

OUR STATE
and OUR NATION

Georgia Studies

UNIT 9



American Government and Citizenship

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GEORGIA EVENTS ▼

- 1776**
Declaration of Independence signed by Georgia representatives
- 1781**
Colonies win independence, become the United States under the Articles of Confederation
- 1787**
Georgia delegates help draft the Constitution of the United States
- 1788**
Georgia becomes the fourth state to ratify the U.S. Constitution
- 1830**
Congress passes the Indian Removal Act
- 1848**
Women declare their rights as citizens at Seneca Falls, New York
- 1854**
The Republican party is formed
- 1861**
Georgia secedes from the U.S.; Confederate States of America organized
- 1865**
Civil War ends; Thirteenth Amendment ratified
- 1893**
Tom Watson introduces bill in Congress creating rural free mail delivery
- 1896**
U.S. Supreme Court rules in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that separate facilities for people of color are legal
- 1913**
U.S. Constitution amended to allow federal tax on income
- 1920**
Nineteenth Amendment gives women the right to vote
- 1924**
Congress grants all Native Americans citizenship
- 1933**
Congress enacts New Deal programs to provide relief, reform, and recovery
- 1954**
U.S. Supreme Court rules in *Brown* decision against segregation in public schools
- 1963**
U.S. Supreme Court upholds lower court ruling that county unit system is unconstitutional
- 1964**
Civil Rights Act passed
- 1965**
Voting Rights Act passed guaranteeing voting access for all eligible citizens
- 1991**
Georgia gets eleventh Congressional seat
- 1995**
Newt Gingrich elected Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
- 2000**
Georgia gets two additional Congressional seats
- 2010**
Georgia gets thirteenth Congressional seat

Chapter 23

Foreword

Georgia Standards of Excellence
Correlations ▼

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Chapter Outline

Need for Rules

A Nation of Many Governments

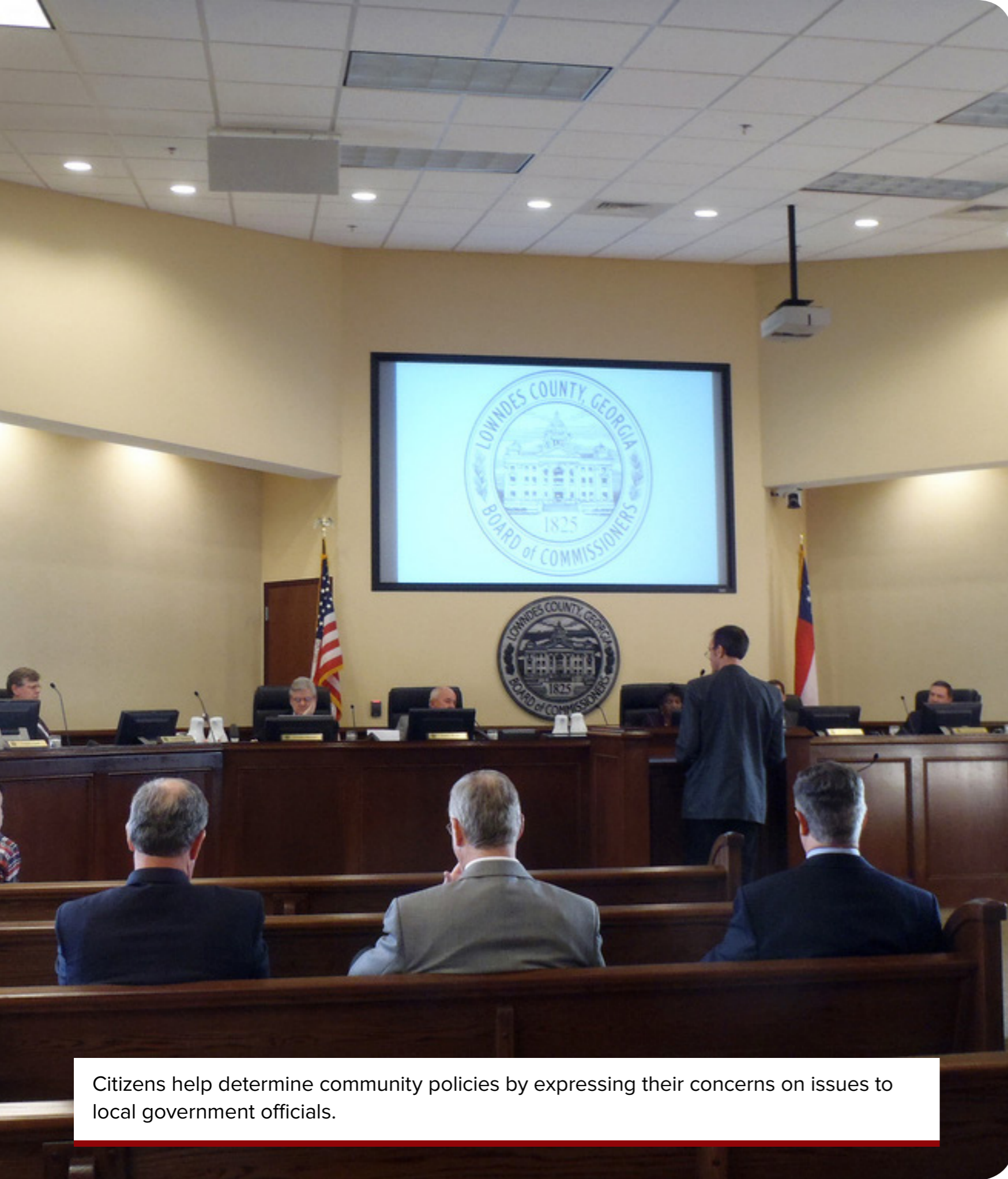
A Government of the People

A Government of Law

SS8CG1

Describe the foundations of Georgia's government.

- c. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens according to the Georgia Constitution.



Citizens help determine community policies by expressing their concerns on issues to local government officials.

CHAPTER 23

AT FIRST GLANCE

This chapter opens with historical views of what government is and why it exists. The opening is a prelude to a discussion of the American concept of government and its purpose. The necessity for the existence of government in society is covered. The chapter explains the many different levels of government that exist in America and citizens' roles. The concept of citizenship is discussed, and examples of rights and responsibilities the students have as citizens are given.

Let's Talk Government

Need for Rules

A Nation of Many Governments

A Government of the People

A Government of Law

What is government? Some will define it by naming persons in government, like the president or governor. Others will mention government activities, like police and fire protection. Still others, when they hear the word "government," will gripe about the taxes they have to pay. But putting one's finger on government itself is not so easy.

For the great masses of European people in past centuries, it was natural to think of the governments of kings and queens as being all-powerful. After all, European monarchs often claimed that they ruled by "divine right." That is, they said they received their authority from God. All the king's ministers, governors, sheriffs, and soldiers made sure the masses stayed in line. Quite correctly, our ancestors saw government as a power over which they had no control.

Do these images of an all-powerful force fit American government? No, they do not now and have not for a very long time. Since the United States became an independent nation, the American people themselves have been the powerful force that governs our country.

Think about these events you read about in earlier chapters:

- In 1776, the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, which stated that if the people no longer approve of a government, they can do away with it.
- In 1795, outraged by the Yazoo Land Fraud, Georgia citizens chased corrupt legislators out of office.
- In 1920, responding to the national woman suffrage movement, state legislatures ratified the Nineteenth Amendment giving women the right to vote.

In each instance, the people changed the government to fit what they believed. If a government is shaped by what the people believe and what the people do, what does that tell us? It tells us that government is the people themselves. This idea, called **popular sovereignty**¹, is discussed in Chapter 8.

Vocabulary

- 1 **Popular sovereignty** - The idea that government must be based on the will of the people.

Need for Rules

Why do we have government? What human needs does it serve? To answer these questions, think back to some earlier events:

- 1 In 1803, Georgia's legislature devised a lottery to distribute public land to persons who would settle and develop it.
- 2 In 1935, Congress adopted the Social Security Act to provide pensions to older citizens.
- 3 In 1965, Pres. Lyndon Johnson ordered federal troops, FBI agents, and the national guard to protect civil rights marchers in Selma, Alabama, against violence.

What did government do in these examples? It encouraged economic development. It helped men and women who were out of work. It protected the public against violence. We have

government for all these reasons and more. But above all, we have government because we have to live with other human beings.

The 328 million people who make up America's huge society share many common needs, interests, and goals. But they do not have exactly the same needs or interests. Even people who live together in a small community won't all have the same goals. Some conflict is sure to arise.

Government is a social institution. A **social institution**¹ is a group of people organized to manage conflict and establish common behaviors. It does this by having rules about the way individuals and groups relate to one another.

Government—it's all about the people.





Every day, we live by rules. Some rules tell us the duties we have. To feed the dog every morning is an example of a family duty you might have. Other rules tell us our rights. As a church member you may have the right to participate in certain church activities. Some rules regulate behavior, such as a school rule prohibiting weapons. Enforcing rules is necessary so people can get along together—fairly and safely.

We are all members of a society. Society's rules generally apply to everyone. These rules may be divided into two categories.

In one category are *informal rules*. These are self-enforced or enforced by social pressure from other people. For example, we learn a sense of fair play and respect for others. So we learn that we should not cut in line to buy movie tickets or get on a bus. Our own conscience or other people's reactions help enforce the rule.

In the second category are *formal rules*. These rules are enforced by our governments, and we call them *laws*. Examples are laws prohibiting the sale of cigarettes to minors, or requiring students to stay in school until age 16. Another rule

◀ A ball game without any rules would not be any fun—it would be chaos. What would football be like if each team decided which rules it would follow? Or even worse, what if there were no rules?

by law is that children have access to free public schooling. These are legal rights or requirements that can be enforced by government. Also enforced by government are duties, such as paying taxes that pay for the fire department and for building and operating schools. Paying taxes is a *legal* duty or obligation.

What is **government**²? It is a social

institution created to hold society together. It is composed of people who serve everyone. Other social institutions—like the family, church, and school—are responsible for informal controls on social relations. Government is the social institution responsible for formal controls. It makes and enforces the rules that people must obey. ■



LOCATING *the* MAIN IDEAS

- 1 **Define:** popular sovereignty, social institution, government
- 2 How did the idea of government as a power over the people develop?
- 3 Where does the power come from in U.S. government?
- 4 Why is it necessary to have government?
- 5 How are informal rules enforced? How are formal rules enforced?

◀ What informal rule are these children following? They are also an example of one of our society's formal rules. What is it?

Vocabulary

- 1 Social institution** - Groups of people and their behaviors that have developed over the years to serve particular human needs.
- 2 Government** - A social institution set up to promote and protect society through formal rules and services.

A Nation of Many Governments

Commonly we speak of the government, as if there were only one. Actually, that is not the case in the United States. We are a nation of many governments.

Suppose you are a resident of Decatur, Georgia. That means you would be living within the **jurisdiction**¹ (area of legal control or authority) of at least seven government areas:

- United States of America
- State of Georgia
- DeKalb County
- City of Decatur
- City of Decatur School System
- Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)
- Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority

To live in and pay taxes to so many governments is not unusual. Most citizens of the United States live within four or more governments. In 2012, the United States had 90,056 governments.

All these governments, except school districts and special districts, are general-purpose governments. That is, they provide many services to the people. School districts and special districts (such as MARTA) are special-purpose governments. Usually they are created to provide a single or special service, such as education or transportation.

These governments are all parts of one system of government. The system is based on two powerful ideas of a good government. Ours is a government of the people and a government of *law*.



◀ **Savannah City Hall.** Georgia's first government was located in Savannah.

Vocabulary

- 1 **Jurisdiction** - 1. An area of legal control. 2. The authority of a court to act or hear a matter.

A Government of the People



We are proud to say that we have a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” Pres. Abraham Lincoln spoke these words in the Gettysburg Address in 1863, but the idea is much older. You can find the idea in **Georgia’s 1776 Rules and Regulations*** where it says that all power “originates” from the people.

Of the people means that all government authority comes from the people themselves. Authority does not come from a king’s claim of “divine right” to rule. It does not come from an army’s conquest of the land. It means that people have given their consent to the governing officials to run the government.

* Georgia’s 1776 Rules and Regulations - *This Congress, therefore, as the representatives of the people, with whom all power originates, and for whose benefit all government is intended... do declare, order, and direct that the following rules and regulations be adopted in this Province...*

◀ Citizens can watch their local representatives in action when their city council or county commissions meet.



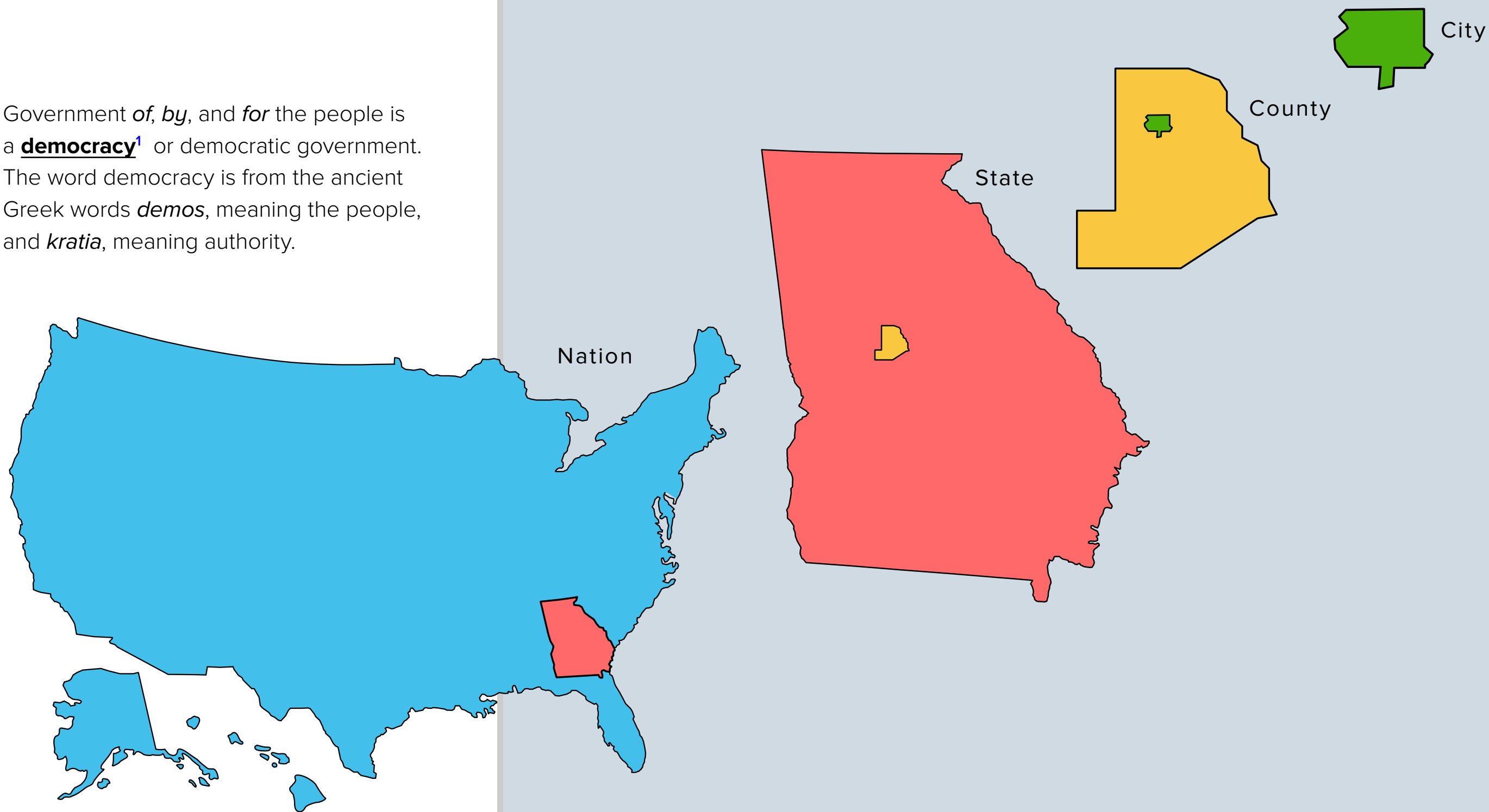
On The Campaign Trail:
My Government, My Vote,
My Voice

[Transcript](#)

By the people refers to the means by which the people control their government. Generally, our government operates according to the choices made by a majority of the people. Who do the majority of citizens want to run the government? What does the majority want the government to do? These questions are decided by voting. Also, political parties, campaign activities, and public opinion polls let elected representatives know what the majority of the people want.

For the people announces that the government exists only for the good of all the people. It is not intended to serve one person, a privileged class of individuals, or one religion. We can judge if a government is for the people by looking at the policies it pursues. A policy consists of a goal and the plan or strategy to reach the goal. These policies should serve all Americans.

Government *of, by, and for* the people is a **democracy**¹ or democratic government. The word democracy is from the ancient Greek words *demos*, meaning the people, and *kratia*, meaning authority.



I AM A CITIZEN OF...

Vocabulary

- 1 **Democracy** - A form of government whose power comes from the people.

CITIZENS & CITIZENSHIP

The phrase “as a citizen of” is frequently found in letters written to the newspaper about some event in government. Why? What is the letter-writer’s reason for saying “as a citizen”? The writer is announcing to all who read the letter, “You should listen to me because of who I am—a citizen.”

What is a **citizen**¹? A citizen is any member of a political system—be it a nation, state, county, or city—in which the people have a voice in their government. The status of being a citizen is called **citizenship**². Not everyone who lives in the United States is a citizen.

The U.S. Constitution provides that a person may acquire citizenship in two ways: by birth and by **naturalization**³.

By birth. Children born in the United States are citizens. Children born abroad of parents who are U.S. citizens are also citizens.

By naturalization. Persons who are not U.S. citizens by birth and who seek to become citizens must follow a legal process called naturalization. They must meet certain

requirements, including lawful entry to the United States and good moral character. They must also learn the principles of American government.

Just as there are several levels of government in America, there are several levels of citizenship. Citizens of the United States are also citizens of the state and county in which they reside. That means a family from Iowa who become residents of Cobb County, Georgia, become citizens of Georgia and Cobb County. If they live in a city, they also become citizens of that city.

Does having citizenship make a difference in a person’s life? It can make a big difference. All residents—whether they are citizens or not—must obey the laws of the United States and the state in which they live. They must pay federal and state taxes. But only citizens have a say in deciding what those laws and taxes will be.

Only citizens have the right to vote in federal, state, and local elections. Only citizens of Georgia can be elected to public office in this state. Only citizens can serve on juries.



To many Americans, citizenship means much more than the right to do something. It means actually doing it. It can mean, for example, writing a letter to the editor.

Citizens take part in the affairs of their nation, state, city, or county in many ways. Here are a few ways to participate:

- learn about candidates and issues
- vote in every election
- work with others to solve some community problems
- serve on school boards and city councils
- join a local volunteer fire department
- gather signatures on petitions to express public opinion
- contribute money to political parties or candidates
- contact state officials about some issue
- join a political club or organized interest group
- volunteer for military duty in wartime
- respond when called for jury duty
- report information about crime to police

Most of the time, Americans meet their citizenship obligations *voluntarily*. Citizen responsibility is what makes self-government work.

Vocabulary

- 1 **Citizen** - Member of a political system in whose operation the people have a voice.
- 2 **Citizenship** - The rights and responsibilities associated with being a citizen.
- 3 **Naturalization** - Legal process through which a person who is not a citizen can become one.

A Government of Law

In the United States we have a “government of law.” What does this mean? It means that the government’s authority is limited by laws. The limits are set forth in the U.S. and state constitutions and laws passed by legislative bodies. This idea is sometimes expressed by the terms “limited government” and “due process of law.”

In our government, officials can only do what the law specifically says they can do. They may not do whatever they please. Even if the majority of the people back them, and even if they are the highest officials in government, they may not operate outside the law. Also, the people we choose to make the laws must obey them just like everyone else.

So, we have a government that is both “of the people” and “of law.” The powers that it has come from the people, but those powers are limited by law. How

can we know the powers and limits of our government? The answers are found in its constitution. The next chapter tells you more about the written constitutional basis for national and state government in America. ■

LOCATING *the* MAIN IDEAS

- 1 **Define:** jurisdiction, democracy, citizen, citizenship, naturalization, majority, plurality
 - 2 What are two ways people may acquire citizenship in the United States?
 - 3 Explain how a general-purpose government is different from a special-purpose government.
-



MAJORITY AND PLURALITY

In democratic decision making, a **majority**¹ vote is generally used to determine the outcome.

A majority is any number greater than one-half of the total vote. Ordinarily, a simple majority, consisting of 50 percent plus one of the total persons participating in the vote, is used to decide the outcome. In special cases, however, a government may require a specific majority—such as two-thirds of the total persons voting.

Even though allowing the majority to make political decisions is an important principle,

there are exceptions to it. When there are more than two candidates, some states allow the one who gets more votes than anyone else to be the winner, even if it is not a majority. This is called a plurality. Georgia does not allow election by a **plurality**². Rather, a runoff election must be held between the two top vote getters.

The other exception is that in a democracy there are certain rights of the minority that the majority cannot take away. For example, the majority cannot vote to prohibit criticism by the minority. Thus we have majority rule but minority rights.

Vocabulary

- 1 **Majority** - Any number greater than one-half of the total.
- 2 **Plurality** - In elections with three or more candidates, winning more votes than any other candidate, but less than a majority.



CHAPTER 23 QUIZ

Text Version

Chapter 24

Foreword

Georgia Standards of Excellence
Correlations ▼

[SS8CG1](#)

Chapter Outline

The Constitution of the United States

- Separation of Powers
- Checks and Balances
- Federalism
- Guaranties to the States

The Changing Shape of Federalism

The Constitution of the State of Georgia

- Three Branches of State Government
- A Third Level of Government

SS8CG1

Describe the foundations of Georgia's government.

- Explain the basic structure of the Georgia state constitution (preamble, bill of rights, articles, and amendments) as well as its relationship to the United States Constitution.
- Explain separation of powers and checks and balances among Georgia's three branches of government.



The U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC, houses the Senate and the House of Representatives—the legislative branch of government.

CHAPTER 24

AT FIRST GLANCE

This chapter introduces students to the American system of constitutional government, comprised of a national constitution and 50 state constitutions. Differences and similarities in the national and state constitutions are reviewed, as are such important constitutional principles as separation of powers, federalism, limited government, and checks and balances. The structures of the national government and Georgia’s government are described and compared. This chapter also explains how federalism works and its evolving nature over the past 200-plus years.

Constitutional Government

[The Constitution of the United States](#)

[The Changing Shape of Federalism](#)

[The Constitution of the State of Georgia](#)

The government of the United States of America is based on a written **constitution**¹. The U.S. Constitution states the basic principles of our government. It spells out the powers of government, the limits of those powers, and how the government is to be organized. It guarantees certain rights to the people. The 50 states also have constitutions, but the U.S. Constitution is the highest law—“the supreme law of the land.”

Vocabulary

- 1 **Constitution** - The legal document that authorizes a state or national government to exist. A constitution usually outlines fundamental principles, form, major officials, and powers of a government.

The Constitution of the United States

The U.S. Constitution was not the first written law of the country. After the American Revolution, the new nation of 13 states was first governed under the Articles of Confederation. This document established a central government that had little power and could not deal with national problems. States were taxing goods from other states. Some printed their own money. Some made agreements with foreign governments. Public debt went unpaid. Serious conflicts occurred in several states. By the mid-1780s, the nation was in political and economic turmoil. Many leaders believed that the central government should have more power.

A convention of delegates from every state except Rhode Island met in Philadelphia from May until September 1787 to strengthen the Articles of Confederation. However, they soon decided to draft a new constitution. This is how it began:



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

▲
Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States, a painting by Howard Chandler Christy. In September 1787, four months after they began work, delegates to the Constitutional Convention sign the new constitution. George Washington stands at the front.



The “Preamble,” as this introduction is called, assures the public that the new constitution bases the authority of government on the support of the people—the principle known as popular

sovereignty. The Preamble also makes it clear that the framers wanted to give the nation a good chance to survive.

In shaping the new government, the framers faced two complex problems. First, they had to construct a national government strong enough to rule and hold the country together. They had to do this and still protect the liberties the people had won in the Revolutionary War. Second, they had to persuade the states to give up some powers they had under the Articles of Confederation. This action would strengthen the national government so it could better deal with national problems. At the same time, they had to respect the special interests of each state to control its internal affairs.

With these concerns in mind, the framers of the Constitution laid out a plan of shared powers. Power would be shared in two ways. First, a national government would be divided into three branches—an

◀ The green lawn leading up to the U.S. Capitol is known as the Mall. It is flanked by museums and memorials that document and celebrate our nation’s history.

arrangement commonly called **separation of powers**¹. Each branch would have various checks on the other branches to balance power. Second, the national government would share power with state governments, though in certain areas the national government would be supreme. This arrangement is called **federalism**². These arrangements became two of the most important principles of the new American government.

SEPARATION OF POWERS

The framers wanted to strengthen the national government but prevent the concentration of power in the hands of any individual or small group. To do this, they designed a government with three main divisions or “branches.” This principle, the separation of powers, provided for

1 A legislative branch to make laws;

- 2** An executive branch to carry out, enforce, and administer laws; and
- 3** A judicial branch to interpret the law and make judgments in legal disputes.

The legislative branch is the U.S. Congress, which is **bicameral**³ (with two houses). This lawmaking branch consists of members of the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives and their staffs. Senators serve six-year terms. Two senators are elected from each state, for a total of 100. There are 435 U.S. Representatives. They serve two-



The U.S. Supreme Court, the highest court in the country, interprets the laws of the land. Many important decisions affecting Georgia have been issued here.



The Executive Branch

[Transcript](#)

year terms and are elected from districts in each state. The number of districts is based on the state’s population, but each state is guaranteed at least one representative.

The executive branch is headed by the president. The president and the vice-president are the only elected officials in the executive branch. It is the largest branch because it takes many thousands of employees to carry out the laws. The executive branch includes the army, navy, and air force and numerous departments organized to carry out specific services. The president has the power to appoint top officials for each department.

The judicial branch is made up of the Supreme Court and other federal courts. They review and interpret U.S. laws in cases that are brought before them. Voters do not elect any officials in the judicial branch of the national government.

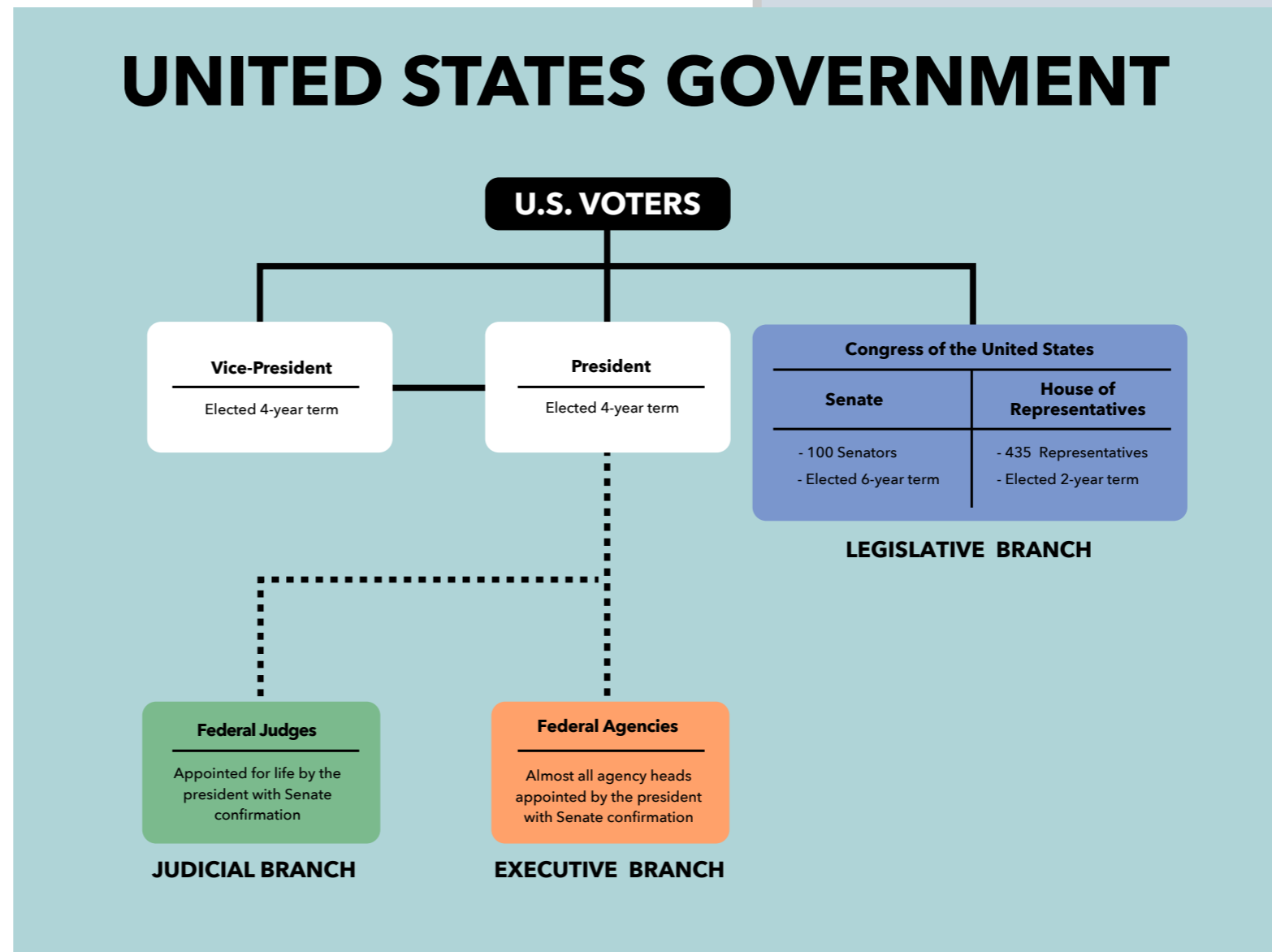
State governments today have a three-branch organization similar to the national

government. Titles are different, however. The state chief executive is called “governor.” The state legislature is not called “Congress” but is the “assembly,” “general assembly,” or “state legislature.” The state judicial branch is often called the “state court system.”



On The Campaign Trail: Do You Qualify?

[Transcript](#)





- ◀ The White House serves as both the office and home for the president of the United States and the first family.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

The powers of each of the three branches are not completely and neatly separated from one another. Through a system called **checks and balances**⁴, each branch can curb the powers of the other two branches. The power of one branch to check another prevents any single branch from taking full control. Because of this relationship, the three branches must work

together to make the government function effectively.

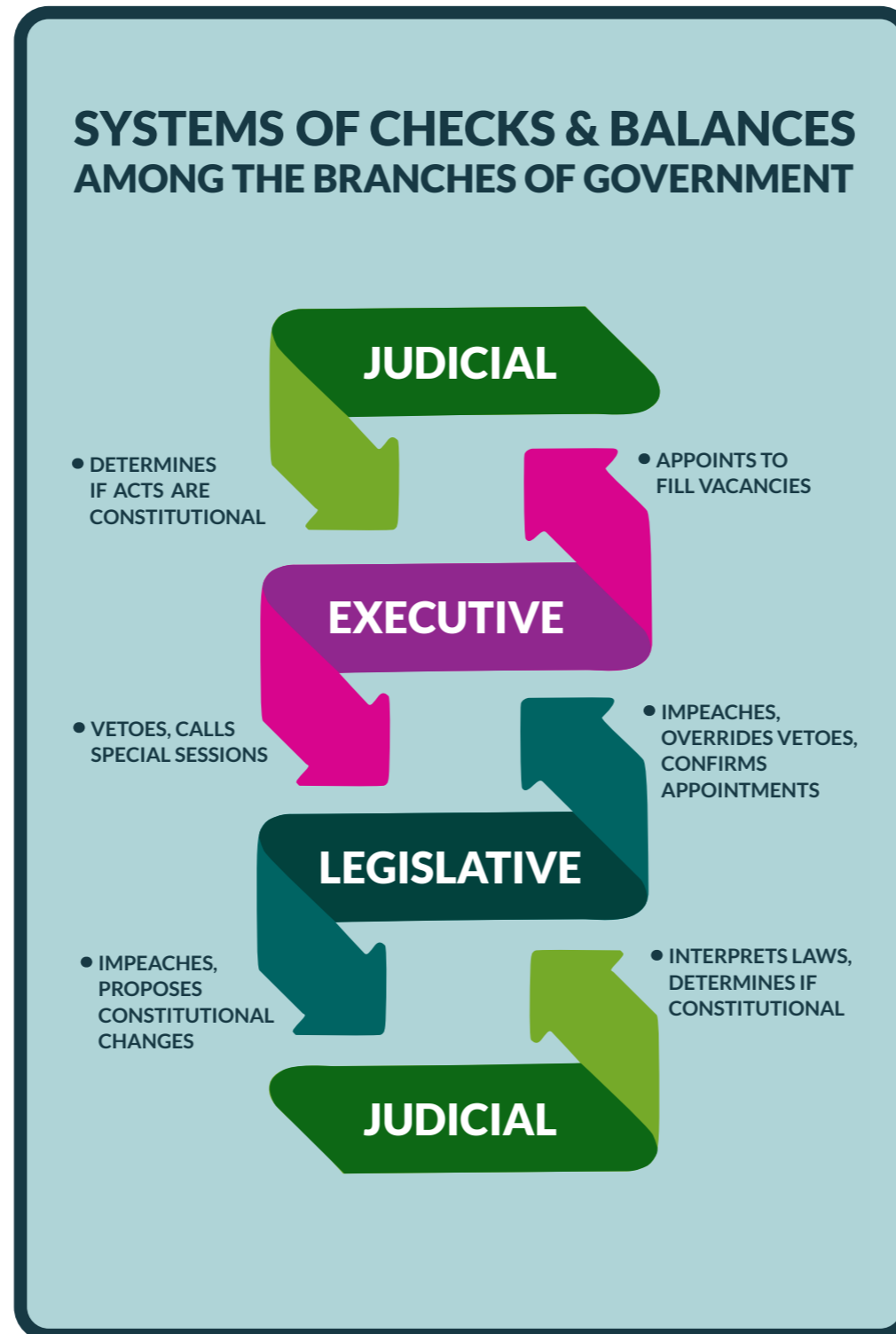
The presidential power to **veto**⁵ (refuse to approve) a bill passed by Congress is one example of a check. Congress, in turn, has the power to override a veto by a two-thirds vote. The U.S. Supreme Court has the power to overturn a law passed by Congress and approved by the president if it determines the law is unconstitutional.

By checking power with power, the

framers aimed to achieve a balance among all three branches of the national government. Likewise, authors of state constitutions sought a balance among the branches of state governments. This system of sharing power is found not only within the national government but also within the state governments. The result is that each branch can get involved in activities that are the primary responsibilities of another branch. ■

FEDERALISM

Remember that the framers of the Constitution faced a difficult problem. They



LOCATING *the* MAIN IDEAS

- 1 Define:** constitution, separation of powers, federalism, bicameral, checks and balances, veto
- 2** What was the main weakness of the central government under the Articles of Confederation?
- 3** How were the framers of the Constitution able to keep governmental power from being concentrated in the hands of a few powerful people?
- 4** Give an example of how one branch of government can check the power of another branch of government.

wanted to make the national government stronger, but they were committed to ensuring that the states would retain certain powers. Their solution was to devise a federal system that distributes power between the national government and the states, with the national government supreme in matters of national interest. In matters of concern to both national and state government, they share power. In some matters, the states are free to govern without national interference.

The United States was the first government to have divided powers in a dual (double) federal-state system. Federalism was a new idea in 1787—very different from systems



of other nations at that time. Most nations then had unitary (single) governments with power concentrated in the central government. Local governments, such as counties, were arms of the national government in those countries. But in the United States, local governments became arms of the state. States were allowed to develop many laws based on local culture and traditions.

For citizens of the United States, federalism means that they live as citizens of two governments at the same time. Authority over certain matters (coining money, for example) is given to the national government. Authority over other matters (such as child custody) is reserved for the states.

- ◀ Interstate highways connecting states are built using a combination of federal and state funds.

Other powers belong to both levels of government. Both can impose taxes on citizens. Both can enforce penalties on citizens who don't obey the law. In contrast, under unitary governments citizens live under the authority of only one central government.

DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

Both the national and state governments have lawmaking powers under the U.S. Constitution, but neither has unlimited powers. Rather, the Constitution distributes some powers solely to the national government. These include authority to issue coins and paper money, declare war, set up a post office, and establish rules for citizenship. The national government also has the power to regulate business between states, make treaties with other nations, and maintain an army and navy.

In addition to specific grants of power,

the Constitution also says Congress has the power “to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States...” This statement is sometimes called the “necessary and proper” clause. It is also known as the “elastic” clause because it allows Congress to stretch its powers and to make laws on subjects not actually listed in the Constitution.

Only the federal government has the authority to issue money.



The U.S. Constitution prohibits states from doing some things, such as printing money, but it does not spell out what they can do. When it was sent around to the 13 states for ratification (approval), there were demands for some **amendments**⁶ (additions or changes). These demands resulted in 10 amendments, popularly known as the **Bill of Rights**⁷. One of these amendments, the 10th, reads:

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

This statement means that the states can make and enforce laws on subjects not mentioned in the Constitution.

Here are some of the things states do under their “reserved” powers: create local governments, regulate marriage and divorce, operate public schools and colleges, license occupations and businesses, conduct elections, regulate



political parties, protect persons and property, and regulate traffic on public roads.

In some areas, the national government and the state governments exercise power concurrently (at the same time). These include the power to **levy**⁸ (set) and collect taxes, establish courts, regulate public utilities, take property for public use, build highways, and define crimes.



State laws regulate numerous family matters such as marriage and divorce. In Georgia, couples have to be at least 16 years old to marry with parental consent and 18 without.

POLICE POWER

The general reserved power under which states protect the public, consumers, or the environment is sometimes referred to as its **police power**⁹. A state government may pass laws to protect public health, morals, safety, or welfare, as long as such laws do not violate U.S. or state constitutions.

GUARANTIES TO THE STATES

In addition to distributing powers between the national government and the states, the U.S. Constitution makes several guaranties to the states. It also provides for relations between the states.

The Constitution guarantees that the national government will protect each state from foreign invasion and, if requested, from domestic violence (violence at home). Also, citizens of one

state cannot be denied any of their rights by moving to another state.

The Constitution provides for the admission of new states to the Union. It also guarantees that no new state will be carved out of an existing state without the agreement of that state's legislature.

Techwood Homes in Atlanta was built in 1934–1935 by a New Deal program to replace city crime with modern apartments for low-income tenants. The 600-unit complex, built just south of Georgia Tech, was the first public housing project in America.



Perhaps the most important guarantee is the following: “The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government. . . .” This statement means that no state can set up a monarchy or a dictatorship. The people are guaranteed representative government, a government of the people. Beyond this statement, however, the U.S. Constitution leaves it up to the people of each state to shape their state government.

AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution includes a process for making changes to that document, but it is a difficult process. Over the past 200 years, it has been amended fewer than 30 times. Two-thirds of each house of Congress must propose an amendment (or call a convention to propose it). Three-fourths of the states must then ratify the proposed amendment for it to become effective. ■

LOCATING *the* MAIN IDEAS

- 1 **Define:** amendment, Bill of Rights, levy, police power
 - 2 **Identify:** necessary and proper clause
 - 3 Describe how powers are distributed between the national and state governments under federalism.
 - 4 Why would a driver who moves from Tennessee to Georgia have to apply for a new driver’s license?
 - 5 List three guaranties made to states by the U.S. Constitution.
-

Vocabulary

- 1 Separation of powers** - A division of governmental power among separate branches, each with distinct roles and powers.
- 2 Federalism** - Political system in which the national government is supreme but shares some powers with the state governments, which also have certain independent powers.
- 3 Bicameral** - Consisting of two chambers. The legislatures of the United States and Georgia are bicameral, each having a Senate and a House of Representatives.
- 4 Checks and balances** - A plan built into U.S. and state constitutions to keep the three branches of government from overpowering each other.
- 5 Veto** - An action by a chief executive to prevent a bill passed by a legislative body from becoming law. Vetoes can be overridden by the legislature.
- 6 Amendment** - An addition or change to a bill, law, or constitution.
- 7 Bill of Rights** - Fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed to U.S. citizens by the Constitution's first 10 amendments.
- 8 Levy** - To impose or set, as in the case of government levying taxes.
- 9 Police power** - The general power of the state government to protect citizens and the environment by passing laws in the interest of public safety and welfare.

BILL OF RIGHTS

“No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property except by due process of law.”

This statement is from the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the State of Georgia. Many citizens are aware that the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution are called the U.S. Bill of Rights. But did you know that every state constitution also has a bill of rights—a list of freedoms or liberties protected by law? In most cases, the rights listed in state constitutions are much like those set forth in the U.S. Constitution.

What is in the U.S. Bill of Rights? It spells out two kinds of rights that Americans in the late 1700s believed were their traditional rights: rights of individual liberty and rights of persons accused of crimes.

Rights of individual liberty include freedom of religion, speech, and the press; the right to assemble peaceably and to petition the government; and the right to keep and bear arms.

Rights of persons accused of crimes include the right to trial by jury and to a lawyer; protection against unreasonable searches

and seizures; against self-incrimination; against deprivation of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; against excessive bail and fines; and against cruel and unusual punishments.

Originally, the U.S. Bill of Rights protected citizens only from actions of the national government. However, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment extends most of the protections of the U.S. Bill of Rights to cover actions by state governments.

Liberty Bell



Georgia’s constitution has a Bill of Rights that includes all the individual protections in the U.S. Bill of Rights—such as guarantees of due process of law, equal protection of the laws, freedom of religion, and the right to bear arms. But it guarantees additional rights not mentioned in the national Bill of Rights. For example, it guarantees freedom of conscience, prohibits banishment from the state as punishment for a crime, and provides you cannot be imprisoned because of debt.

CONSTITUTIONFACTS.COM

The U.S Constitution & Amendments: The Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights

Amendment I (1): *Freedom of religion, speech, and the press; rights of assembly and petition*

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Amendment II (2): *Right to bear arms*

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

Amendment III (3): *Housing of soldiers*

No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

Amendment IV (4): *Search and arrest warrants*

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Amendment V (5): *Rights in criminal cases*

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb, nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.

Amendment VI (6): *Rights to a fair trial*

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed; which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defence.

Amendment VII (7): *Rights in civil cases*

In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

Amendment VIII (8): *Bails, fines, and punishments*

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

The Changing Shape of Federalism

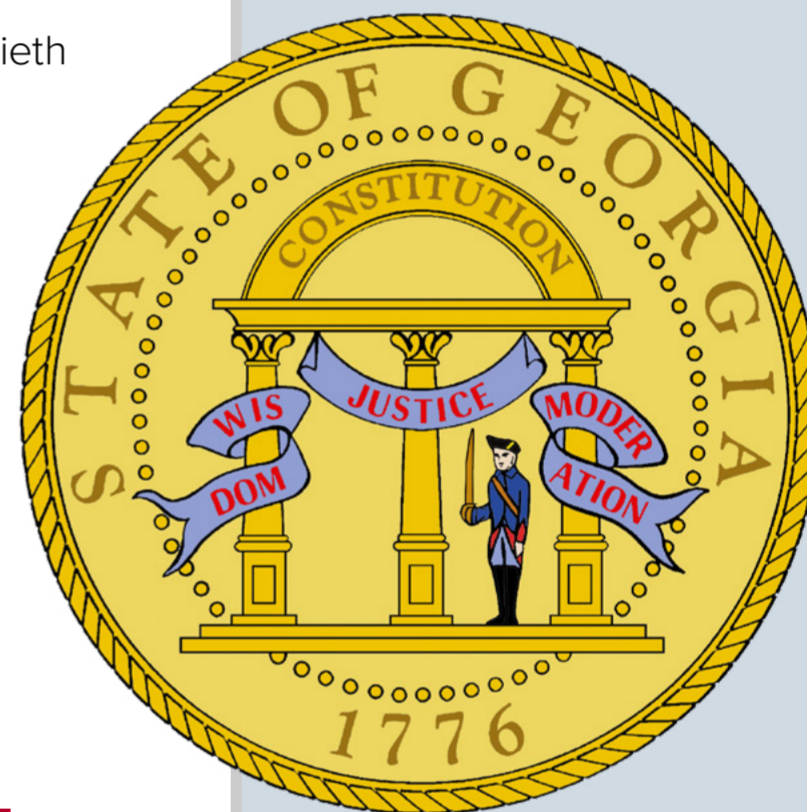
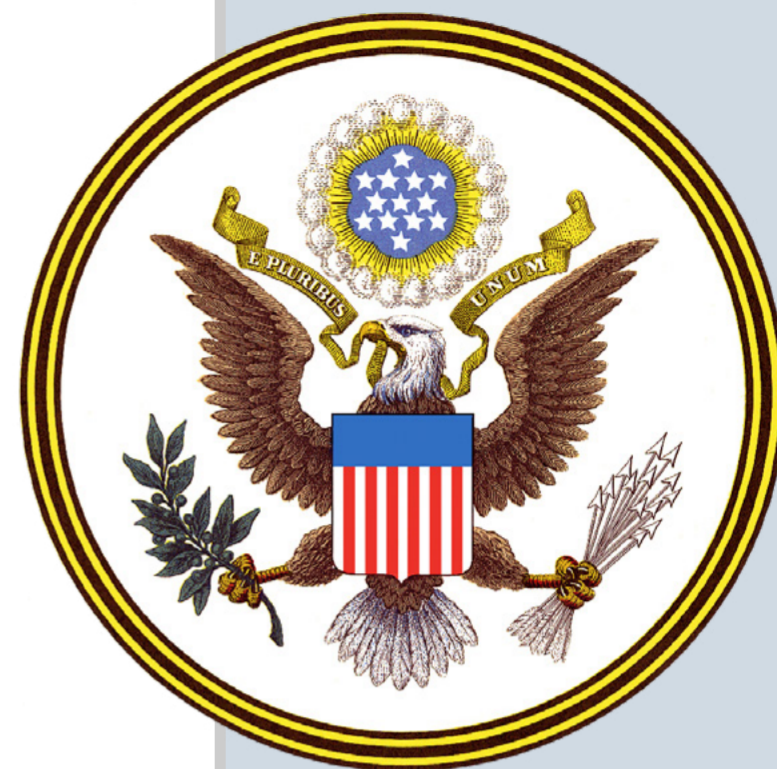
Today, federalism is not quite what the framers of the Constitution planned in 1787. Over the past two centuries technological, social, and economic changes and several big events—including the Civil War and the Depression of the 1930s—altered the relationship between the national government and the states.

Until the Civil War, Americans generally thought of their state and the nation as two distinct supreme authorities. They saw two equal partners acting separately in different areas of life. In those days, neither government had a very big influence on the daily life of most Americans. Generally, though, the state played a bigger role than the national government in everyday life.

As a result of the Civil War, the national and state governments were no longer equal powers. Instead, national supremacy was recognized. The war had settled the question of whether states could withdraw

from the Union. They could not. The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, added in 1868, prohibited the states from violating specific rights of citizens. The effect of this amendment was to make the national government the protector of personal rights against state action.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, problems arose that forced government to take on new functions with respect to the economy. Railroads and other giant corporations that engaged in interstate commerce were driving competition out of business. Public health was threatened by unsanitary practices in food industries and by impure and dangerous drugs. Forests and other



◀ *I pledge allegiance to the Georgia flag and to the principles for which it stands; Wisdom, Justice, and Moderation.*



One of the biggest shifts of power within the federal system—away from the states and to the national government—came with the Great Depression that began in late

natural resources were being depleted. Georgia and other states tried to curb unfair and dangerous business practices but were generally not effective. Farmers, merchants, and other citizens clamored for national action.

Congress responded with laws that outlawed unfair business practices, regulated interstate commerce, and protected resources. By 1920, the national government had also established the Federal Reserve System (a nationwide banking system) and federal funding for vocational education and highway construction.

1929. States were unable to deal with the crisis, and the national government stepped in. Its New Deal activities involved cooperation with state and local governments and grants of funds to those governments. Together, they provided jobs and welfare assistance; built roads, bridges, health clinics, and schools; and aided agriculture and manufacturing.

However, when the states accepted federal funds, they usually had to accept federal regulations that came with them. As a result of the New Deal, policies of the national government affected not only

◀ President Lyndon B. Johnson met with black leaders (L to R) **Martin Luther King Jr., Whitney Young,** and **James Farmer** early 1964 to discuss the Civil Rights Act.

the lives of individual citizens but also the operations of state government more than ever before.

The 1950s and 1960s brought another shift of power to the national government. This shift was linked to the civil rights movement, the Cold War with the Soviet Union, and urban problems. The civil rights movement had the greatest effect on the relationship between the national government and the states. Beginning with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the national government stood more firmly on the side of civil rights. New federal laws, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, increased federal authority over activities traditionally handled by states. These included schools, public accommodations, and voting. Massive federal aid to education came after the Soviet Union orbited the satellite *Sputnik* in 1957. If America was going to win the space race, it had to have

more scientists and engineers. Finally, as more federal funds were applied to the problems of the nation's older cities and its poor people, federal influence on local government grew.

In recent years, Congress has shifted more responsibility back to the states. Still, in many cases, the activities of the national government and the states are closely intertwined. This means that when the states—and their local governments—act, they are often carrying out federal policies.



LOCATING *the* MAIN IDEAS

- 1 Describe how Americans viewed the authority of their state and the nation before the Civil War.
- 2 In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, why did the federal government rather than state governments need to solve problems in the economy?
- 3 How did the Great Depression trigger a shift of power in the federal system?
- 4 What are the three principles of the pledge of allegiance to the Georgia flag?

The Constitution of the State of Georgia

When on January 2, 1788, Georgia became the fourth state to ratify the U.S. Constitution, it already had a state government operating under a constitution written in 1777. This constitution was rather short and sketchy and provided for a small government run completely by a one-house legislature.

The next year, Georgians wrote a new state constitution, one more in line with the new national constitution. The Constitution of 1789 was longer, more detailed, and provided for a larger state government and a bicameral legislature. It had true sharing of powers among the three branches.

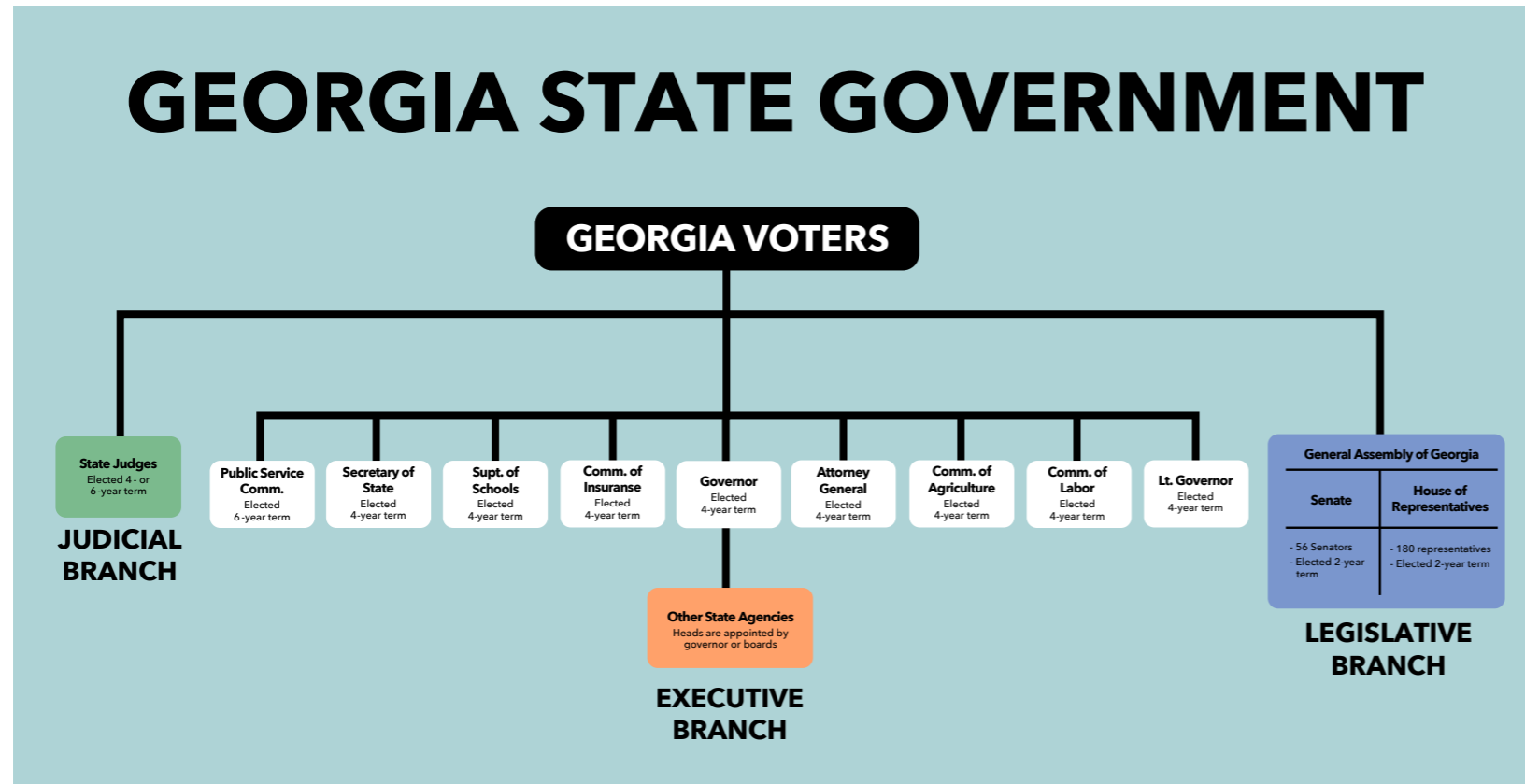
Generally, state constitutions—including Georgia’s—have been longer than the U.S. Constitution. They contained more details and placed more restrictions on government action. As social and economic conditions in the country



changed, they became outdated, but the U.S. Constitution did not. Therefore, most state constitutions have had to be amended thousands of times and have been replaced in many states several



In Atlanta, the area that includes the state capitol, the judicial building, and offices of executive agencies is known as the Capitol Complex.



times. Georgia, for example, has had 10 constitutions: those of 1777, 1789, 1798, 1861, 1865, 1868, 1877, 1945, 1976, and 1983.

Georgia's 1983 constitution is in many ways like the U.S. Constitution. It includes a preamble that says why the constitution was written:

To perpetuate the principles of free government, insure justice to all, preserve peace, promote the interest and happiness of the citizen and of the family, and transmit to posterity the enjoyment of liberty, we the people of Georgia, relying upon the protection and guidance of Almighty God, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

It has a Bill of Rights, articles that set up the three branches of government, and a process for amending the constitution.

Georgia's constitution, however, is much longer than the national constitution. It has a more extensive list of rights protected from government interference. It specifically spells out important principles, such as separation of powers and judicial review. It sets forth qualifications for voting and running for office. Unlike the national constitution (which only provides for president and vice-president), Georgia's constitution specifically creates various officials in the executive branch (such as secretary of state and attorney general).

And Georgia's constitution details many matters not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution, such as taxes, spending, public schools and colleges, and local government.

THREE BRANCHES OF STATE GOVERNMENT

Georgia's government is organized into three branches. It is slightly different from the national government structure. It took the state governments many years to work out the power-sharing arrangement among their three branches. Today, the balance differs slightly from one state to the next.

Generally, state governors have less power within the executive branch than the president of the United States. The president does not have to share power with other elected executive officials. But many governors do. Also, governors

may have less influence over the judicial branch than the president has. Most state judges are elected by the voters, but federal judges are appointed by the president. On the other hand, many governors have relatively more power in their state legislatures than the president has in Congress.

A THIRD LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT

Although the Constitution establishes just two levels of government, within the states there is a third level—local governments. Local governments are created by the states and work as arms of the states, carrying out state functions. The authority they have comes from the state constitution and state laws. The state may also abolish local governments. In Georgia there are three types of local governments—counties, cities, and special districts.

Local governments are very important in the federal system of government because they directly serve the people. They carry out state law and sometimes national law. They also enact and enforce their own laws, called **ordinances**¹, on traffic, local taxes, land use, and other community matters. However, local governments are not full partners with national and state government. Their power comes from and may be taken back by the state.

Because each level of government has lawmaking powers, conflict is possible. If there is a conflict, then the higher level of government prevails. ■

LOCATING *the* MAIN IDEAS

- 1 Define:** ordinance
 - 2** In what ways is Georgia's constitution like the U.S. Constitution? How does it differ?
 - 3** What two kinds of rights are guaranteed in the U.S. Bill of Rights?
 - 4** What is the third level of government in the United States?
-

Vocabulary

- 1 **Ordinance** - A law enacted by a city or county affecting local affairs, such as traffic, noise, and animal control.



CHAPTER 24 QUIZ

Text Version

Chapter 25

Foreword

Georgia Standards of Excellence
Correlations ▼

SS8CG1

Chapter Outline

Politics in a Democracy

- Participation in Politics
- Voting
- Voting Opportunities

Political Organizations

- Interest Groups
- Political Parties

Election Year

- Primaries
- General Election

SS8CG1

Describe the foundations of Georgia's government.

- b. Explain separation of powers and checks and balances among Georgia's three branches of government.
- c. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens according to the Georgia Constitution.
- d. List voting qualifications for elections in Georgia.

AT FIRST GLANCE

This chapter covers politics and citizen participation in government. The processes by which citizens participate in a democracy through voting and other activities are explained. The role of political organizations such as lobbying and interest groups as well as political parties is covered. The election cycle of primaries, campaigning, and elections is described.

Citizens and Government

[Politics in a Democracy](#)

[Political Organizations](#)

[Election Year](#)

Our democracy is a government by the people. American citizens elect the president, vice-president, and members of Congress. Citizens of Georgia elect the Georgia governor and General Assembly as well as city and county officials. Every two years in November, more than one million Georgians and millions of other Americans cast their votes. They are choosing leaders and decision makers for local, state, and national communities. Voting is an important way in which Americans participate in democracy.

News reports often describe state and national election campaigns in much the same way that a horse race is announced. Public opinion polls project who is in the lead. Observers comment on the image and appeal of each candidate. Speculation about the winners and losers runs high. But in political campaigns, voters also need to know the interests and capabilities of the candidates and their views on public issues. Public officials who are elected will be making decisions that affect everyone.



In 2002, Georgia became the first state in the nation to use touchscreen voting equipment in every voting precinct.

CHAPTER 25

Politics in a Democracy

Elections are just one part of politics in a democracy. **Politics**¹ is the process of deciding about public issues. It is all of the public activity that revolves around two general questions:

- 1 Who will represent us in government?
- 2 What decisions or public policies will government representatives make?

Politics is a necessary part of democracy because people have differing ideas about what is important and what should be done about it. All groups in our democracy have the freedom to express their political opinions. In politics, groups and individuals compete for the power to decide which actions government should take. Think about students in your class trying to make a decision about rules in the lunchroom. Most likely, there will be several different ideas about what the rules should be. To come to a decision, students would speak up for their views

and campaign to convince others to be on their side. They might even have to compromise to get a majority vote and a final decision. These are activities of democratic politics.

In some ways, politics is like a public game. It has rules and players, winners and losers. It has goals and strategies for reaching those goals. The rules are the federal and state laws aimed at keeping the game fair. The players are all the people who care enough about their government to take part in it. Most of the players are average citizens who are part-time players. These people get involved because they care about certain public issues such as crime, roads, education, or health care. There are some full-time players who are professional politicians. Politics is their job. They may be political party officials, campaign directors, lobbyists, or people who have been elected to public office.

PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

Americans may get involved in politics in many ways. Some join political parties and become active in local and state political organizations. Some participate by contributing money to a candidate or political organization. Others campaign for individuals or become candidates for public office themselves. Citizens join

associations that are interested in specific public issues and work to achieve certain outcomes. For example, their goals might be improving public parks, strengthening drunk-driving laws, or setting higher standards for drinking water.

There are many ways in which people can have a say in politics, but the first step is for the citizen to become informed. Citizen political participation in a democratic society requires keeping up with what's

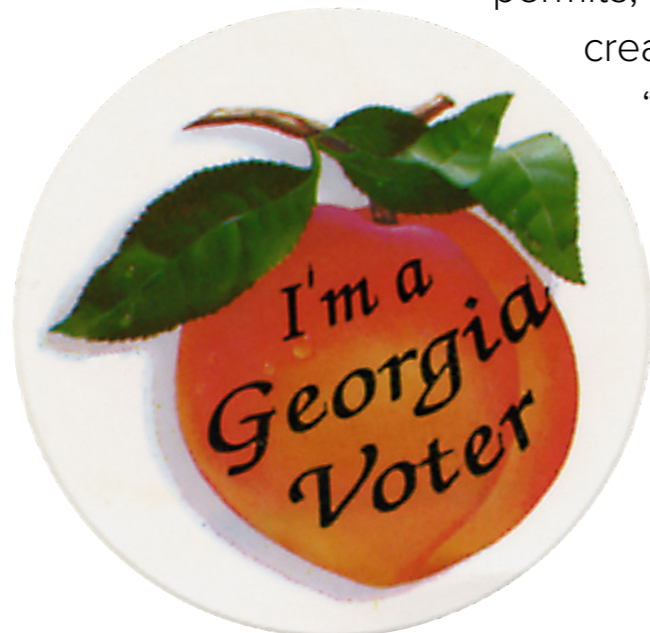


◀ Most often citizens attend public meetings that involve issues affecting them directly.

happening in government. Newspapers, news magazines, television news, and the Internet all help the people monitor policy arguments and decisions. Armed with information, citizens of all ages can influence government policies.

What is a public **policy**²? A public policy is a government goal with a plan to achieve that goal. For example, Georgia citizens wanted to reduce the number of teenage auto accidents. They worked with Georgia legislators, and in 1997 the General Assembly passed a law for that purpose. While 15-year-olds still can get learner's permits, the law

created a new "Class D" license for



qualified 16-year-olds and restricted full licensing at 18 to young people who have had no reckless driving, drag-racing, drunk-driving, or several other violations within 12 months prior to applying.

VOTING

An election is the most visible kind of political activity in our democratic government. Election activities include nominating candidates, developing party platforms and election strategies, raising campaign funds, organizing campaign speeches and debates, and urging voters to go to the polls. Finally, election day comes, and the votes are cast.

Voting is probably the most significant form of citizen participation. Voting is how we choose our representatives. Since these officials make government decisions for us, voting is an important



▲ In Georgia, high school principals serve as deputy voter registrars. Young adults can register to vote at school six months prior to their eighteenth birthday. They cannot vote, however, until they reach age 18.



On The Campaign Trail:
Lights, Camera, Action!

[Transcript](#)

way to influence government. Voting rights are protected by both state and federal laws. Every U.S. citizen who is at least 18 years old has the right to vote freely and in secret. Each is entitled to have his or her vote counted the same as every other citizen's vote.

When voters elect their political representatives, they are participating in the American form of democracy, representative democracy. This means they elect officials to make policy decisions for them. This is different from direct democracy, where people themselves—not elected representatives—make policy decisions.

THE ELECTION PROCESS

Under the U.S. Constitution, each state is responsible for holding elections. In Georgia, federal, state, and local elections are conducted by local officials under the

supervision of the secretary of state, the chief elections officer for the state.

State and local election officials prepare a ballot that lists the names of candidates for office. On election day, qualified citizens go to designated voting places, or **polls**³ in their **precinct**⁴ (voting district). These are often in firehouses, courthouses, and schools. In 2002, Georgia adopted a statewide uniform system of voting. Voters in every county use touchscreen voting units to cast their ballots. In the evening after the polls close, local elections officers count the votes. They send the totals to Georgia's secretary of state. The state totals are then compiled, and the official results are shown on the Internet.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

The top officials of each level of government—national, state, and local—are elected. These elected officials appoint

and oversee the work of additional people who work in government.

For what offices may Georgia citizens vote? In the national government, they participate with other Americans in electing the president and vice-president. To represent the people of Georgia in the U.S. Congress, they vote for two U.S. senators and 1 of 14 U.S. representatives.

The greatest number of races in which a citizen may vote is at the state level. For some state offices, such as the governor, candidates run statewide. All Georgia voters may vote in these races. For other state offices, such as state representative, candidates run within a district. Only voters living within the district may participate. Here are the state-level elective offices in Georgia:

Legislative Branch: elected by district

- State Senator
- State Representative

Executive Branch: elected statewide

- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- Secretary of State
- Attorney General
- State Superintendent of Schools
- Commissioner of Insurance
- Commissioner of Agriculture
- Commissioner of Labor
- Public Service Commission (5 positions)

Judicial Branch: elected statewide or by district

- Supreme Court Justice (7 positions, statewide)
- Appeals Court Judge (12 positions, statewide)
- Superior Court Judge (district)
- District Attorney (district)

At the local level, voters elect county commissioner and city council members, along with a sheriff, judge of probate court,

LOCATING *the* MAIN IDEAS

- 1 **Define:** politics, policy, polls, precinct
- 2 Why are politics necessary in our democracy?
- 3 List three ways citizens can participate in politics.
- 4 What is the difference between a representative democracy and a direct democracy?
- 5 For which national offices can Georgia citizens vote?

clerk of superior court, tax commissioner, and other local officials. The number varies from place to place. ■

VOTING OPPORTUNITIES

The average citizen has many opportunities to vote. The most important is the **general election**⁵ for national, state, and county offices held on the Tuesday after the first Monday every November in even-numbered years.



Special elections can be held at almost any time. They are used to fill elective positions that become vacant when an officeholder (called an **incumbent**⁶) resigns or dies. A special election known as a **recall**⁷ is sometimes held to allow citizens to remove a person from office before the end of his or her term. If the person is removed, another special election is held to fill the vacant position.

Another type of election is called a primary. In the **primary election**⁸, voters **nominate**⁹ (name) party candidates to run in the November general election. Each political party holds its own primary election.

Besides voting for persons to fill government offices, citizens may vote on questions. A vote on a question, at either the general election or a special election, is called a **referendum**¹⁰. In a referendum, the people make a decision directly rather than



On The Campaign Trail:
Narrowing the Field

[Transcript](#)

◀ On election day, voters must show photo identification and have their voter registration verified.

through their representatives. In Georgia, referendums are used for local matters. A vote to raise local sales tax is an example of a referendum vote.

Voters also are regularly called on to approve constitutional amendments. To be adopted, amendments to the Georgia constitution have to be approved by a majority of those voting in the general election. ■



LOCATING *the* MAIN IDEAS

- 1 Define:** general election, incumbent, recall, primary election, nominate, referendum
- 2** In addition to electing politicians, what other decisions do voters make?

Vocabulary

- 1 **Politics** - The process by which we determine our government policies and choose the officials who will carry them out.
- 2 **Policy** - A plan of action to meet a specific goal; also, a position on a specific issue.
- 3 **Polls** - 1. Designated voting sites used for elections. 2. Surveys of public opinion.
- 4 **Precinct** - A district set up for voting purposes.
- 5 **General election** - The election for national, state, and local offices held in November of even-numbered years on the Tuesday after the first Monday.
- 6 **Incumbent** - A person holding office.
- 7 **Recall** - Special election to remove a person from public office before the end of that official's term.
- 8 **Primary election** - A statewide election held by a political party to choose its candidates for the general election.
- 9 **Nominate** - To formally propose a candidate for appointment or election to an office.
- 10 **Referendum** - A direct vote by the public on some question or issue.

Political Organizations



Politics is played not only by individuals but also by organizations. Generally citizens can have more influence on government through a political organization than on their own. There are two general types of political organizations: interest groups and political parties.

INTEREST GROUPS

An **interest group**¹ is a group of people or organizations who share a special interest and attempt to promote that interest through politics. Their special interest may be better schools, rural health care, higher wages for police, lower property taxes on forest land, or opposition to building a hazardous waste facility. Or it may be better housing for the poor, less regulation of business, or increased pension checks. Hundreds of interest groups try to influence specific government policy.

- ◀ The entrances to the Georgia House and Senate are on the third floor of the state capitol. During a session, lobbyists wait there to talk with state legislators.

They include such groups as retired workers, textile manufacturers, labor unions, doctors, government employees, real estate developers, tobacco growers, churches, and insurance agents.

By joining with people who have the same interests, members of interest groups can have more influence on elections and policy making than they could as individuals. Interest groups advertise and contribute money to candidates. They organize their members or hire people called **lobbyists**² who personally contact policy-making officials in an attempt to influence legislation. Lobbyists got their name years ago because of their habit of gathering in the lobbies of hotels where legislators were staying.

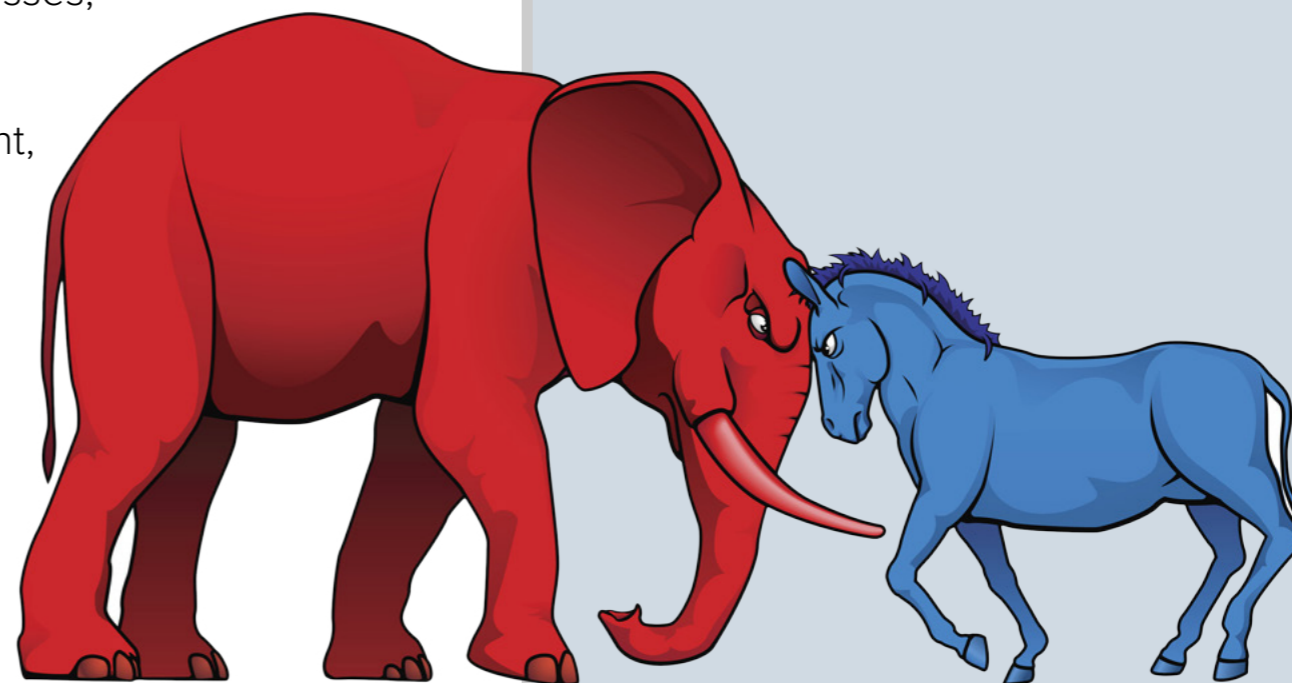
Today, they still contact legislators in lobbies or halls of state capitols. Georgia law requires lobbyists to register each year with the State Ethics Commission. Currently, more than 1,000 lobbyists

register during a session of the General Assembly.

POLITICAL PARTIES

The goals of a political party are much broader than those of a special-interest group. **Political parties**³ are political organizations that seek to elect their members to public office in order to organize government and determine public policy. A political party is supported by individuals, businesses, and interest groups.

To control government, the party has to win elections. To win elections, it has to appeal to a majority of voters. Therefore, unlike the special-interest group, a political



On The Campaign Trail:
Party Over Here, Party
Over There!

[Transcript](#)

After the 2000 presidential election, the colors of red and blue became associated with the Republican and Democratic parties when national television networks used those same colors on their electoral maps.

party attempts to bring together people with many interests. Party members may agree on only a few major issues, such as spending on welfare and regulating business.

While parties take sides on important issues and work to get specific laws passed, they play their biggest role in elections. Political parties nominate candidates to run for election to local, state, and national offices. Then they work to get their candidates elected.

The United States has a two-party system. The Democratic party and the Republican party are the only major national parties. Since the Civil War, only the candidates of these two political parties have been elected president of the United States. Only a few candidates from third, or minor, parties have been elected to other top offices.

The two major parties operate on the local and state levels in every state as

well as on the national level. Because the parties' role in elections is so important to having government by the people, their operations are regulated by state and federal laws. ■

LOCATING *the* MAIN IDEAS

- 1 Define:** interest group, lobbyist, political parties
 - 2** Why would a person join an interest group?
 - 3** How did lobbyists get their name?
 - 4** What are the two major political parties in the United States and how are they involved in elections?
-

Vocabulary

- 1 Interest group** - A group of people or organizations who share a particular interest and try to promote that interest through politics.
- 2 Lobbyist** - Person who contacts legislators in an attempt to influence legislation.
- 3 Political parties** - Political organizations, particularly the Democratic and Republican parties, that regularly compete to win elections in order to control the government and influence its policies.

Election Year

The American electoral system is generally based on **partisan**¹ elections, in which the candidates are identified by political party. In Georgia, candidates for judicial office, as well as some local government offices, run in **nonpartisan**² elections—that is, without a party label.

PRIMARIES

During the late spring in election years, campaigning begins for the party primary elections, which are held in July and August. A primary election gives voters a chance to participate in nominating the parties' candidates who will compete in the November general election. Every four years, most states, including Georgia, also hold a separate presidential preference primary.

A primary is a party's election to choose its candidates for a coming election.

In the Democratic primary, Democrats run against each other. Democratic voters choose one person for each contest in the general election. Meanwhile, in the Republican primary, Republican voters choose their candidates.

Georgia's primaries are "open" primaries. This means that both the Democratic and Republican primaries are open to any registered voter. One does not have to be a member of a party organization to vote in a primary.

However, a voter cannot vote in both party primaries. Also, if no candidate wins a majority vote in the primary and a runoff is necessary, the voter has to stick with the same party. (A voter can switch parties from year to year.)



On The Campaign Trail:
That's Debatable

[Transcript](#)

What if no one runs for a certain office in the primary of one of the parties? The person nominated in the other party's primary would be unopposed for that office in the general election. He or she would win automatically unless there is a successful write-in candidate.

OTHER METHODS OF NOMINATING

A party may nominate its candidates in other ways. In the past, candidates were often chosen at state conventions or at a **caucus**³ (meeting of party leaders). Today, the primary is the only method used by the Republican and Democratic parties in Georgia.

A candidate may also use a **petition**⁴ to get on the general election ballot. If the candidate seeks an office voted upon statewide, the petition must be signed by a number of voters equal to 1 percent of the total number of voters eligible to

vote in the last election for the office the candidate is seeking. For other offices, the number is 5 percent. Generally,



- ◀ Every four years, political parties hold national conventions attended by delegations from all 50 states and U.S. territories. Delegates approve the nominations of candidates for president and vice-president of the United States.



On The Campaign
Trail: Conventions &
Candidates

[Transcript](#)

the petition method is used by an **independent**⁵, a person not affiliated with a political party, to get his or her name on the ballot.

GENERAL ELECTION

In the November general election, the names of all candidates for state offices, opposed or unopposed, nominated in primaries or by petition, appear on the ballot. Names of candidates for local and federal offices are also listed.

In the general election, there are no rules governing party voting. A voter may choose all Democrats or all Republicans, some from each party, and any independents on the ballot. The voter may even write in the names of persons not listed on the ballot.

In order to be elected, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes cast. If no one receives a majority, a runoff is held between the two candidates with the highest vote totals. Runoffs are scheduled three weeks after the election. A runoff is seldom needed, though, because usually only two candidates compete for each position in a general election.

The winners in the general election take office the following January. ■



LOCATING *the* MAIN IDEAS

- 1 **Define:** partisan, nonpartisan, caucus, petition, independent
- 2 How is a party primary different from a general election?
- 3 How could a candidate be unopposed in the general election?
- 4 In a general election, are voters in one party allowed to vote for candidates of the other party or for independents?

- ◀ Bill explains the difference between the popular and the electoral vote, how the number of electoral votes is determined per state, and the importance of swing states. Students will also be able to identify key states with large numbers of electoral votes and explain why candidates focus on some states more than others.

Vocabulary

- 1 **Partisan** - Connected with political parties, as in a partisan election.
- 2 **Nonpartisan** - Not identified with any political party.
- 3 **Caucus** - Meeting of members of a political party or group to choose candidates for office or take a group position on issues.
- 4 **Petition** - 1. A formal written request. 2. A written document signed by a certain number of voters for some purpose, such as listing an independent candidate on the general election ballot.
- 5 **Independent** - A person who has no connection with a political party.



CHAPTER 25 QUIZ

Text Version