

New Mexico 4-H

A Day at the Roundhouse

State Government in New Mexico



**New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service
4-H Youth Development Program**

New Mexico 4-H Day at the Roundhouse

The 4-H Youth Development Program offers the opportunity to learn about being an effective citizen through educational materials, field trips and service projects. Congratulations on taking a step toward being an active citizen in the State of New Mexico.

This booklet is designed to help you get the most out of your visit to the Roundhouse, which houses the New Mexico State Government during Legislative Session. We have included basic information as well as worksheets to help you “Learn by Doing” as you meet the legislators that represent your area and experience the democratic process firsthand.

To learn more about Citizenship and exhibit what you have learned, consider the following 4-H projects:

- 5351 Exploring Citizenship Unit 1: My Clubs and Groups
- 5352 Exploring Citizenship Unit 2: My Community
- 5353 Exploring Citizenship Unit 3: My Heritage
- 5354 Exploring Citizenship Unit 4: My Government
- 5355 Exploring Citizenship Unit 5: My World

You may contact your County Extension Office to add a Citizenship project to your enrollment. This booklet includes materials from Exploring Citizenship Unit 4: My Government, New Mexico 4-H Project 5354.

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New Mexico 4-H is the youth development program of the Cooperative Extension Service through New Mexico State University.

Part Three

Political Parties in a Democracy

Political parties are the instruments through which candidates are put forward, platforms written, conventions run, and campaigns conducted.

The two major political parties in the United States are the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. From time-to-time, third parties arise when certain groups feel neither major party represents them.

Political parties provide the framework for selecting candidates for political office at all levels. Almost all states use primaries to select candidates for state office. The Democratic and Republican primaries offer voters a choice of several candidates seeking the nomination of their party. A candidate must win the primary in order to run for a state office.

National Democratic and Republican conventions are held each national election year. Delegates to the national conventions are determined by each state. This is usually done at a state convention. National conventions are held to submit presidential candidates and



adopt party platforms. The President usually selects the Vice Presidential candidate.

“Political parties provide an outlet for concerned citizens who do not care to run for public office. They provide a social mechanism for permitting the largest part of the population to influence majority decisions by choosing the candidates for

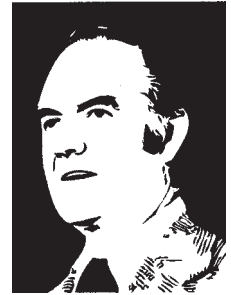


political office. They provide a continuing link between the relatively small number of men who implement government policy and the massive voting public. In short, through participation in national political parties the people of the nation govern themselves.”

Senator Howard Baker
Republican – Tennessee

Political parties are looking for help at all levels. The youth of America can play an important role in American politics.

“No political candidate today can ignore the reservoir of talented young people that are available to assist in his bid for public office. In a close campaign, their help can frequently make the difference between winning and losing.”



Senator George McGovern
Democrat – South Dakota

Things to Do

Select one or more of the following activities to carry out.

1. Select a political party to study. Write the National Republican Committee and the National Democratic Committee for information.

Democratic National Committee
430 South Capitol Street, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20003
www.democrats.org

Republican National Committee
310 First Street, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20003
www.rnc.org

You might also want to write to some of the minor parties. The local library can help you find their addresses.

2. Join or start a political club in your area. Write the appropriate national committee to obtain information about its teenage club.
3. Find a political candidate who seems to believe in the same things you do. Volunteer to help with this candidate's campaign.
4. One of the most active hobby groups in the country today is collectors of campaign buttons and other political items. This can become a very interesting activity which will help you learn about political campaigns, past and present. For more information about his hobby, write to American Political Items Collectors (APIC), P.O. Box 55, Avon, NY 14414. <http://apic.us/>



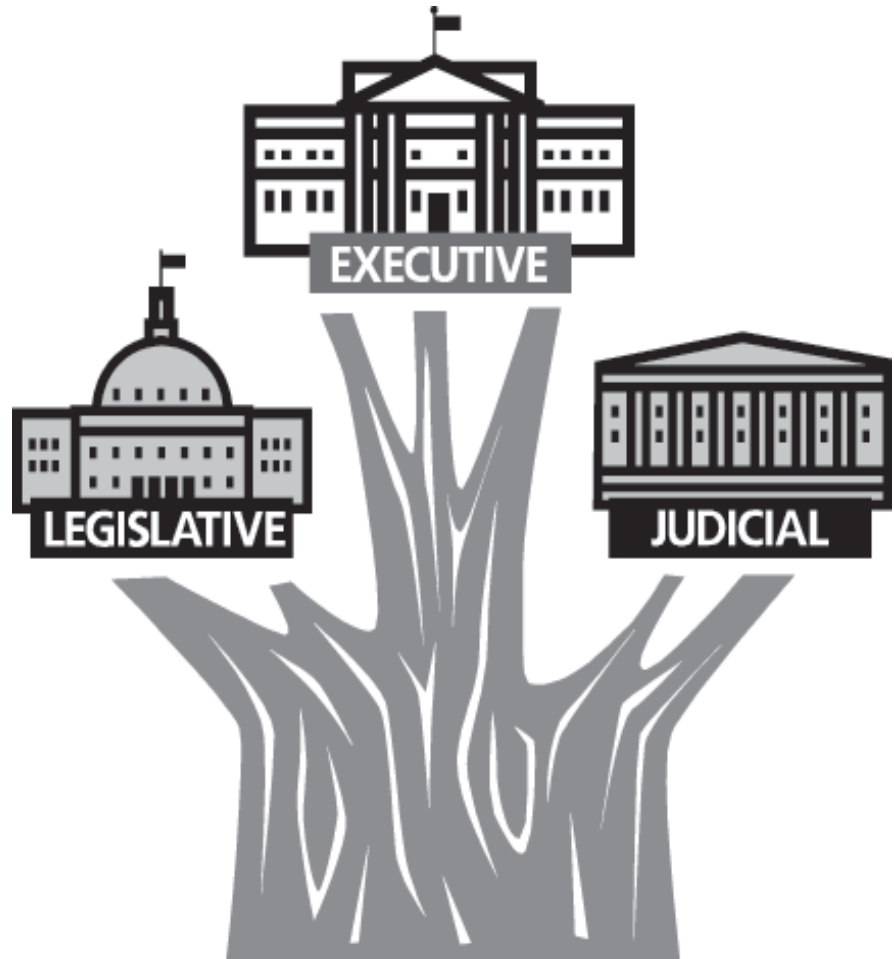
State Government

Each of the fifty states within the United States has a state constitution and state government. States have certain rights and powers, according to the United States Constitution.

The United States Constitution is the law of the land, but the constitution of each state is the law within its boundaries. The only powers denied a state are those that conflict with the guarantees of the United States Constitution. The Limitations placed on states by the Constitution are actually few. The separate states cannot make treaties with foreign countries, coin money, tax imports or exports, deny the due process of equal protection of the law to any individual or corporation, or impair the obligation of contracts.

State citizens elect their own officials who give leadership to their state's government. The states enact and enforce civil and criminal law subject only to the Constitution's broad guarantees of individual freedom. The states control the public education systems within their borders and provide services in health, welfare, and highway construction. They license business and industry, charter corporations, and regulate utilities, insurance companies, and other businesses. States also have the power to tax individuals and corporations within the state.

Among states there are



significant differences in state constitutions and in state governments. Despite these differences, every constitution has its "Bill of Rights" that forcefully reaffirms age-old concepts of the natural and inherent rights of man. Although state govern-

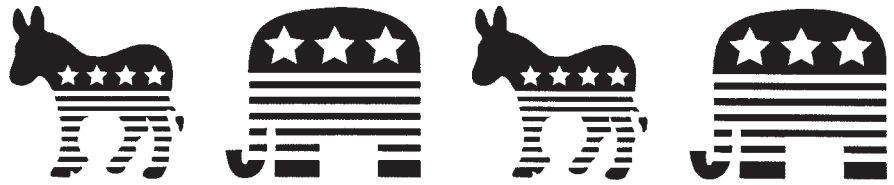
ments are set up differently, each state government consists of three distinct and separate branches: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. This separation of powers is patterned after federal government structure.

Executive Branch

The Executive Branch includes the governor and a number of other elected officials. These may or may not include a lieutenant governor. Generally, there is a secretary of state, a treasurer, an attorney-general,

and sometimes an auditor. Executive officials may be elected by the people along with the governor, or the state constitution may specify that the governor appoint them, much as the President of the United

States appoints his cabinet and certain other officials. The governor is head of his state and usually the head of his political party in that state.



Questions and Answers:

Who is the governor of your state? _____

What is his political party? _____

What other officials make up the executive branch of your state's government, and what are their positions?

In your state, how are the members of the executive branch, excluding the governor, chosen?

Legislative Branch



The Legislative Branch usually consists of two houses (except in the state of Nebraska). These are usually referred to as the Senate and the House of Representatives. Senators are usually elected to four-year terms while representatives usually serve two-year terms.

In 1952, a Supreme Court decision (Baker vs. Carr)

insisted on the concept of "one man, one vote." This ruling resulted in the apportionment of state senators as well as representatives on the basis of population. Thus, the composition of state legislatures is much different from that of the national congress. In time, there might be one-house state legislatures such as Nebraska has used since 1937.

Questions and Answers:

What does the legislative branch in your state consist of? _____

The men and women who are elected to serve in your state legislature serve designated periods of time.

What are the lengths of their terms? _____

What are the names of the men and/or women who represent you in the state legislature?

What are their political parties? _____

Judicial Branch

The Judicial Branch of the state, like that of federal government, consists of a number of different court systems. No state has more than four kinds of courts, or fewer than two. At the top level is a court of last ap-

peal, often but not always called the state “supreme court” as in the federal judiciary. The state supreme court supervises and receives cases of appeal from lower courts. In the state supreme court, the number

of justices range from three to nine.

Below, the Supreme Court are the courts of appeal. Next are the trial courts, with such names as chancery court, circuit court, district court, and superior court.

Questions and Answers:

What is the court of last appeal called in your state? _____

How many justices sit on the court of last appeal in your state, and what are their names?

What is the function of the court of last appeal? _____

What system of courts is immediately below the court of last appeal in your state, and what is its function?

What other courts make up your state's judiciary system and what is the function of each one?

Except for those in the District of Columbia, we are all residents of a state and consider ourselves Georgians, New Yorkers, Arkansans, Californians, etc. To be sure, all of us are Americans, but we are also citizens of a state. We are proud of our state citizenship, and as good state citizens we should be informed on issues that affect our state. We should actively work toward making our state a better place to live.



What is a Bill?

A **bill** is a proposed law under consideration by the legislature. A bill does not become law until it is passed by the legislature and approved by the Governor. Once a bill has been enacted into law, it is called an “Act” or a “statute”.

The bill must bear the signature of the member (Senator or Representative) introducing it to verify that the member actually intended to introduce the bill. The member is then called the sponsor of that bill. That member may add the names of other members onto the bill who also support it. These members are called co-sponsors.

The bill must be read and referred to the appropriate committee in either the House of Representatives or the Senate. Once it has been approved in one, it starts the process over in the other. Only after a bill has been through committee and approved in both the House and the Senate will it be sent to the Governor. Only after the Governor approves it will it become law.

The New Mexico State Legislature convenes in regular sessions on the third Tuesday in January each year. The Legislature meets for 60 days in odd-numbered years and 30 days in even-numbered years. Between regular sessions, legislators serve on interim committees that study a variety of issues.

Examples of Legislative Committees

House of Representatives	Senate
Agriculture, Water & Wildlife	Finance
Appropriations & Finance	Conservation
Education	Judiciary
Healthy	Public Affairs
Ways & Means	Rules

List at least two more standing committees for each:

House:

Senate:

New Mexico 4th Roundhouse Scavenger Hunt

Research the following items to help you gain a better understanding of the New Mexico Legislature.

How many representatives are there in the House?

How many Senators are there?

What is the difference between the House and the Senate?

List the 4 steps to pass a bill in New Mexico?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Who is the Speaker of the House?

Who presides over the Senate?

What floor is the Governor's office on?

What is the Governor's office called?

What is a bill that is of interest to your county? (Describe what it is for).

How much money does New Mexico have budgeted for this year?
