the rule of law offer more protection for individuals because the decisions governments make have to be based on the rules. Another thing the rule of law introduces is the idea that there are some areas of life where the government cannot interfere. This idea is called “limited government.”

One way to understand “rule of law” is to think about your favorite sport: it has rules, right? You want to make sure the rules of the games are enforced fairly to all teams. This is also true of governments.

Another idea that some democracies consider important is the idea of **equality**. Many democracies will include in their constitutions that all people are equal and include rules to ensure that the people that run the government treat each person as having equal worth.



Remember, these are categories. Sometimes, a government will combine categories. For example, Jordan is a constitutional monarchy with a parliament.

Monarchy

A **monarchy** is ruled by a hereditary leader, such as a king. Monarchies can be absolute, constitutional, or ceremonial. An **absolute monarch** controls the entire government; an example of this form of government is Saudi Arabia. A **constitutional monarch** has power and serves as the **executive**, but the constitution limits this power; Monaco has a constitutional monarchy. In a **ceremonial monarchy**, the monarch has very little power and performs ceremonial duties; Great Britain is an example of a ceremonial monarchy.



Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdul-Rahman al Faisal al Saud founded Saudi Arabia in 1932 (image courtesy History Today).

Dictatorship

A **dictatorship** is ruled by a group of people selected by one person. The people who run the government are responsible to the dictator and no one else. The country of Turkmenistan under Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow is a good example of a dictatorship. While the country has a constitution, a **parliament**, and elections, Berdimuhamedow is able to make changes to the rules as he wishes whenever he wants.



As of 2022, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow is the authoritarian leader of Turkmenistan (image courtesy Reuters).

Oligarchy

An **oligarchy** is ruled by a smaller group. There are many different kinds of oligarchies. In many places, the military holds the power. This type of government is called a **stratocracy**. Currently, Thailand is a country under military control. Another kind of oligarchy, a **plutocracy**, is where the wealthy are in control. During the Renaissance, the city-states on the Italian peninsula were often plutocracies. The country of Iran is a **theocracy**, which means that the country is controlled by a group of religious leaders. Another kind of oligarchy often practiced is rule by one political party, such as the Communist Party in China.



The Communist Party of China is a kind of oligarchy (image courtesy *The Diplomat*).

Parliamentary Democracy

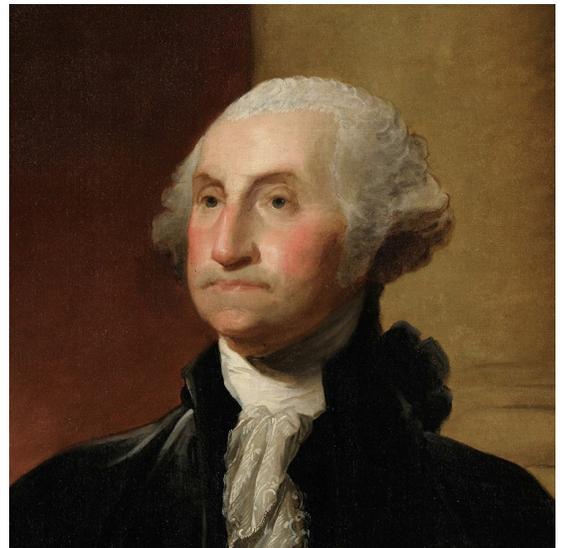
A **parliamentary democracy** is a form of democracy in which the people elect a legislative body called Parliament. The executive, usually called a prime minister, is selected from this group. Often, parliamentary democracies will have many different political parties, and the parties will have to cooperate in running the government because no one party has a clear majority in the body. India has a parliamentary system.



The chambers of the British Parliament are well known (image courtesy CNN).

Presidential Democracy

A **presidential democracy** is where voters select both their representatives in the legislative body and the executive. For example, in the United States, voters choose their representative every two years, electors to select their president through the **Electoral College** every four years, and their senator every six years.



George Washington served as the United States' first president (image courtesy of the White House).

Participatory Democracy

A **participatory democracy** is a form of government in which people have greater responsibilities than voting for representatives. This could include serving on advisory boards, commenting on policy changes, or proposing legislation. A specific kind of participatory democracy is called **direct democracy**. A direct democracy is a government run by all the people of a place. Most of the time, other types of governments will include elements of participatory democracy rather than organize the entire government around the idea that everyone should be involved in making day-to-day decisions.



A town hall meeting is a kind of direct democracy (image courtesy *New York Times*).

Our Defining Documents

The governments we have organized are defined by written documents—both those that influenced their design and their constitutions. Historians can study these documents to get a better understanding of why the creators of our constitutions made the decisions they did.

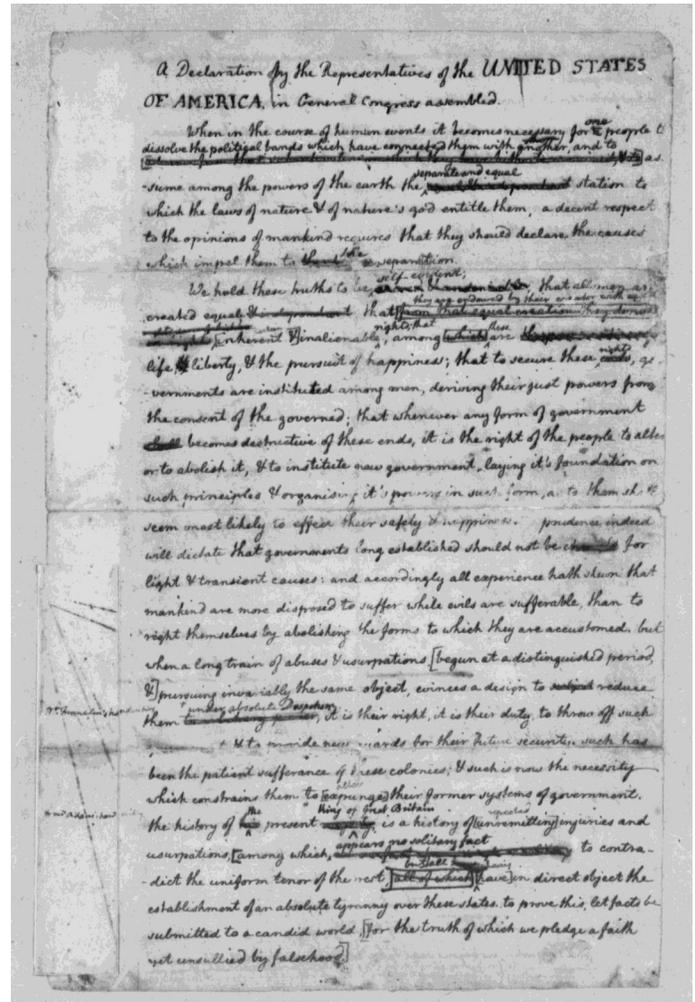
Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence is a brief document but very important in American history. Many people are familiar with these lines of this defining document:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

This brief passage includes many of the principles that shaped the American government, such as natural rights, equality, consent of the governed, and the social contract.

The British colonies in North America had become increasingly angry about a major shift in the British government's policies toward them. After the French and Indian War (1754–63), British officials attempted to pay back British debts by placing various **revenue**-raising schemes on the colonies. The colonists objected to this and to the introduction of a large number of British soldiers in the colonies to ensure cooperation. After a series of escalating events, war between the two sides began in 1775. Attempts to stay within the British empire failed. The Declaration of Independence was mostly written by Thomas Jefferson after the Second Continental Congress decided to make an official declaration of separation from the British Empire. The Fourth of July celebration marks the occasion of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress in 1776.



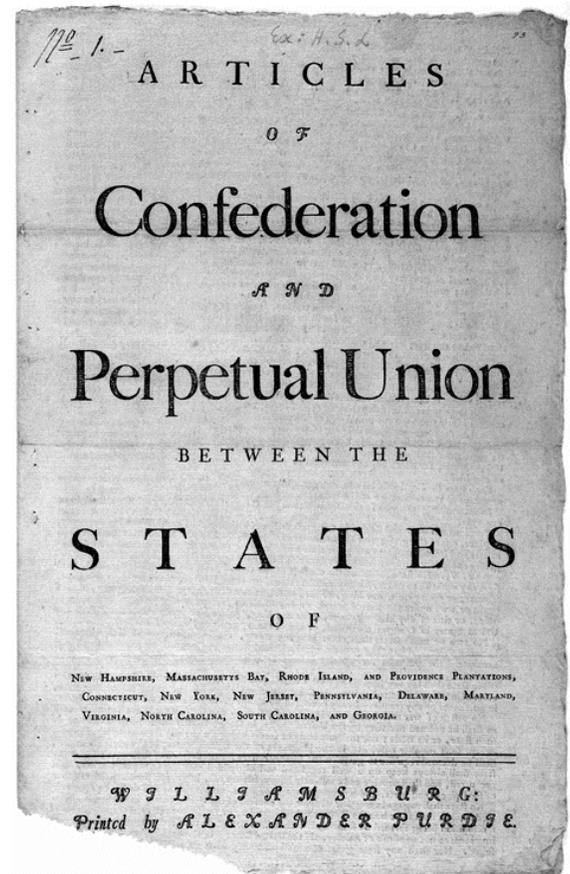
Thomas Jefferson's rough draft of the Declaration of Independence (image courtesy Library of Congress).

Articles of Confederation

The Articles of Confederation was the first constitution of the United States, ratified in 1781 and remaining in effect until the adoption of the US Constitution. It was an agreement between the original thirteen colonies to establish a unifying government in the US. The Articles made clear each state's **sovereignty** while also establishing a **Congress** to resolve interstate disputes. Congress created by the Articles of Confederation were also supposed to coordinate actions agreed upon by the states: for example, the raising and arming of a Continental army. However, that Congress was not very effective because it lacked power. It did not even have the authority to tax. The authors of the Articles of Confederation were fearful of concentrating too much power in a strong, central government. They had just gained independence from Great Britain because they believed that the leaders were overstepping their rightful authority.

After experiencing the challenges of living with a very weak central government, dissatisfaction with the system grew. Leaders such as James Madison and George Washington feared that the United States might not survive with the Articles of Confederation. Alexander

Hamilton convinced Congress to call for a Constitutional Convention to consider revising the Articles in 1787. The **delegates** rapidly shifted to writing a new document which would become the US Constitution. As it went through the ratification process and debates grew over whether the Constitution should be adopted or not, a group of writers started publishing essays on why the Constitution should be approved. These writers are known as the Federalists, and the collection of essays they wrote in support of the adoption of the Constitution, called the "Federalist Papers," were and are very influential.



The Articles of Confederation (image courtesy of the Library of Congress).

US Constitution

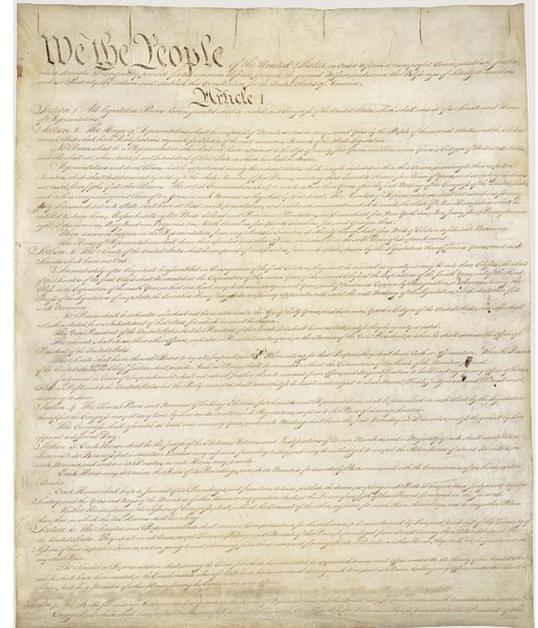
The US **Constitution** was created in order to establish the government of the United States after the failure of the Articles of Confederation. The Constitution needed to balance executive power with legislative and judicial power. The American people did not want another king after they had just fought a war against one, but they also wanted to create a governing system that would accomplish their goals.

The idea of a constitution originated in the ancient Greek city-states. Aristotle, a famous Greek philosopher, recorded the Athenian constitution. The writers of the US Constitution were very familiar with political philosophers such as John Locke, who believed people were born with certain “natural rights” such as life, liberty, and property, and Baron de Montesquieu, who argued for the protection of individual rights, separation of powers, and checks and balances.

The framers also looked at the Iroquois Constitution, also known as the Great Law of Peace, for ideas such as one office per person at one time, a process to remove leaders, a **bicameral** legislature, and a balance of power between the Iroquois Confederacy and individual tribes.

In fact, leaders in the Iroquois Confederacy had regular communication with the framers of the Constitution including Benjamin Franklin. The Great Council of the Confederacy was even asked to address the Continental Congress of 1776.

When the Constitution was **ratified** it was, and still is, seven articles long. It is the supreme law of the land.



The Constitution (image courtesy of the National Archives).



The people of the Iroquois Confederacy called themselves the *Haudenosaunee*, (pronounced "hoo-dee-noh-SHAW-nee"). This is a *Haudenosaunee* settlement (image courtesy PBS).

Preamble to US Constitution

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Articles in the Constitution

Article 1	Organizes the legislative branch
Article 2	Organizes the executive branch
Article 3	Organizes the judicial branch
Article 4	Defines relationship between the states and the federal government
Article 5	Establishes procedure to amend the Constitution
Article 6	Establishes supremacy of the federal government
Article 7	Describes ratification process

The Constitution was ratified and becomes the official framework of the United States on June 21, 1788.

On December 15, 1791, the Bill of Rights was ratified and added to the US Constitution.

The Amendment Process

The framers recognized the Constitution might need to be changed. They included a process to make changes to the Constitution through the addition of **amendments**. The Constitution was amended with the first ten amendments, or the **Bill of Rights**, in the first Congress. Without an agreement for the addition of those clear statements of protection of individual rights, it might not have been approved. Since then, many amendments have been proposed. The Constitution has been amended twenty-seven times.

If an amendment is ratified it means that each state needs to amend their own constitutions to reflect the US Constitution because of the **Supremacy Clause**. The Supremacy Clause establishes that federal constitution and law takes priority over state constitution and law.

How is the US Constitution amended?

Either:

Both houses of Congress approve an amendment with $\frac{2}{3}$ approval in both houses

Or

A constitutional convention called by $\frac{2}{3}$ of state legislatures proposes an amendment

Then:

The amendment becomes a part of the Constitution when $\frac{3}{4}$ of the states ratify the amendment

Amendments to the US Constitution

Bill of Rights

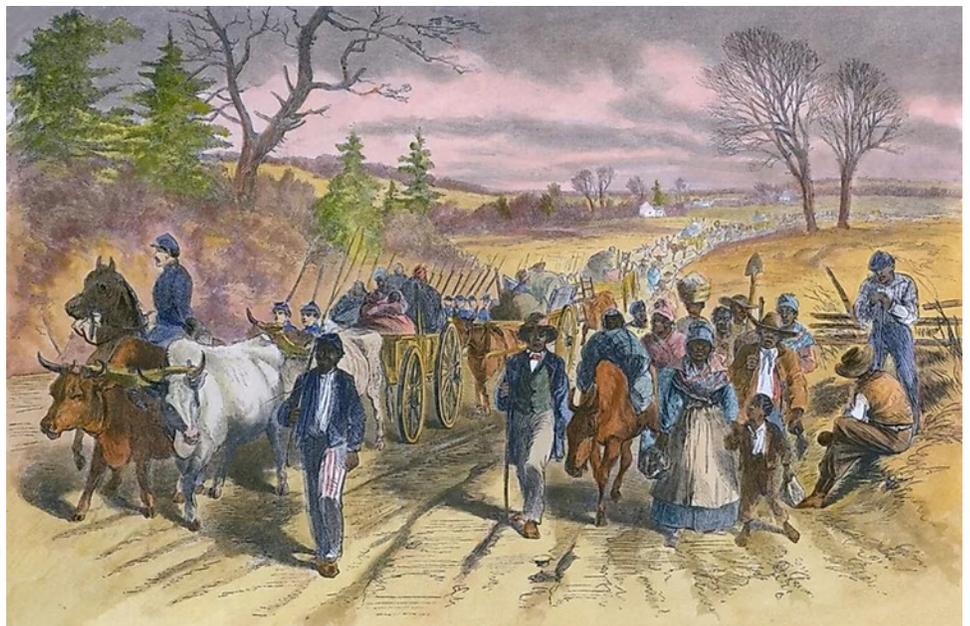
The Bill of Rights is one of America's founding documents and includes the first ten amendments to the US Constitution. It makes clear the limitations placed on the power of the federal government and how it can treat its citizens. The Bill of Rights contains the first amendment, which protects a person's ability to express their beliefs. Several amendments offer protections for people involved in the criminal justice system, from police searches to court procedures. The Bill of Rights was added to the US Constitution to help get the Constitution passed because citizens were concerned about the amount of power the federal government had. In fact, the tenth amendment declares that any power not assigned to the federal government belongs the state or the people. A large group of citizens, collectively named the **Anti-Federalists**, rejected the Constitution without these protections. The Anti-Federalists believed that the federal government was too powerful in relation to the states and individuals without a section that explicitly states in what ways the federal government was limited.



James Madison wrote much of the Constitution and incorporated the Bill of Rights during the first legislative session in 1789 (image courtesy the White House).

Reconstruction Amendments

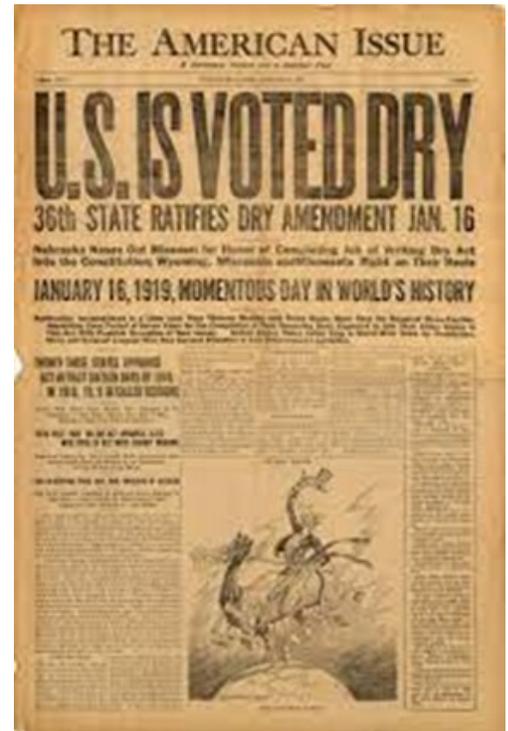
These amendments were added to the US Constitution after the American Civil War. The thirteenth amendment abolished slavery except for punishment as a crime. This amendment was necessary because the Emancipation Proclamation only applied to the states in rebellion. Maryland, Delaware, Missouri, and Kentucky were slave states that remained loyal to the Union. The fourteenth amendment does several important things. First, it grants citizenship to all persons "born or **naturalized** in the United States." It seeks to protect citizens from unequal treatment by requiring that all citizens receive equal protection of the law and due process. The fifteenth Amendment prohibited states from **disenfranchising** voters "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."



The Reconstruction Amendments attempted to empower former slaves to become full and equal citizens of the US (image courtesy *World Atlas*).

The Eighteenth Amendment

The eighteenth amendment prohibited the manufacture, sale, or transport of alcohol in the United States. It was ratified on January 16, 1919. For decades, activist groups tried to limit or ban access to alcohol because they viewed it as a major social problem. **Prohibition** slowly lost public support partly because it was not as effective or transformative as advocates argued it would be. The twenty-first Amendment was passed on December 5, 1933, officially repealing the eighteenth amendment or prohibition.



The United States prohibited the sale and distribution of most alcohol in the years between 1919 and 1933 (image courtesy Ohio Memory).

The Nineteenth Amendment

The nineteenth amendment, ratified on August 18, 1920, established the right to vote for women. Women fought for the right to vote for decades in the US, beginning in 1848. Proposed in 1878, the nineteenth Amendment took a staggering forty-two years (1920) to be ratified. Most of the other amendments took seven years or less.

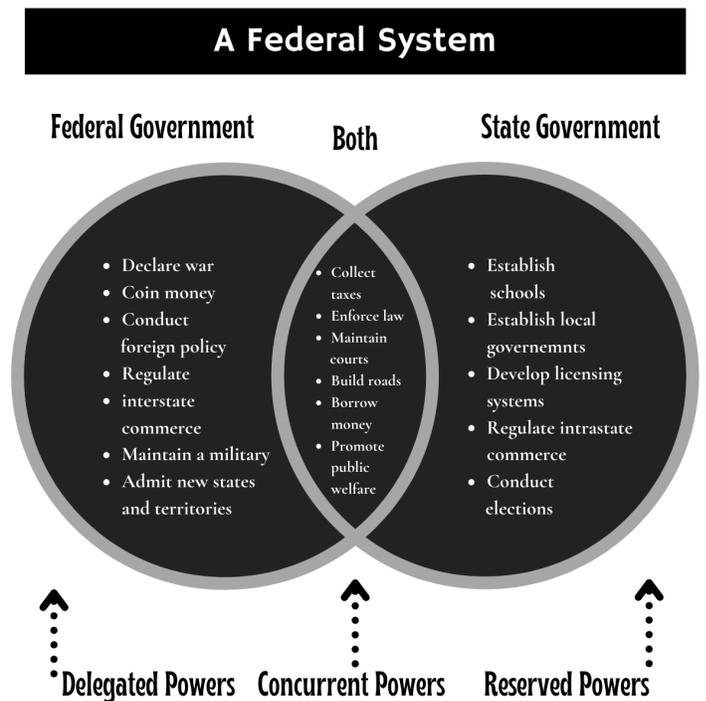


Women's suffrage procession in 1913 (image courtesy of Harvard University).

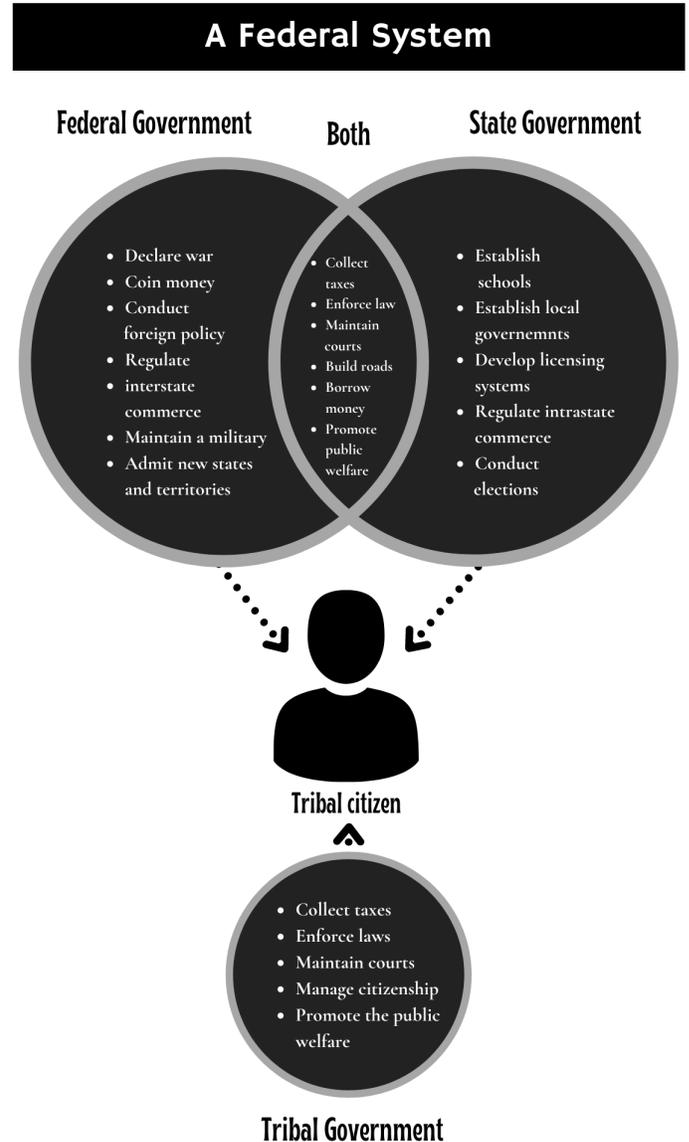
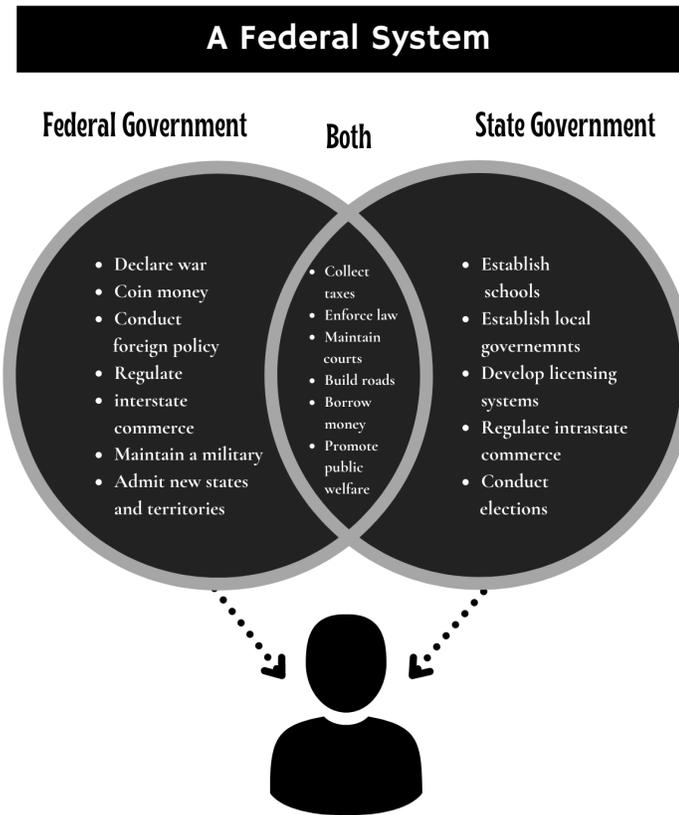
Federalism

People in the United States live within a federal system. This means that they are governed by several different governments at the same time. Each of the governments has a different set of powers and responsibilities. This can be difficult to understand, but one way to think about it is to consider how similar it is to a student's life. A student has parents or guardians that have authority over the student and responsibilities to the student. When the student goes to school, other authority figures enforce rules and are responsible for providing education for the student. Schools and parents govern different parts of the student's life and different responsibilities. This is similar to how our federal system works for people who live in the United States. There is the United States government (also called the federal government), the state government, **county** and **municipal** governments and, sometimes, a tribal government that have authority and responsibilities to the people in the US.

Government Power in the Federal System		
Enumerated power to the federal government	These are powers the federal government that are specifically described in the Constitution	Examples: coining money, regulate commerce, declare war
Implied power to the federal government	These are powers the federal government has that are implied by the enumerated powers.	Examples: If the federal government is authorized to coin money, it is implied it may create an agency (the Mint) to manage the process.
Powers denied to the federal government	These are powers the federal government may not exercise.	Examples: The federal government may not infringe on the freedom of speech or try a person twice for the same crime.
Reserved powers of the state	These are powers that are reserved to the states.	Examples: States determine licensing requirements and the rules that make marriages and divorces legal.
Concurrent powers of the federal and state governments	These are powers that the federal and state governments share.	Examples: Both the federal and state governments may collect taxes. They may both incarcerate people convicted of some crimes.



Power is divided in a very specific way among these kinds of governments. If the Constitution specifically states that the federal government may do something, that is called a delegated power. Some powers were specifically reserved for states. These are called reserved powers. On some matters, the federal government and the state governments have the same powers. These are called concurrent powers. Because tribal nations are sovereign, their governments also have power over their land and people. The power the states and tribal nations have are only limited by federal law and the Constitution.



Governments in the United States

The United States Government

The United States is a constitutional federal **republic**. The Constitution is the supreme law of the land, establishing the rules of operation for the government. “Republic” is a word that describes a representative government. “Federal” means a national government with certain specific powers and responsibilities, and state governments with a different set of powers and responsibilities. The federal government has limited power over the fifty states and the state government has power within the state guided by federal guidelines. The United States government is organized into three branches with different areas of responsibility: the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary.

Oklahoma’s State Government

The State of Oklahoma’s government is similar to the United States government in that it has a constitution and all the same branches; however, it has different power than the United States government. The State of Oklahoma must follow the federal Constitution and its own state constitution.



The United States and Oklahoma state flags fly outside the Oklahoma State Capitol (image courtesy State of Oklahoma).

Tribal Government

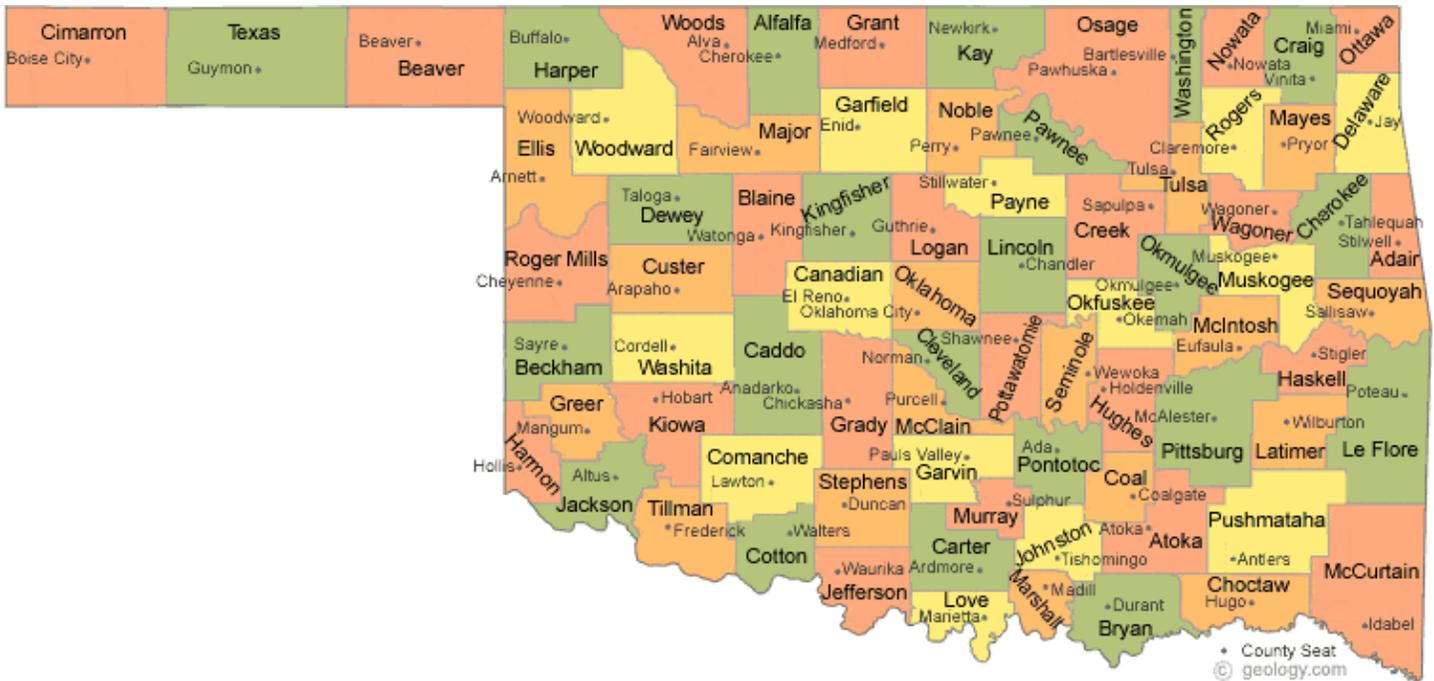
The many tribal nations located within the state boundaries of Oklahoma are sovereign, meaning they are the highest authority in some matters over their membership and land. Tribal governments work with the state and federal government to promote their people’s interests. Similar to the federal and state governments, tribal governments are democratic and representative, although the forms of government can vary widely between nations. Tribal governments have **jurisdiction** over their tribal citizens and tribal reservations.



The Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma operates a tribal police department and court system (image courtesy Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma).

County Government

The state constitution organized the state into smaller subdivisions called counties. In Oklahoma, county governments center around three elected county commissioners in each county. County governments have a different set of powers and responsibilities than the federal and state governments. County governments have significant responsibilities for road construction and maintenance, court systems, and collecting property tax. Counties typically have an elected sheriff and maintain a jail. This level of government funds libraries. County governments serve both the **urban** and **rural** residents within the county border.



What county do you live in? (image courtesy geology.com)

Municipal Government

In some parts of Oklahoma, the population elects some form of municipal or city government. Municipal governments do not cover the entire geographic area of the state. They are usually formed when a place sees significant population growth and enough **citizens** vote for a municipal government. The form of government can vary, but most adopt a mayor-council or council-manager format. They create a **charter**, which is similar in function to a constitution. The charter explains how the government should work. Individuals are elected by sections of the municipality and serve on the council. The municipal government offers a number of services, often including sewage, water, trash, parks, and building permits. They operate police and fire departments.



Sanitation, parks, and water service are provided by municipal governments (images courtesy *Houston Chronicle*, City of Oklahoma City, and LawtonOK.gov).

The Branches of Government

The Articles of Confederation and the US Constitution contain evidence that the framers feared giving too much authority to the government. They devised several methods to ensure government officials would never have too much authority. One of these methods, which is written into the US Constitution, was a system called “**separation of powers**,” which divided the government into three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. These branches control a different part of the government and they also check the powers of the other branches, so one branch does not become too powerful.

Branches of Government

Legislative

- Passes laws
- Creates budget
- Conducts investigations
- Confirms appointments
- Ratifies treaties
- Impeaches elected officials

Executive

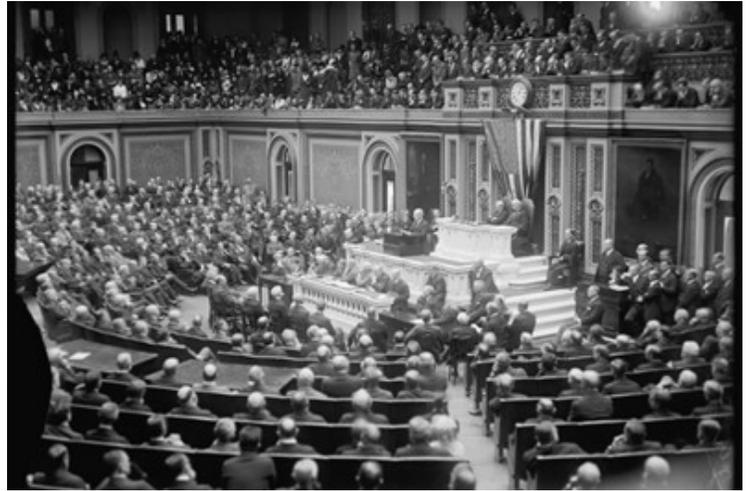
- Veto legislation
- Creates policies
- Organizes agencies to enforce laws
- Conducts foreign policy
- Chooses appointments
- Maintains military

Judicial

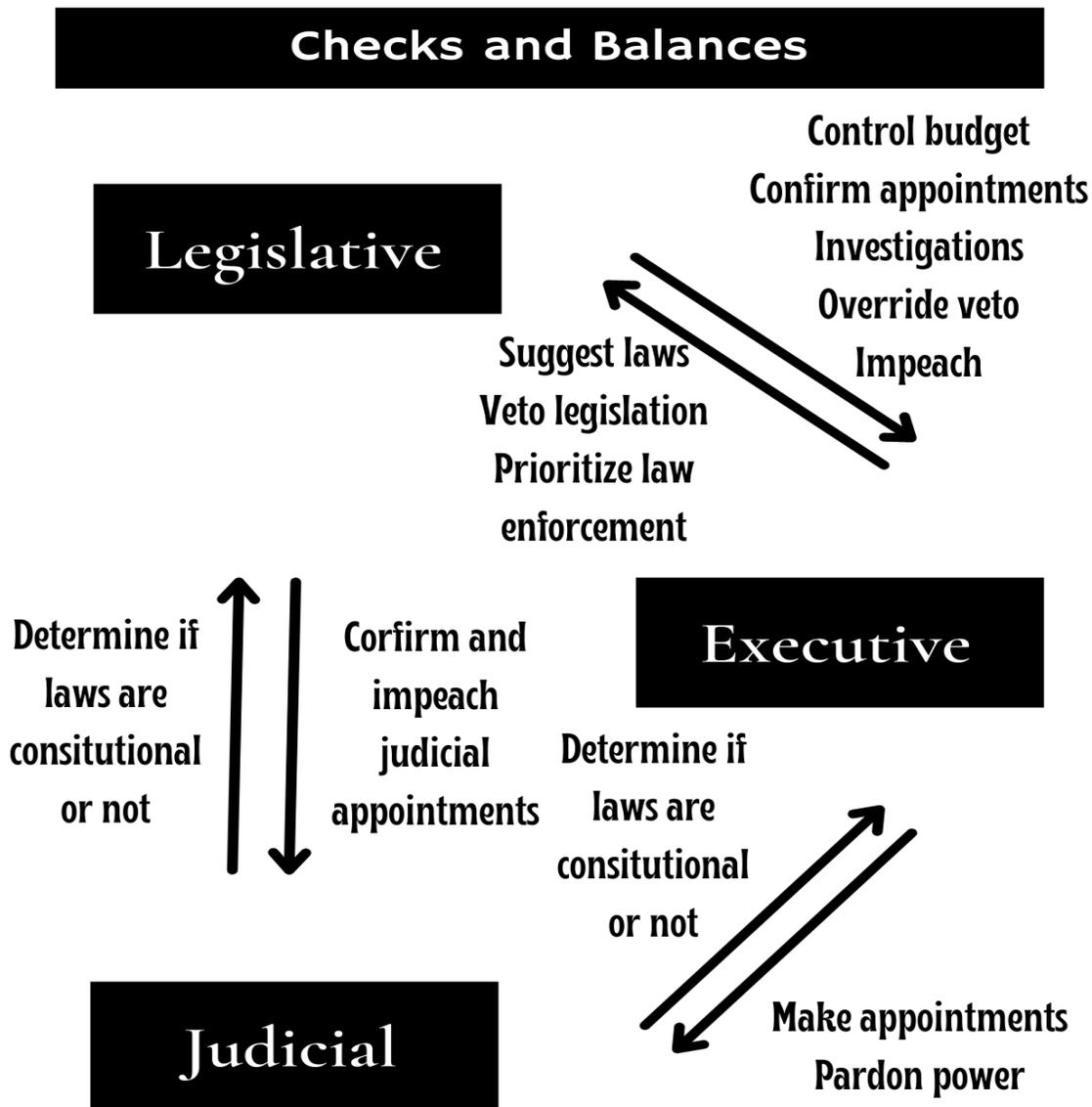
- Interprets laws
- Reviews the constitutionality of laws
- Makes judgements in court cases

Checks and Balances

The branch system allows the different branches to check and balance each other. This system forces the branches to cooperate and gives each branch authority over some functions of another branch. For example, if the legislative branch wants to make a law, the president, the head of the executive branch, can **veto** it, which prevents it from becoming law. The judicial branch can declare the law unconstitutional. At the same time, the legislative branch can **impeach** the president and judges if they do something wrong or **corrupt**.



President Woodrow Wilson gives the first State of the Union address to Congress in person. Presidents are constitutionally required to give a yearly report to Congress (image courtesy the Library of Congress).



The Legislative Branch

This branch is responsible for creating laws. Congress also confirms or denies presidential nominations for heads of federal agencies and judges, sets the **budget**, and has the authority to declare war.

Congress has two bodies: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Congress is bicameral because of the Great Compromise of 1787. The compromise arose to allow states with a larger population a law-making chamber that mirrored their size, allowing these states to dominate the activities of that house. To balance this, another chamber with equal representation from all states was created to maintain the national power of states with smaller populations.



The name for the United States' legislature is the US Congress, and this is the building where they meet. It is called the US Capitol building. State legislatures are called legislatures and meet in their Capitol buildings (image courtesy NPR).

The House of Representatives

One part of the United States' bicameral legislature is the House of Representatives. It is a group of legislators based on the population of the states. The House is led by the speaker of the house who is part of the current majority party. The speaker is also the next in line for the presidency if the vice president is incapable. Currently, there are 435 elected representatives. A representative serves a two-year term with no limit on the number of terms. Their terms short so that this body can more closely reflect current public opinion of political issues. The House has many powers assigned to it by the Constitution, such as the power to write the federal budget, introduce **bills**, impeach federal officials, and elect the president in the case of an Electoral College tie. The House is the part of the government that may declare war.

The Senate

The Senate is the other part of the United States' bicameral legislature. It is composed of two senators per state. There are one hundred senators in the Senate. The vice president leads the Senate. Senators serve six-year terms and do not have a term limit. The Senate is also different from the House because only one-third of the Senate is elected each election cycle. The Senate has powers assigned to it by the Constitution. These include the powers to confirm the president's appointments to federal positions, ratify **treaties**, and try impeachment cases given to it by the House. The Senate has a role in foreign policy through their confirmation of foreign service staff and their responsibility in ratifying treaties concluded by the executive branch.



Carl Albert served as the Speaker of the House from 1971 to 1976 (23139.G24, John Dunning Political Collection, OHS).

The Executive Branch

The Presidency

This branch is responsible for carrying out and enforcing laws. The head of the executive branch is the president. The president has many roles and they include:

Chief of state: The president is the leader of the country

Chief executive: The president enforces laws, appoints key federal and grants **pardons**

Commander in chief: The president leads the military

Chief diplomat: The president negotiates with other countries

Chief legislator: The president signs bills into laws, introduces legislation, and works on the budget with Congress

Head of the party: The president helps their party with raising money and electing candidates

The Vice President

The vice president, or VP, is the president's second-in-command. They have their own responsibilities but their most important job is to run the country if the president is incapable (Article II, Section 1, US Constitution). Some of their other roles are running the Senate and breaking tie votes in that body. The vice president also collects the electoral votes for the presidential candidates and announces it in front of Congress.



Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected to four terms! He is the reason there is the twenty-second amendment to the Constitution limiting the amount of time a president can serve (image courtesy NPR).

The president is not directly elected the way senators and representatives are. People vote for electors to send to the Electoral College during a presidential election. These electors cast their votes, and they actually elect the president.



The election of Aaron Burr to the vice presidency convinced many people that they had to change the rules for electing the president and vice president (image courtesy National Archives).

The Cabinet

The cabinet is a tradition from the beginning of the presidency as well as an interpretation of Article II, Section 2 of the US Constitution. It is a group of the heads of executive departments such as the **secretaries** of defense, education, and treasury, as well as the vice president and the **attorney general**. This group helps inform the president on issues.



Washington and his cabinet (image courtesy *Smithsonian* magazine).

Federal Agencies

These agencies are separate from the presidential cabinet. They are established by **statutes** passed by Congress. They are very similar to the executive departments because federal agencies report to the president. However, unlike the executive departments where a secretary is confirmed and fired by the president, in federal agencies the head is chosen by the president but cannot be removed by them. This helps limit the power of the president while opening the opportunity for diverse opinions to be heard by the president. Examples of independent federal agencies include the Central Intelligence Agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Federal Reserve.



The Department of the Interior is responsible for managing the country's land and natural resources (image courtesy Department of the Interior).

The Judicial Branch

This branch is responsible for interpreting the meaning of laws, applying laws to cases, and deciding if laws violate the Constitution. Some courts within the judicial branch conduct trials to determine if a **defendant** has violated a law (criminal) or caused an **injury** (civil) to another party. In a criminal trial, the prosecuting party is the government. Sometimes, a guilty verdict can result in the **incarceration** of a person. A civil case is where one person or group sues another person or group over an issue that has caused a problem and they cannot come to an agreement about how it should be solved. There are three types of courts in the federal judiciary: district courts, circuit courts, and the Supreme Court. The president appoints judges and they are confirmed by the Senate.

District Courts

District courts are the lowest level of court in the federal government, and include the bankruptcy court, Court of International Trade, and the US Court of Federal Claims. District courts conduct both civil and criminal trials. There are ninety-four district courts across the US. The goal of these courts is to get the facts of a case and reach a verdict using a judge and **jury**.



Judge Diane Humetewa (Hopi) is a federal district judge with the US District Court of Arizona (image courtesy AP).

Court of Appeals

These courts are the next highest level in the judicial branch. There are thirteen **appellate courts** across twelve regional circuits, which were created by organizing the ninety-four federal judicial districts. The thirteenth court is called the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit and can hear special cases from other specialized courts such as the Court of International Trade. The goal of these courts is to see if the district courts applied the law correctly to court cases. These courts consist of three judges and do not use a jury. The appellate courts only examine if the district court came to its decision properly. They do not retry cases or offer new chances for the case to be heard if new evidence is discovered.



Judge Luck Koh serves on the US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals (image courtesy *San Francisco Chronicle*).

The Supreme Court

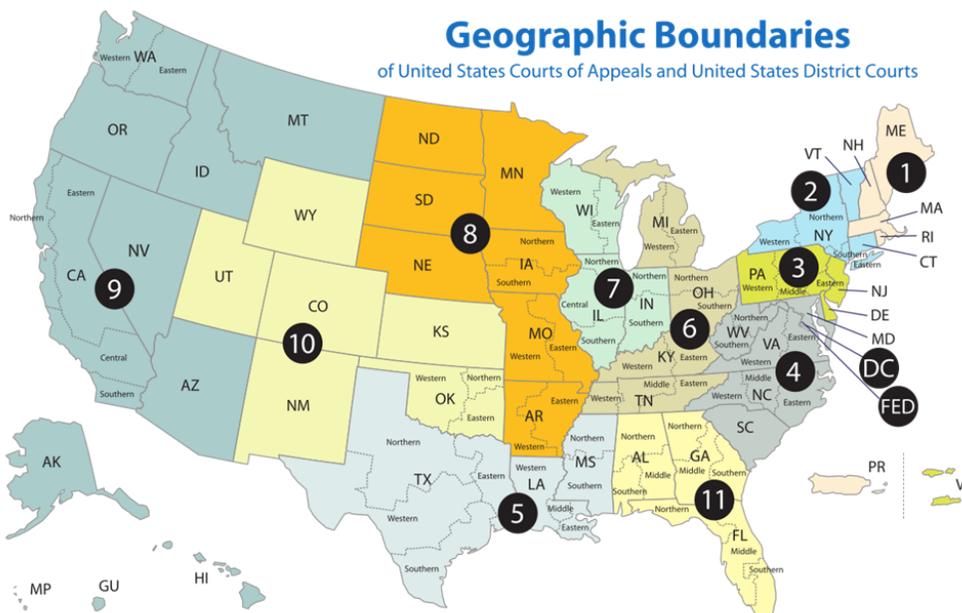
This is the highest court in the United States. Article III of the US Constitution directs the creation of the Supreme Court, which has final authority over all court cases. It is made up of nine justices: a chief justice and eight associate justices. These are nominated by the president, confirmed by the Senate, and serve for life. A lifetime appointment allows justices to make unpopular opinions because they cannot be thrown out of office as a result of their ruling.

Only the Supreme Court has the power to decide if a law is constitutional or not. This is called **judicial review** and was established by the court case *Marbury v. Madison* in 1803. There are many court systems in other countries that do not have judicial review. Decisions are reached by the justices choosing a side. Most of the time, decisions require five justices to support it.



The Supreme Court in 2022. Seated, left to right: Associate Justice Samuel Alito, Associate Justice Clarence Thomas, Chief Justice John Roberts, Associate Justice Stephen Breyer and Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

Standing, left to right: Associate Justice Brett Kavanaugh, Associate Justice Elena Kagan, Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch and Associate Justice Amy Coney Barrett (image courtesy the Supreme Court, Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States).



The district and appellate court system is organized geographically (map courtesy of UScourts.gov).

The Defining Documents of the State of Oklahoma

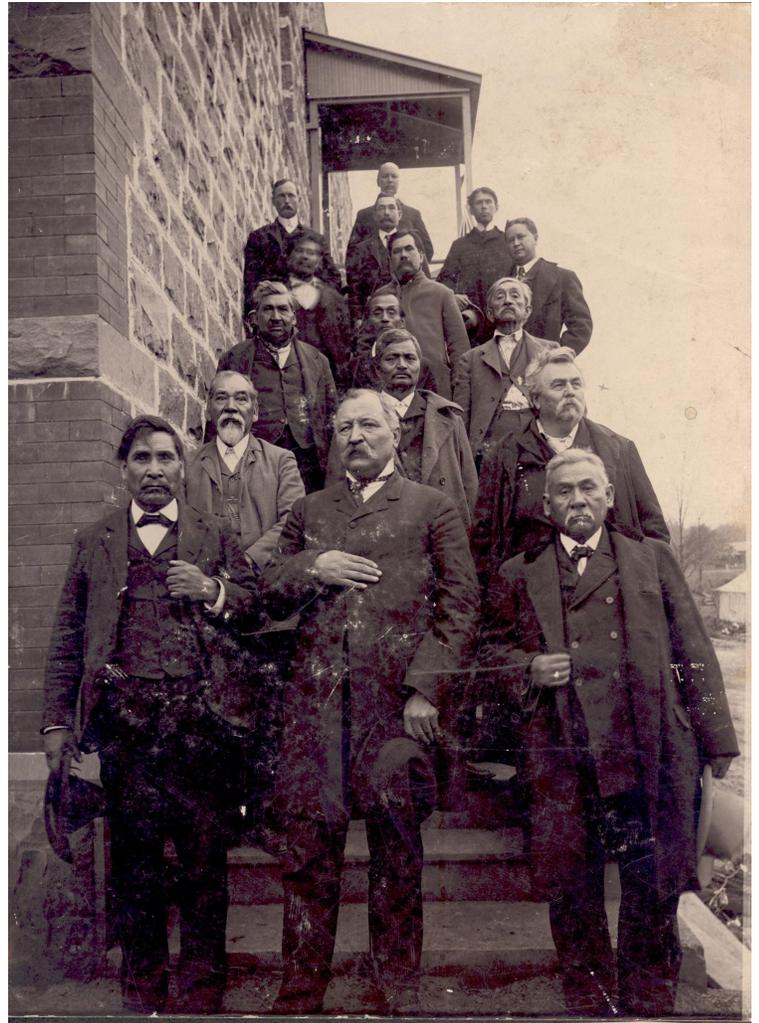
Sequoyah Constitution

As part of the negotiation for the removal of the Five Tribes in the 1830s, the US government agreed that once removed, the tribes would never be “embraced in any Territory or State.” As westward expansion drove settlers across the continent, American Indian nations in Indian Territory were content to remain exactly as they were. However, the Curtis Act of 1898 forced these tribes to break up communal lands into private land plots and abolish their tribal governments. The tribal nations attempted to retain their sovereignty by cooperating and writing a constitution. They were concerned that Indian Territory would be combined with Oklahoma Territory. They organized the Sequoyah Convention of August 21, 1905, in Muskogee, part of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, in order to exercise control on the march toward statehood. The convention attendees advocated for Indian Territory to be admitted as its own state.

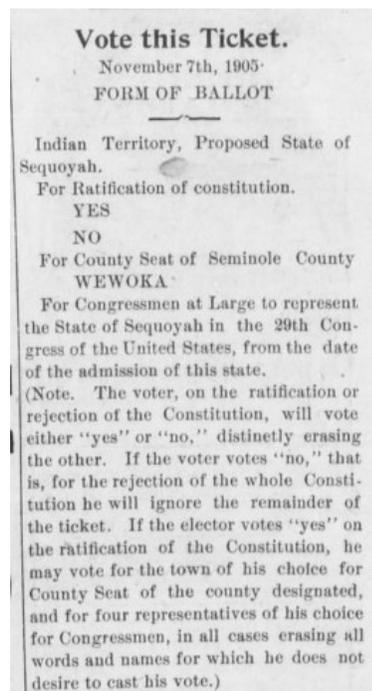
Four of the Five Tribes sent their chiefs to the convention. Chickasaw Governor Douglas Johnston refused to go to the convention because he thought the Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory would be combined anyway. In his place, he sent William “Alfalfa Bill” Murray instead.

The Sequoyah Constitution was signed on October 14, 1905, in McAlester. The Constitution was approved with 56,279 for and 9,073 against on November 7, 1905.

During the 59th Congress, Senator Porter James McCumber of North Dakota and Representative Arthur Phillips Murphy of Missouri, who was also the attorney for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, filed statehood bills for the state of Sequoyah. However, their proposal went nowhere as the Republican Congress refused to consider it because they feared another Democratic state, as the Democratic Party heavily influenced Indian Territory.



Delegates to the Sequoyah Convention (576, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS). Below is a copy of the ballot from the *Wewoka Herald*, November 3, 1905.



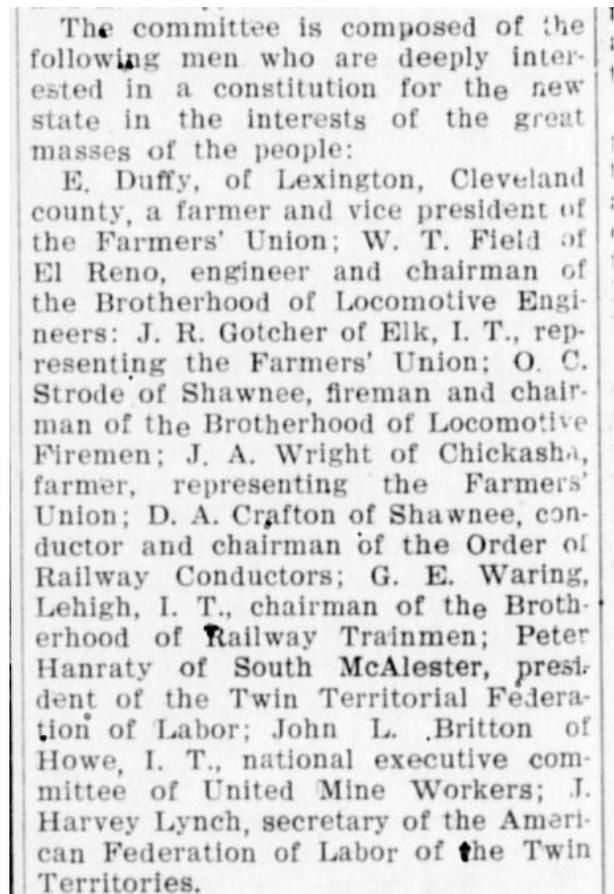
Shawnee Demands

After the failure of Congress to accept the Sequoyah Constitution, it was clear that the two territories would come in as one state. After passage of the Enabling Act in June 1906, different groups began organizing to ensure that the new Oklahoma Constitution would include rules that they thought important. During this time, many believed that regulation of the economy by the government was a good solution to problems that developed with industrialization. Many people also believed that the government should have rules protecting vulnerable groups from abuse, such as workers, children, women, and farmers. Those who wanted rules that reflected these values were called progressives. Oklahoma had many progressives, both voters and those writing the constitution. Progressives, both in and outside Oklahoma, were excited to have the opportunity to write a new constitution to serve as a model constitution for a modern state.

Different people and organizations in the state shared their ideas about what should go in the constitution to the delegates who would write it. The most important example of this advocacy is the Shawnee Demands, or the “24 Demands.” In August the Twin Territories Federation of Labor, the Oklahoma Farmer’s Union, and several groups of railroad workers met to make a list of suggestions for the constitution. These groups represented a majority of the workers in the state. They developed a list with twenty-four demands, which was approved and released on September 10, 1906. They wanted the constitution to include:

- The initiative, referendum, and recall
- Mandatory education and free textbooks printed by the state
- An eight hour day for miners and government workers
- A corporate tax commission to ensure corporations were paying the correct amount of taxes
- A ban on using convict labor
- A ban on child labor in mines, mills, and factories
- A ban on gambling in farm products

In her diary, Kate Barnard wrote that the Democrats, the largest party in Oklahoma at the time, embraced the “24 Demands” and potential delegates campaigned on them. The vast majority of these proposals were written into the constitution. Oklahoma’s Constitution is considered one of the most progressive, and longest, constitutions to be adopted.



A list of the committee members who wrote the Shawnee Demands (*The Labor Signal and Oklahoma State Labor News*, September 21, 1906).

The Oklahoma Constitution

Advocates for combining the territories and proceeding toward statehood succeeded, and the Oklahoma Enabling Act of 1906 was passed by Congress. This act, signed by President Roosevelt, let the registered voters of Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory elect **delegates** to a state constitutional convention. These delegates were to draft a state constitution, allowing them to petition for statehood.

After weeks of deliberation, the constitution was set before voters on September 17, 1907, on the 120th anniversary of the **adjournment** of the Constitutional Convention. The delegates of this Constitutional Convention took pieces of other state constitutions, the Sequoyah Constitution, as well as the US Constitution, to create the Oklahoma Constitution we know today.

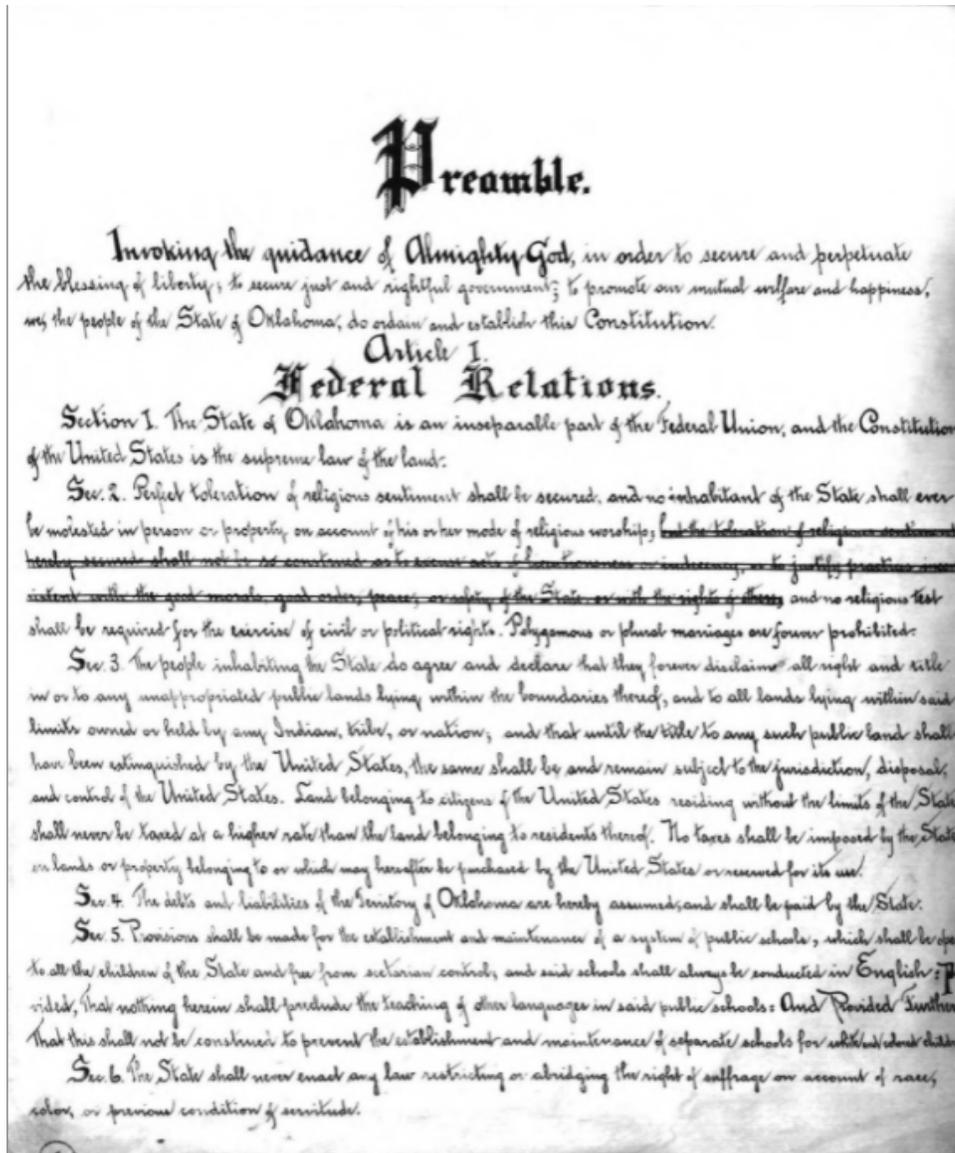


Theodore Roosevelt was the president who approved Oklahoma statehood (6116, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).



A session of the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention. photograph by Fred S. Barde, 1907 (11438.B, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).

The Oklahoma Constitution is longer and more specific than the US Constitution. It serves as the supreme law of the land for Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Constitution has a **preamble** and thirty articles. It establishes the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the Oklahoma government as well as regulations of banking, the process of constructing public roads, and the rules regarding **suffrage**. Most constitutions do not include so many fine details. As Oklahoma was moving toward statehood, many voters within the United States concluded that the government has a responsibility in regulating business and in protecting the public. This general trend was called Progressivism. Many popular politicians in most of the parties promoted Progressive ideals, including Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. In Oklahoma, many state leaders were also Progressives. This belief that the government had many responsibilities can be seen throughout the Oklahoma Constitution.



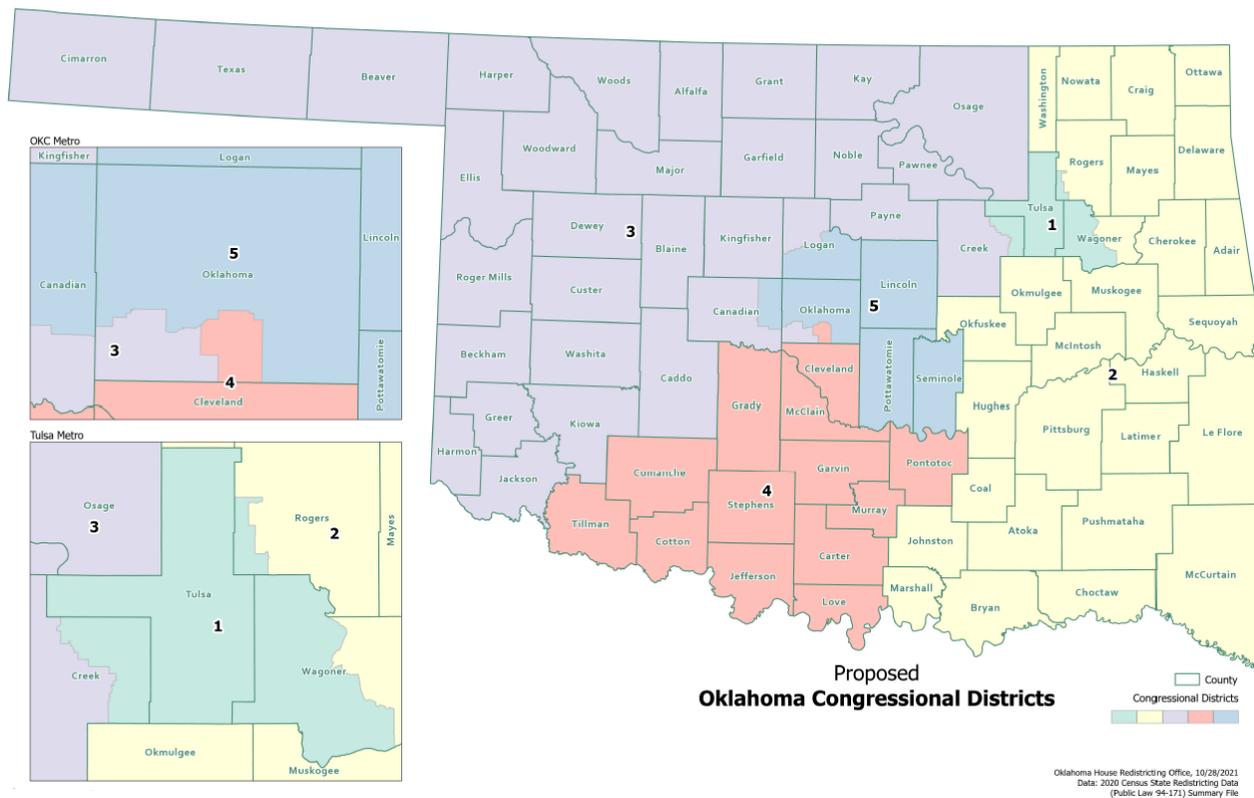
This is an image of the original constitution of Oklahoma (OHS).

Want to explore the Constitution?
Head to http://www.oklegislature.gov/ok_constitution.html

Oklahoma's Legislative Branch

Similar to Congress at the federal level, the Oklahoma Legislature is bicameral with a House of Representatives and a Senate. The House is led by the speaker of the house, and the Senate is led by the lieutenant governor. Another difference between the two legislatures is their size. As established by the US Constitution, the US Senate consists of two senators per state while the US House is legally set at 435 members. The house members represent a geographic district within a state, while the senators represent all the people of a state. The Oklahoma legislative bodies are different because they follow the guidelines of the Oklahoma Constitution. The Oklahoma Senate has 48 members because there are 48 senate districts in Oklahoma. Each district gets a senator. The Oklahoma House has 101 members because there are 101 house districts. A district is an area that votes for a representative. Every ten years, the districts change shape based on the new population figures released after the **census**. Each district is supposed to have close to the same population as the other districts. Over ten years, as people move, the populations shift, and the districts are redrawn to balance the populations. This is called **redistricting**.

The state legislature meets in Oklahoma's Capitol in Oklahoma City. Each legislative term is two years and has two sessions. The first session is the year after the most recent statewide election and the second is the year after. The legislature usually meets from January to May for a regular session. Sometimes, they meet at irregular times if there is an important matter that cannot wait. This is called a special session.



This district map is based on the 2020 census (image courtesy KJRH).

Oklahoma's Executive Branch

Like the US government's president, Oklahoma has a head of the executive branch: the governor. The governor, like the president, has the job of enforcing laws and vetoing legislation. Additionally, the **lieutenant governor** is a role similar to the vice president. The lieutenant governor also leads the state senate and serves as a tiebreaker for senate votes.

The executive branch includes state agencies that conduct state business. Each of the agencies specializes in an area of responsibility. For example, the state Department of Education oversees the schools in the state. The Department of Environmental Quality works to ensure our air, water, and land are clean.

The state executive has a cabinet to advise, much like the president's cabinet. However, in Oklahoma specifically, the secretary of state has an additional responsibility: American Indian affairs. On the federal level, the secretary of the interior meets with American Indian nations. The Oklahoma secretary of state has roles similar to roles of the federal secretaries of state and interior. This is necessary because there are so many Native nations within Oklahoma; these governments need close cooperation. The executive branch needs to have someone in charge of overseeing this work.



Charles N. Haskell, first governor of Oklahoma (6091, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).



Kevin Stitt, Oklahoma's governor in 2022 (image courtesy State of Oklahoma).

Oklahoma's Judicial Branch

Like the federal judicial branch, the Oklahoma judicial branch has levels of courts. Unlike the federal branch, judges are elected for the municipal and district courts. The governor appoints judges for the Courts of Appeals and the Supreme Court.

Municipal Courts

Municipal courts are on the city level of government. They have limited judicial power and mainly focus on **misdemeanor** crimes within the community. An example of a misdemeanor crime would be a speeding ticket given by a police department.

District Courts

The next level of court is where the majority of cases are heard. These are also called courts of general jurisdiction. There are seventy-seven district courts across Oklahoma for the seventy-seven judicial districts organized by county. This court hears criminal trials and civil **lawsuits**.



Municipal court in Newcastle (image courtesy City of Newcastle).



Tulsa County District Court building (image courtesy KTUL).

Court of Appeals

These courts are the next level of the judicial branch and are split into two types of courts. Their objective is to determine if the law was applied correctly in the municipal or district court. Courts of appeals do not retry the case; they simply make sure the law was applied correctly. There are two types in the State of Oklahoma.

1. Court of Criminal Appeals - This is Oklahoma's highest court for criminal cases. It looks at appealed cases that deal with crimes. It has five judges.
2. Court of Civil Appeals - This court is the next level for civil cases. Civil appeals also go to the state Supreme Court. There are twelve judges in this court, divided into four groups of three. A three-judge panel will hear a case and deliver an opinion.



The Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals in 2022 (image courtesy Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals).



The judges of the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals in 2022 (image courtesy Ballotpedia).

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court is the highest court in the state of Oklahoma for civil cases. The Oklahoma judicial system is special because it has two high courts for cases. The Court of Criminal Appeals is the highest court for criminal cases, and the Supreme Court is the highest court for civil cases, especially those dealing with the Constitution.



Oklahoma Supreme Court in 2022 (image courtesy Oklahoma Watch).

County Government

The state constitution establishes county governments to help divide the state into smaller pieces to assist in administration. This level of government serves the state and enforces its laws. They also assist municipalities by providing road, bridge, and fire services. There are seventy-seven counties in the state of Oklahoma, each with a **county seat**.

While every county is different, they are all organized in the same way. Each county is governed by eight elected officials and a district attorney.

Board of County Commissioners

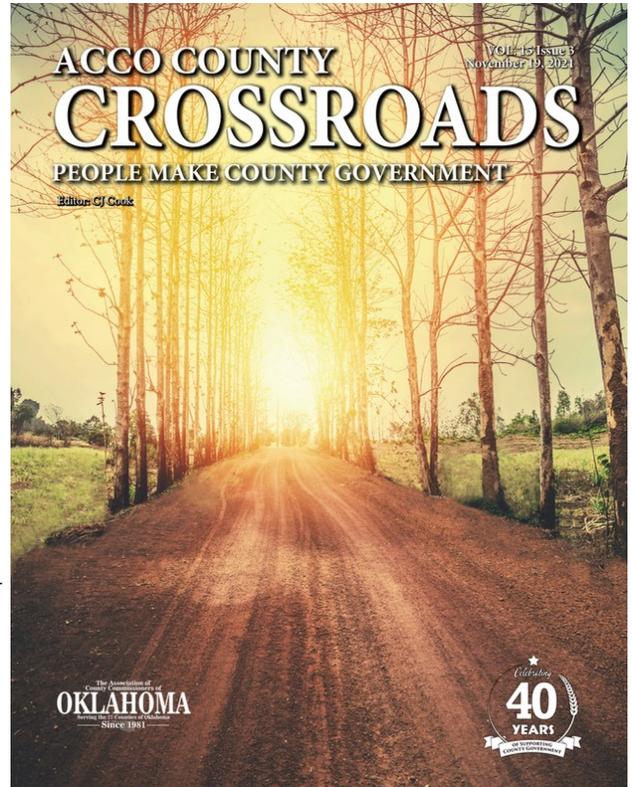
Three of the eight elected officials are called county commissioners. They serve as a **quasi**-head of government and are elected from three equally sized districts within the county.

County Sheriff

The county sheriff is the chief law enforcement officer. They enforce court decisions and other laws within the county. The deputies in the sheriff's department will spend their time enforcing traffic laws, investigating crimes, serving **warrants**, and conducting **evictions**. They usually also operate the county jail.

District Attorney

The district attorney serves as the chief prosecutor for the county. They are responsible for deciding which criminal cases to prosecute and representing the country in court. In addition to the funding the office receives from county government, the office collects fees from individuals convicted of crimes. The district attorney uses this money to operate.



In Oklahoma, there is an organization called the Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma (ACCO). This is the cover of their newsletter (image courtesy ACCO).



Oklahoma has 77 counties, each with its own county seat (image courtesy Geology.com).

County Clerk

One of the eight elected officials, the county clerk keeps track of the records of the county and serves as the secretary for the county commission. These records include property deeds, real estate records, and legal documents.

District Court Clerk

The district court clerk keeps records for the criminal and civil cases of the district court. These records can include marriage licenses, divorce decrees, and adoption certificates. The court clerk's office is responsible for ensuring the county court system runs smoothly and is also charged with collecting court costs required of people involved with the court system. They publish court records so that the public can access them.

County Assessor

The county assessor establishes the market and tax value of property in the county. They give these reports to the county treasurer for the county budget. Property taxes are important because they fund most of the county's budget. The county assessor keeps property records and makes them available to the public.

County Treasurer

They collect taxes confirmed by the county assessor. They also serve as the official keeper of county funds.

The screenshot shows the website for the Cleveland County Assessor's Office. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for "Government Offices", "Services", "How Do I...", "Community", and "Video Tour". A search bar is located in the center of the header. Below the navigation, the main content area features a "Welcome to the Cleveland County Assessor's Office!" message. To the right of this message is a "CONTACT US" button. Below the welcome message, there is a list of services: "2021 Tax Levies", "Agriculture Exemption", "Business Personal", "Miscellaneous Documents", "Farm Personal", "General", and "Geographic Information Systems (GIS)". A sidebar on the left contains icons for "County Clerk", "Court Clerk", "Assessor", "Employment Opportunities", and "Maps".

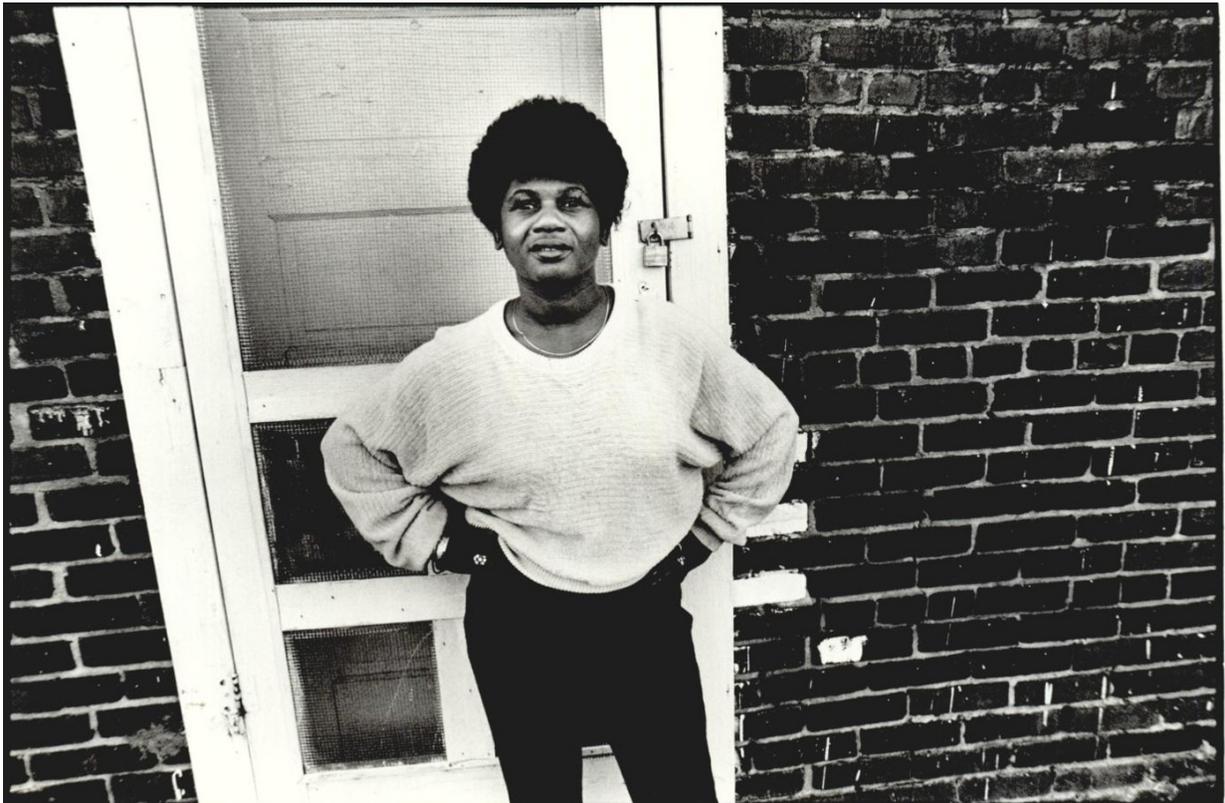
County government websites contain a lot of interesting and useful information (image courtesy Cleveland County).

Municipal Government

Municipal, or city, governments are also established by the state constitution to help govern the state more effectively. It is a more direct form of government because the leaders making decisions about the town live there and are a part of the community.

City Executive

Like the US government, the town or local executive branch has a head called the **mayor**. The role of the mayor can vary depending on what form of municipal government the city or town uses: the mayor-council (also known as strong mayor) and the council-manager systems (also known as weak mayor) are the two most common in Oklahoma. It is their responsibility to enforce law in their town as well as work with the other branches of the town government. Tulsa uses the mayor-council form of government. The other common way of running the city adds a **city manager** to the city executive branch. In this system, the mayor gives up their day-to-day responsibilities but still decides on policy with the **city council**. This type of system is used in Oklahoma City. For example, both Tulsa and Oklahoma City recently needed to hire a police chief, but they approached it differently. In Tulsa's strong-mayor system, the mayor picked and hired the police chief. In Oklahoma City's weak-mayor system, the city manager decided and hired the new chief.



Lelia Foley was the first Black woman mayor elected in the nation when she was elected mayor of Taft, Oklahoma, in 1973 (2012.201.B0154.0529, OPUBCO Photography Collection, OHS).

City Legislature

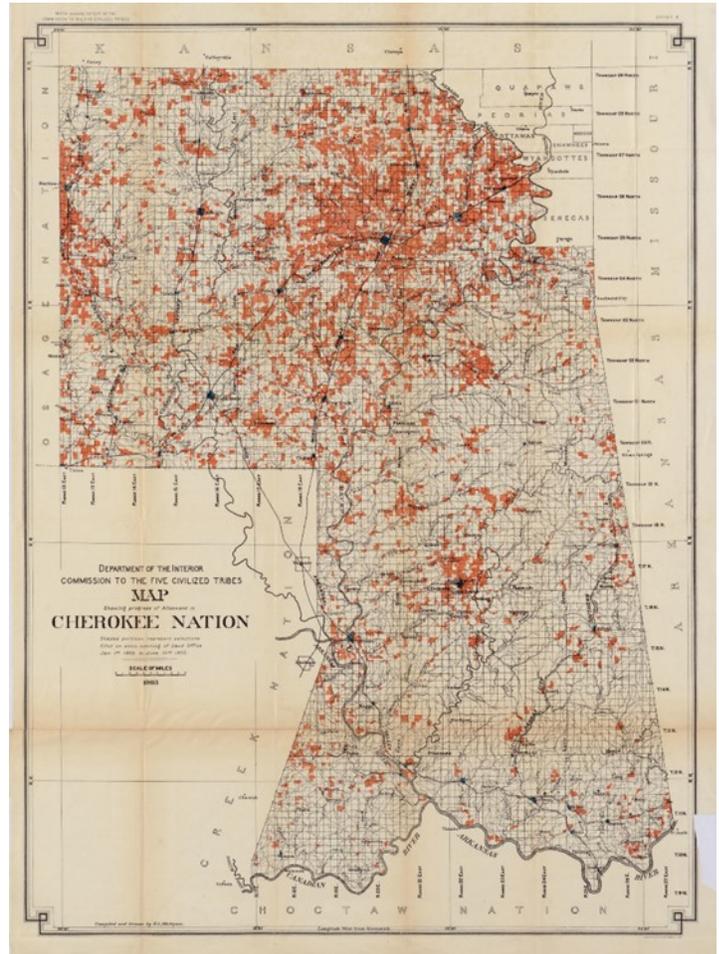
This is called the city council and is made up of councilors coming from different **wards** or districts in the city. They come up with laws called **ordinances** and they adopt them as a group through voting. In Oklahoma, cities and towns made decisions about land use, street maintenance, parks, sanitation and water service. They also have their own fire and police departments.

Tribal Governments

The stories of tribal nations and the state of Oklahoma are intertwined. The tribal nations and their governments predate the state of Oklahoma. In 1877, the US government adopted the policy of breaking up the land held by the tribes and reassigning small pieces to individuals with the Dawes Allotment Act. Although there were factions of tribal members who thought this was a good idea, tribal governments forcefully resisted. In response, the US government passed the Curtis Act in 1898, which weakened the tribal governments. This period led to the movement of around 90 million acres to the ownership to non-Indians, or two-thirds of tribally-held land.

In the 1920s, observers noticed these policies had been destructive. In 1928, the Merriam Report, examining the results of an investigation into conditions for tribal members after allotment, was released. The report documented the challenging conditions that existed in Indian country. It argued that allotment had failed in its stated goal to improve the lives of tribal members and stated the government needed to act to address the problems it caused. This report led to the creation of a package of laws during the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt that people called the “Indian New Deal.” The most important law in this New Deal was the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act. This law included guidelines to reestablish strong tribal governments. However, this law did not apply to the Native nations in Oklahoma. In 1936, Senator Elmer Thomas sponsored the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act to extend the Indian Reorganization Act to nations in the state. Not all tribes accepted the offer to rebuild governments under the guidance of the Bureau of Indian Affairs but many did.

Later, in the 1970s and 80s, there was another period of establishing and strengthening tribal governments. It is important to understand how tribal governments work since these governments exist within the state and often serve the same people. The tribal nations within Oklahoma are sovereign nations. That means they have the authority to make decisions about their own nation, land, and people. At times, the tribal government may offer services to both tribal members and non-members within their jurisdiction. Here are examples of how tribal governments are organized.



An allotment map of Cherokee Nation, 1930 (image courtesy Library of Congress).



Wilma Mankiller became the Cherokee Nation’s first elected woman chief in 1987 (2012.201.B0381.0404, OPUBCO Photography Collection, OHS).

Cherokee Nation

The Cherokee Nation is one of the Five Tribes, a group of tribes originating in the southeastern part of what would become the United States and forcibly removed to Indian Territory in the 1830s and 1840s. These tribes adopted many elements of the colonizing American culture, including the structure of government, both in their original homeland and in Indian Territory. The Cherokee Nation's government today is similar to that of the US federal government.

Executive

The Cherokee Nation's executive branch functions much like the United States executive branch. It establishes tribal policy that implements the laws passed by the Tribal Council. The executive branch also runs day-to-day tribal operations. The principal chief and deputy principal chief lead it. The Tribal Council confirms a cabinet picked by the principal chief. The principal chief and deputy principal chief are elected every four years by a popular vote of Cherokee Nation citizens.

Legislative

Called the Tribal Council, the Cherokee Legislature is a representative group of seventeen Cherokee Nation citizens. They are picked every four years by popular vote. Fifteen of the seventeen represent districts inside the Cherokee Nation. The other two represent districts outside the nation. Their goal is to establish laws for the Cherokee Nation and further the interests of the Cherokee people. An example of this was when the Tribal Council signed a \$2,000 relief bill for each Cherokee citizen using federal money.

Judicial

This branch serves to hear and solve disputes concerning laws and the Cherokee Constitution. The judiciary is made up of the District Court and the Supreme Court.

District Court

The district court serves the same function as the previously mentioned district courts but rules over the Cherokee Nation. Justices serve four-year terms. The principal chief selects and the Tribal Council confirms them.

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court is the highest court for the Cherokee Nation and consists of five Cherokee Nation justices. They are picked in the same way as the district court justices but serve ten years. They also serve as interpreters of the Cherokee Nation's laws and Constitution.



Seal of the Cherokee Nation (image courtesy Tulsa's Future).



Chief Dennis W. Bushyhead, principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, 1879–87 (590, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).

Comanche Nation

Unlike the Cherokee Nation, the Comanche lived in **bands** across the United States and had less interaction with the US government, thus reducing the federal government's influence on their tribal government.

Tribal Council

The Tribal Council is the main governing body of the Comanche Nation. It is composed of all enrolled members over the age of eighteen. They elect the chairman, vice-chairman, secretary/treasurer, and the Comanche Business Committee. They also elect the tribal administrator who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Comanche Nation.

Comanche Business Committee

Composed of four Tribal Council elected officials, their aim is to carry out the mission of the Comanche Constitution and to safeguard the rights, privileges, and powers of the Comanche people. They also communicate with the United States government for assistance in promoting the Comanche people.

Tribal Court

The Comanche Tribal Court aims to preserve and strengthen the sovereignty of the Comanche Nation by interpreting laws and the Comanche Constitution. It includes the District Court, which reviews all cases, and the Appellate Court, which deals with appeals and the Comanche Constitution.



Comanche Nation seal (image courtesy Comanche Nation).



Comanche government building (image courtesy KSWO).

Statutes

What is a Statute?

A statute is a law passed by a legislature. These laws usually **enact** or **prohibit** something. Statutes use an interesting character called the section sign. The section sign looks like this: § ,and it reads as the word “section.” It serves to reference a particular section of a document.

Oklahoma Statutes

Oklahoma has many statutes that set rules for many things. One statute sets the standard weight and measurements for the state (Title 83), while others describe how the state agriculture system will function (Title 2).

Oklahoma Historical Society

The Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) was created by a statute. It was created as part of the Oklahoma Historical Societies and Associations (Title 53) under chapter 1A - Oklahoma Historical Preservation Act. The statute establishes that OHS’s job is to hold present and future collections of the state for research and historical learning. Chapter 1A also creates other specific rules about how the society will conduct its business, such as dealing with money, interacting with tribal nations, and what to do and what to do with seasonal employees. Basically, Chapter 1A lays out the boundaries for OHS so it can do an effective job and represent the state well.



OHS employees in 1910 (20058, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).

Oklahoma Highway Patrol

This is another agency created by Oklahoma statute. Statute Title 47 Motor Vehicles created the Oklahoma Highway Patrol. Chapter two, section 105 outlines pay, uniform standards, and use of force.

It is important to understand why these statutes are so detailed. They need to be detailed because they are the laws that govern the agencies they create. If the laws were not detailed, the agencies could do something that might harm the state or waste money. For instance, if the Oklahoma Historical Society was not given guidelines for dealing with money, the state could lose time and money investigating problems. The statutes are all about streamlining processes between the government and the agencies they create and ensuring the responsible use of taxpayer money.

Lateka Alexander is the first Black woman state trooper in Oklahoma (image courtesy Black Chamber of Commerce).



Revenue

What is a tax?

All of the services governments offer cost money. In order to pay for these services, governments **tax** the people living in their jurisdiction. There are a number of different taxes. Governments can also charge money for a service, called a **fee**. They can also require a person or business to pay money for something they have done that violates the law. This is called a **fine**. All of the money collected through taxes is called revenue. Sometimes, one level of government will receive funds from a different level of government. For example, the American Rescue Plan of 2021 provided extra funds for state, county, and municipal governments in order to help deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Once a government has an estimate of how much revenue they will receive through taxes, fees, and fines, they will invest a lot of thought and time creating a budget to plan how to spend that money. Spending money is called an **expenditure**. Money spent on a particular agency or project is called an **appropriation**.

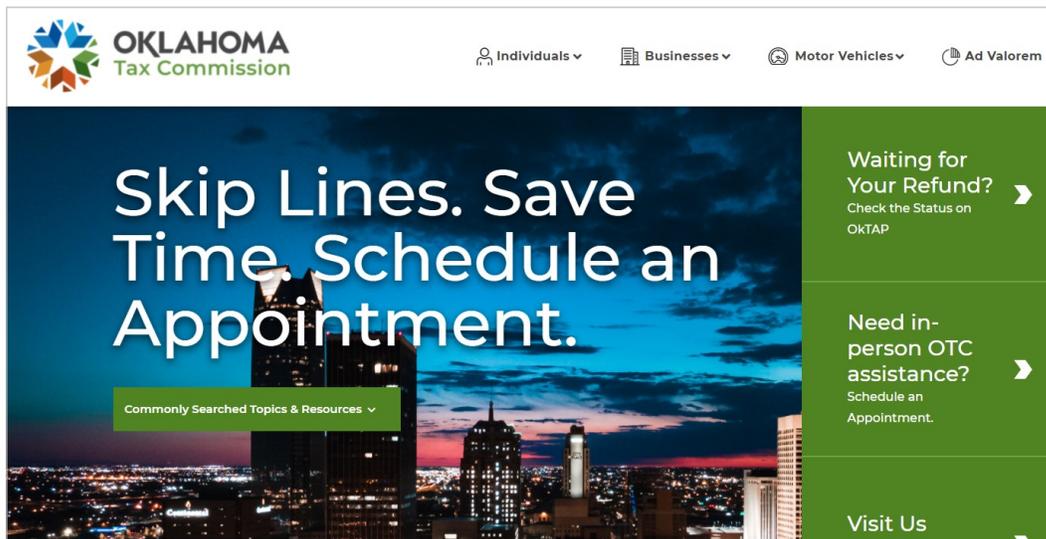
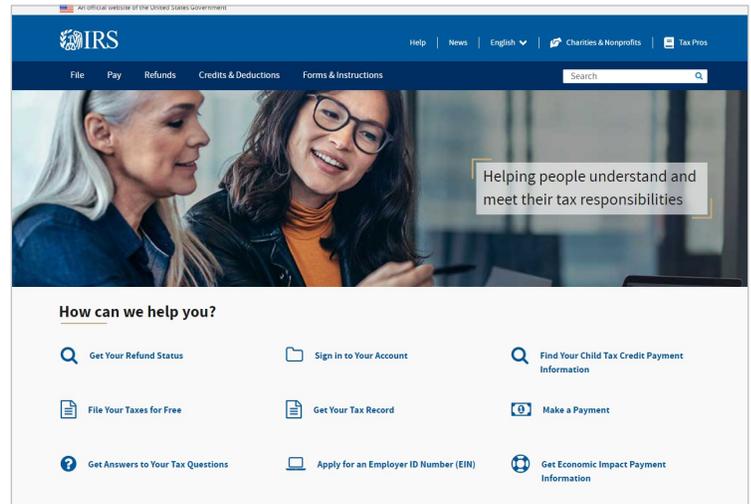
Kinds of taxes

Different levels of government depend on a different mix of taxes, fees, and fines to function. Knowing how each level of government collects revenue and what services they provide is an important part of citizenship.

Income Tax

An **income tax** is a tax on the money a person makes working. Most of the time, there is a way for an employer to send the income tax to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or the state tax commission. Most people must file their tax forms every year, showing how much they made and how much has already been sent to the governments that charge income tax. Some taxpayers may still owe these governments money because not enough was sent from the paychecks. Other taxpayers may have overpaid. If they overpaid, they will receive a **refund**.

Both the federal government and the State of Oklahoma depend heavily on income taxes to fund their services.



The IRS (above right) processes tax payments for the federal government while the Oklahoma Tax Commission (above) handles payments to the State of Oklahoma (images courtesy IRS.gov and Oklahoma.gov).

Payroll Tax

Payments taken out of a paycheck by an employer and sent to the IRS and state tax commission directly are called **payroll taxes**. In the United States, two important payroll taxes are common other than income tax.

The first shows up as FICA on a paystub; this is the tax a person pays to fund the **Social Security Administration**. This agency is responsible for payments to older Americans, individuals unable to work because of a disability, and those temporarily unemployed.

The second, which appears as MEDFICA, is a tax to pay for **Medicare** and **Medicaid**. Medicare is health insurance for older Americans, and Medicaid is health insurance that some Americans are eligible for based on their income.

Payroll taxes are federal taxes.

Any Corp				Earnings Statement		
EMPLOYEE NAME		EMP. ID	PAY PERIOD		CHECK NO.	
Joe Smith		138	1/1/2022-1/31/2022		7803	
INCOME	RATE	HOURS	CURRENT TOTAL	DEDUCTIONS	CURRENT TOTAL	YEAR-TO-DATE
Gross Wages	22.00	40	3256.00	FICA SS TAX	201.87	201.87
				FICA MED TAX	47.21	47.21
				FED TAX	248.64	248.64
				OK TAX	126.97	126.97

Learning how to read your paystub can help you understand where your money is going and protect you in case there is an error.

Property Tax

Property tax is a tax on property owned by a person or company. Property tax is determined by assessing the market value of the property, which means looking at similar properties nearby and determining how much they sold for. An odd word you might hear when people talk about property tax is a mill. A mill is \$1 in tax for each \$1,000 in taxable value on a property. County treasurers determine how many mills to charge on property in order to fully fund their government.

County governments are heavily dependent on property taxes. The majority of their revenue comes from property tax.

Sales Tax

A sales tax is a tax on items sold in a particular jurisdiction. If you have ever wondered why a candy bar with a price of \$1 actually costs more when you purchase it, it is because you were charged sales tax. Sales tax is a percentage of the purchase price, which can vary from place to place as different places may charge different percentages.

The State of Oklahoma, every county except Oklahoma County, and municipal governments use sales tax to fund their services.

Corporate Taxes

Corporate taxes are taxes businesses must pay on the profits they make.

The federal government and the State of Oklahoma charge corporate taxes. They are not a significant source of revenue for either level of government.

Capital Gains

A **capital gains** tax is a tax on the sale of investments such as stocks, bonds, and real estate. The federal government and the State of Oklahoma charge a capital gains tax. These taxes are only a small portion of each government's revenue.

There are other taxes, but these taxes make up the greatest percentage of government revenue.

Citizenship: Rights and Responsibilities

What is a citizen?

A citizen is a full member of a country. A citizen is supposed to show **allegiance** to their country and must not engage in behavior that may threaten their country. In return, the government of that country must protect that citizen from harm. Citizens have rights and responsibilities in their own country that they will not have if they go to another country. What those rights and responsibilities are can vary from country to country. For example, in Australia, citizens are required by law to vote in every election. Many countries require their citizens to serve in the military for a period of time.

The idea of citizenship has changed over time in the United States. For example, before the Civil War, people in the United States understood the assigning of citizenship as a state responsibility. During the Reconstruction period this changed, and the idea that a person was a citizen of the United States rather than an individual state became a part of the Constitution with the ratification of the fourteenth amendment.

Who can be a citizen?

In the United States currently, anyone born in the US is a citizen. Other individuals, such as children of US citizens born outside of the country, may gain citizenship through a process. Many of the citizens in the US are **naturalized** citizens. Naturalization is the process an immigrant to the United States goes through to become a citizen. The requirements an individual must meet to naturalize have changed significantly over history. As of 2022, a person born in another country who moved to the US can naturalize if they meet these requirements:

- They must be eighteen or older
- They must have lived in the US as a permanent resident for five years, or
- They must have lived in the US as a permanent resident for three years and be married to a US citizen, or
- They must have served in the US military

However, even individuals who meet these requirements may not be allowed to naturalize. Once the individual makes the application to naturalize, they will have a personal interview with an officer from US Citizenship and Immigration Services. Then, they must take tests to demonstrate that they know English and have studied US history and government. If they pass, then they participate in a citizenship ceremony where they give their **Oath of Allegiance** to the United States. The Oath of Allegiance is a statement by a person that they will support the Constitution; that they will not support another country over the US; and that they will help if the US is attacked by another country.



Oklahoman Yovana Medina completed her naturalization process in January 2022 (image courtesy Yovana Medina).

What are the rights of citizenship?

Constitutional rights

During the Constitution's ratification process, many people were concerned that the federal government had been given too much power. They wanted to ensure that Americans knew that the federal government could not go beyond its stated powers and that there were some actions the federal government could never do. The framers made the Bill of Rights a part of the Constitution to make clear that the government had limited powers and that US citizens had rights that could not be taken away.

These rights reflect many of the major objections the Framers had with the British system they lived within as colonial subjects. Still, the protections of the Bills of Rights continue to be debated and **litigated** today. The first amendment prevents the government from interfering with a citizen's ability to speak, to publish, to gather with others in support of an issue, and publicly demonstrate their beliefs. The first amendment also protects people from the government supporting a specific religion. It also makes clear that people can practice their religion without interference from the government. The second amendment protects the right to bear arms. The third amendment prevents the government from forcing people to house soldiers. This was a major complaint during the lead-up to the American Revolution. Amendments four through eight prevent the government from using the criminal justice process in several different ways, such as limiting how the police can do searches, how trials must be conducted, and what punishments can be applied to people who break the law. The ninth and tenth amendments restate that people may have rights that are not spelled out in the Bill of Rights and that the federal government has limited power.

When the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution, it was understood that the limitations of the Bill of Rights was placed on the federal government. After the fourteenth amendment was added to the Constitution, most of the limitations on the federal government in the first ten amendments were also applied to state governments.

Due process of law and equal protection

The fourteenth amendment is very important in the evolution of citizenship in the United States. It makes citizenship national rather than at the state level. It also established citizenship for those who were born in the United States, with the exception of most tribal members. This is known as **birthright citizenship**. It was passed during Reconstruction in response to the effort of several southern governments to severely limit the rights of Freedmen after the passage of the thirteenth amendment. Southern governments passed a number of laws, together called the Black Codes, that banned Black people from voting, having firearms, moving when they wanted, and from testifying against a white person in court. Concerned that Freedmen were being restricted to a life similar to what they experienced during slavery, the US Congress introduced and approved the language of the fourteenth amendment.



The US Supreme Court's 9–0 decision in the 1954 landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* stated segregated schools violated the equal protection clause (image courtesy Library of Congress).

The fourteenth amendment described citizenship rights as including the due process of law and the equal protection of the law. These ideas are very important to how we understand citizenship today. If a person is a citizen of the US, then they must have equal protection and due process. Due process is the requirement that the government cannot take a person's life, property, or liberty without some process that would allow the person to prove that that should not happen. In other words, before the government can take your property or incarcerate you, there must be a process where you might be able to reverse that plan. Most of the time, this would be a trial. Equal protection is the requirement that if some citizens have certain rights, then all citizens should have those rights, too. This prevents the government from creating different classes of citizenship.

What responsibilities do citizens have?

Citizens have many rights they can count on; at the same time, citizens are expected to participate in their communities and in government. The people of the United States decided that participating in the community and decision-making is how the country can work best for the most people, so those are the responsibilities of being a citizen.

Voting

Many citizens have the right to vote, but not all do. Who should be allowed to vote has been a consistent question in American politics, and the groups of people who have been granted the right to vote have expanded over time. Four amendments to the Constitution protect the right to vote for different groups of people. The fifteenth amendment protects the right to vote for Black men. The nineteenth amendment grants the right to vote to women. The twenty-fourth amendment bans poll taxes, which was a way to keep poor people from voting. The twenty-sixth amendment extends the right to vote to people aged eighteen and older.

Paying taxes

In order for the government to do what the people need it to do, it needs money, so it must tax its people in a variety of ways. It is the responsibility of citizens to pay their taxes.

Other kinds of civic participation

There are a number of ways a person can meet their responsibility as citizens. Helping with decision-making is one category of activities a person can explore to try to be an active citizen. Some of the ways a person can do this are running for office, making phone calls for a candidate, getting signatures on a petition, and encouraging others to support a cause. One of the most important is communicating with your elected officials because they want to know what their **constituents** would like them to do on issues. Letting them know what you think helps them do their jobs.

Another way a person can meet their responsibility as citizens is to make sure other people are taken care of. Checking in on elderly neighbors during bad weather, raising funds for nonprofits, and volunteering your time are all ways you can be an active citizen. Some Americans serve their country by joining the military.



One way people meet their civic responsibilities is by protesting, a right that is protected by the first amendment (2012.201.B0927.0744, OPUBCO Photography Collection, OHS).



Tobias William Frazier (Choctaw) was a Code Talker in World War I (22190, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).

Activities

Practicing Citizenship: Can You Pass the Citizenship Test?

People born within the US receive citizenship automatically. People who are born in another country and move to the United States may decide that they want to become a citizen. At this time (2022), the process of naturalizing includes several steps. Individuals must meet specific requirements to be eligible for citizenship. They must be interviewed, demonstrate they know English, and they must take a test that covers civics and US history. After reading this e-exhibit, you should see how well you do!

There are a number of practice tests online. Here is the [practice test](#) offered by USCIS, which manages the naturalization process.

Researching with Primary Sources: Tribal Constitutions

Materials published by governments are important primary sources for historians because they are pieces of evidence that explain how the government works. In the United States, an important principle of government is transparency. This means that the governments you are a part of must make it easy to find out how the government is working. If you like learning about government and politics, you may spend time watching city council meetings, legislative debates, and political speeches. You can learn by reading policy guidance, investigative reports, and court transcripts. You might need to review maps, land surveys, and satellite images created by government agencies. All of these are examples of government documents (and there are many more!) that help governments be transparent. Historians examine these materials to understand the story behind a decision or to learn what is important to the people participating in that government.

Just like the United States and state governments, tribal governments created tribal constitutions that establish the basic rules for how the government will function. You can read tribal constitutions to get an idea of how they are written and what topics the constitutions cover. Take a look at five of the constitutions below and see if you can answer the questions on the following page.

[Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma](#)

[Alabama Quassarte Tribal Town](#)

[Caddo Nation](#)

[Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma](#)

[Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma](#)

[Chickasaw Nation](#)

[Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma](#)

[Citizen Potawatomi Nation](#)

[Comanche Nation of Oklahoma](#)

[Delaware Nation](#)

[Delaware Tribe of Indians](#)

[Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma](#)

[Fort Sill Apache Tribe](#)

[Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma](#)

[Kaw Nation](#)

[Kialegee Tribal Town](#)

[Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma](#)

[Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma](#)

[Miami Tribe of Oklahoma](#)

[Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma](#)

[Muscogee \(Creek\) Nation](#)

[Osage Nation of Oklahoma](#)

[Otoe-Missouria Tribe of Indians](#)

[Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma](#)

[Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma](#)

[Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma](#)

[Ponca Nation of Oklahoma](#)

[Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma](#)

[Seminole Nation of Oklahoma](#)

[Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma](#)

[Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma](#)

[Thlopthlocco Tribal Town](#)

[Tonkawa Tribe of Oklahoma](#)

[United Keetoowah Band of Cherokees](#)

[Wichita & Affiliated Tribes](#)

[Wyandotte Nation](#)

View a [tribal jurisdiction map](#) created by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation

Tribal Constitution Research Challenge

Tribal Nation						
When was this constitution written?						
What counties are within the tribal jurisdiction?						
How are laws made?						
What is the chief executive's title?						
Does the constitution explain who can vote in elections?						
What is a right guaranteed in the constitution?						

Read Critically: *The Federalist Papers*

The *Federalist Papers* were a collection of essays written to explain the proposed Constitution and to support its ratification. Some important historical figures, such as Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, contributed to *The Federalist Papers*. *The Federalist Papers* discuss several of the ideals that were the basis for the kind of government the founders thought would be best. See if you can match the ideals below to its corresponding passage.

Checks and balances

Danger of majority rule

Separation of power

Judicial review

Popular sovereignty and consent of the governed

Federalism and enumerated powers

Federalist Paper 39: In this relation, then, the proposed government cannot be deemed a NATIONAL one; since its jurisdiction extends to certain enumerated objects only, and leaves to the several States a residuary and inviolable sovereignty over all other objects.

Political Ideal:

Federalist Paper 39: It is ESSENTIAL to such a government that it be derived from the great body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favored class of it; otherwise a handful of tyrannical nobles, exercising their oppressions by a delegation of their powers, might aspire to the rank of republicans, and claim for their government the honorable title of republic. It is SUFFICIENT for such a government that the persons administering it be appointed, either directly or indirectly, by the people; and that they hold their appointments by either of the tenures just specified; otherwise every government in the United States, as well as every other popular government that has been or can be well organized or well executed, would be degraded from the republican character.

Political Ideal:

Federalist Paper 10: Complaints are everywhere heard from our most considerate and virtuous citizens, equally the friends of public and private faith, and of public and personal liberty, that our governments are too unstable, that the public good is disregarded in the conflicts of rival parties, and that measures are too often decided, not according to the rules of justice and the rights of the minor party, but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority.

Political Ideal:

Federalist Paper 78: It equally proves, that though individual oppression may now and then proceed from the courts of justice, the general liberty of the people can never be endangered from that quarter; I mean so long as the judiciary remains truly distinct from both the legislature and the Executive. For I agree, that "there is no liberty, if the power of judging be not separated from the legislative and executive powers."

Political Ideal:

Federalist Paper 51: TO WHAT expedient, then, shall we finally resort, for maintaining in practice the necessary partition of power among the several departments, as laid down in the Constitution? The only answer that can be given is, that as all these exterior provisions are found to be inadequate, the defect must be supplied, by so contriving the interior structure of the government as that its several constituent parts may, by their mutual relations, be the means of keeping each other in their proper places.

Political Ideal:

Federalist Paper 78: If it is said that the legislative body is themselves the constitutional judges of their own powers and that the construction they put upon them is conclusive upon the other departments, it may be answered, that this cannot be the natural presumption, where it is not to be collected from any particular provisions in the Constitution. It is not otherwise to be supposed, that the Constitution could intend to enable the representatives of the people to substitute their will to that of their constituents. It is far more rational to suppose, that the courts were designed to be an intermediate body between the people and the legislature, in order, among other things, to keep the latter within the limits assigned to their authority.

Political Ideal:

Working with Data: The Federal Budget

A budget is a plan for how much money a person or group expects to receive and how it will be used. The United States government has a large budget. Most of the government's money comes from a variety of taxes and fees. This revenue is explained on pages 40–41. Take a look at a page from the US government's budget:

Table S-3. Baseline by Category¹

(In billions of dollars)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	Totals	
													2022-2026	2022-2031
Outlays:														
Discretionary programs:														
Defense	714	735	754	756	778	796	811	828	846	865	884	903	3,895	8,221
Non-defense	913	960	913	874	842	849	851	862	880	896	913	931	4,329	8,810
Subtotal, discretionary programs	1,627	1,696	1,667	1,630	1,621	1,645	1,661	1,689	1,726	1,760	1,797	1,834	8,224	17,031
Mandatory programs:														
Social Security	1,090	1,135	1,196	1,261	1,333	1,410	1,493	1,580	1,673	1,769	1,868	1,969	6,694	15,553
Medicare	769	709	767	842	842	948	1,016	1,087	1,229	1,181	1,328	1,415	4,414	10,654
Medicaid	458	521	518	529	563	592	621	654	698	741	783	828	2,823	6,528
Other mandatory programs	2,260	2,886	1,255	870	795	784	806	813	877	846	900	938	4,510	8,885
Subtotal, mandatory programs	4,578	5,251	3,735	3,503	3,533	3,735	3,935	4,135	4,478	4,537	4,879	5,149	18,441	41,620
Net interest	345	303	305	319	365	436	509	581	649	717	798	883	1,935	5,563
Total outlays	6,550	7,249	5,707	5,453	5,519	5,816	6,106	6,405	6,854	7,015	7,475	7,866	28,600	64,215
Receipts:														
Individual income taxes	1,609	1,704	2,005	2,174	2,210	2,347	2,646	2,852	2,986	3,128	3,275	3,431	11,382	27,053
Corporation income taxes	212	268	266	367	412	432	425	424	433	432	433	438	1,902	4,062
Social insurance and retirement receipts:														
Social Security payroll taxes	965	944	1,032	1,068	1,113	1,153	1,202	1,247	1,305	1,355	1,410	1,467	5,568	12,352
Medicare payroll taxes	292	287	314	326	341	353	368	383	402	418	437	456	1,703	3,799
Unemployment insurance	43	55	59	61	60	57	55	55	57	57	58	56	294	577
Other retirement	10	10	11	12	12	13	13	14	15	16	17	17	62	140
Excise taxes	87	74	82	85	90	90	91	92	92	94	97	97	439	910
Estate and gift taxes	18	18	21	22	24	25	25	38	39	41	43	46	116	323
Customs duties	69	85	57	45	45	47	48	49	51	53	55	57	242	506
Deposits of earnings, Federal Reserve System	82	97	102	103	99	77	68	65	71	75	75	79	448	814
Other miscellaneous receipts	36	37	39	40	44	46	49	52	55	57	59	60	218	501
Total receipts	3,421	3,580	3,988	4,304	4,451	4,640	4,991	5,272	5,506	5,724	5,958	6,205	22,374	51,038
Deficit	3,129	3,670	1,719	1,148	1,068	1,176	1,115	1,134	1,348	1,291	1,517	1,660	6,226	13,176
Net interest	345	303	305	319	365	436	509	581	649	717	798	883	1,935	5,563
Primary deficit	2,784	3,367	1,414	829	703	739	606	553	699	574	718	778	4,291	7,613
On-budget deficit	3,142	3,597	1,670	1,074	969	1,041	955	938	1,122	1,021	1,205	1,307	5,710	11,303
Off-budget deficit/surplus (-)	-13	73	48	74	99	135	160	195	226	270	312	354	516	1,873

¹ Baseline estimates are on the basis of the economic assumptions shown in Table S-9, which incorporate the effects of the Administration's fiscal policies.

1. Which section do you think shows what taxes the US government receives?
2. How much did the US government receive in individual income tax in 2020? Make sure you write out the full number!
3. Are corporate income taxes greater or less than the amount the US government receives from individual income tax?
4. What is the name for the Social Security taxes on a paystub?
5. What is a custom duty?
6. How much does the Office of Management and Budget estimate the US government will receive in total revenue in 2029?

A copy of the full budget for fiscal year 2022 is located [here](#).

Practicing Citizenship: Communicating with Your Representatives

It is essential to let your elected leaders know who you are and how you would like them to act on issues that affect you. When you communicate with your elected leaders, it is important to be polite, even if you know they disagree with you on an issue. Your messages do not have to be long—a quick note explaining what you would like them to do and a couple of reasons why is usually all you need to communicate effectively with your elected official. It is ok to talk to your elected representatives even if you are too young to vote! Just make sure your parents or guardians know what you are doing. You can get their help finding out who your representatives are, writing your messages, and you can share all the responses you receive from your representatives.

A great idea is to send an email or letter introducing yourself every year. Try out this template or write your own message and send it to your elected leaders.

Dear [Title of office] [Last Name],

I am a constituent in the area you represent. I would like to introduce myself, and I hope you will do the same! I am [age]. I am in [grade]. I enjoy [describe an activity you enjoy].

I would like to thank you for serving your community by running for office. I know it takes a lot of hard work and effort to do that. I hope that you enjoy the work that you are doing.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

How do I find who represents me?

The best place to start is the [Oklahoma Legislature's website](#). This will give you the names of your representatives at the federal and state level, their addresses, and a way to contact them. If you want to find your county or city representatives, you should start by locating their website. Then, you might find a map showing who represents your area. If you have trouble, there should be a phone number your parents can call to find out your county and city representatives' contact information. Your elected representatives love hearing from their constituents!



Oklahoman Elmer Thomas served in Congress from 1923 to 1951. You can read messages his constituents sent him if you visit the Carl Albert Center at the University of Oklahoma (image courtesy Library of Congress).

Glossary

absolute monarch: a hereditary leader who has all the power to make decisions.

adjournment: suspension of a meeting.

allegiance: the loyalty a person gives to their country.

amendment: a change to a legal document or constitution.

appellate courts: a court that ensures a trial process occurred correctly.

appropriation: an amount of money assigned to a specific use.

attorney general: the top legal officer for a government in the US. There are attorneys general at both the state and federal levels.

authoritarian: a type of government in which government officials, not the people, have the power.

bands: smaller groupings of a tribal nation.

bicameral: having two separate branches.

Bill of Rights: the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution.

bills: proposed laws.

birthright citizenship: a rule that grants citizenship if one is born within the borders of a country.

budget: a plan for how to spend a sum of money.

capital gains: profits from an investment.

census: a count of people.

ceremonial monarch: a hereditary leader who serves as an important symbol for a nation but has no real political power.

charter: a plan for government at the municipal level.

citizen: a person who has the rights and responsibilities of membership in a country.

city council: a group of individuals elected from different parts of a town or city who work together to create policies for the whole municipality.

city manager: a person who manages a city or town government on a day-to-day basis.

common good: the idea that governments can try to make decisions that help most of the people.

Congress: the title of the legislative body of the United States' federal government.

constituent: the people within a voting district an elected official represents in a government body.

constitution: the basic rules of a government.

Constitution: the written instrument that describes the function of the government in the United States.

constitutional monarch: a hereditary leader whose power is limited by a set of rules.

corporate tax: a tax placed on a type of business known as a corporation.

corrupt: using one's official power to enrich oneself or one's allies.

county: a subdivision of state government that has a set of responsibilities for a smaller geographic region.

county seat: the place in the county where the government offices are located.

defendant: the person in a court proceeding who is accused of wrongdoing.

delegates: a person who represents a larger group of people.

dictatorship: rule by a group of people selected by one person with all the power.

direct democracy: a kind of democracy in which all the citizens of a place participate in the day-to-day operations of government.

disenfranchise: to take away the right to vote.

Electoral College: the constitutional body that contains the delegates who elect the president of the United States every four years.

enact: to make a law active.

equality: the idea that people deserve the same treatment and rights.

eviction: a legal proceeding that results in the forced removal of someone from a living space, usually for inability to pay rent.

executive: the branch of government that enforces the law.

expenditure: money spent for a specific purpose.

fee: a sum of money charged for a government service.

felony: a category of crime that requires a year or longer incarceration as punishment.

fine: a sum of money charged for a violation of a law or code.

government: the people who make decisions and set rules for a group of people.

impeach: a process to remove an individual from a government office.

incarceration: serving a sentence in jail or prison.

income tax: a tax placed on the money a person earns.

injury: a harm suffered by the action or inaction or another.

judicial: the branch of government that reviews laws and manages complaints between individuals and groups.

judicial review: the ability of the US Supreme Court to determine the constitutionality of a law or policy.

jurisdiction: the area over which a government official may act.

jury: a group of people called to determine the outcome of a court case.

lawsuits: a claim brought to a court against another person, group, or government.

legislative: the branch of government that creates laws.

liberty: freedom to act without restraint.

lieutenant governor: the second-highest executive official who can assume the office of governor if the governor is removed, resigns, or dies.

limited government: the idea that government should have only specific areas in which it can act.

litigate: taking a matter to court.

majority: the greater number.

Marbury v. Madison: the US Supreme Court case that established the principle of judicial review.

mayor: the elected leader of a town or city.

Medicaid: a government-run health program for some Americans with low income.

Medicare: a government-run health program for elderly Americans.

minority: the smaller number.

misdemeanor: a category of crime that requires one year or less imprisonment.

monarchy: a system of government that is built around a hereditary ruler.

natural rights: the rights a person has simply by reason of being a human.

naturalize: the process of gaining citizenship in a country.

Oath of Allegiance: an oath in which a citizen states their loyalty to a country.

oligarchy: a system of government where a small group runs the government.

ordinances: rules of a municipality that are enforced with fines and incarceration.

pardons: being allowed to avoid the consequences of a criminal conviction.

parliament: a type of legislative body.

parliamentary democracy: a kind of democracy in which the executive is chosen from the legislative body.

participatory democracy: a kind of democracy in which citizens do more than occasionally vote.

payroll tax: taxes an employer takes out of a person's earned wages.

plutocracy: a system of government that is run by, and serves, the wealthy.

preamble: the beginning of a legal document.

presidential democracy: a kind of democracy in which citizens elect the president and their legislative body separately.

prohibit: to forbid by law.

prohibition: the period in American history in which the sale and distribution of alcohol was illegal.

property tax: tax paid on property owned.

prosecutor: an official that represents the government in criminal cases.

quasi: being partly or almost.

ratify: to give consent to make something valid.

redistricting: the process of shifting districts to represent changes in population.

refund: to return or give back.

republic: a kind of democracy that uses elected representatives to make decisions.

revenue: a government's annual income.

rights: something a person should have access to because they are human.

rule of law: the idea that governments should follow clear, known rules for decision making.

rural: the countryside.

sales tax: a tax placed on a purchase.

secretary: the leader of a department of the US federal government, serving in the president's cabinet.

separation of power: the placement of different kinds of authority across branches of government so that one branch does not get too much power.

Social Security Administration: the agency in charge of managing payments to the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and the unemployed.

sovereignty: the right to make decisions for a group or place.

special session: an official meeting outside of the standard meeting times of a legislature.

statutes: laws.

stratocracy: a system of government in which the military runs the government.

suffrage: the right to vote.

Supremacy Clause: the section in the US Constitution that states that the federal government has supremacy over the states.

tax: the money people pay to governments.

theocracy: a system of government in which a religious group controls the government.

treaties: agreements between two sovereign groups.

urban: a city or town.

verdict: the decision of a court.

veto: the blocking of legislation by the executive branch.

ward: an individual who has had a guardian appointed to make decisions for them.

warrant: an order for arrest.

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