

Levels of Government

When the Founders of our country wrote the Constitution and created our government, they chose a federal system of government. This means that the power of the government is shared between the national government and individual state governments. Each state also has many local governments.

We need different levels to handle all the jobs that a government has to do. The national government makes laws, provides services, and solves problems that affect the whole country. The state governments make laws, provide services, and solve problems that affect all the people in that state. Local governments make laws, provide services, and solve problems that affect everyone in a certain community.

The national or federal government is organized into three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. The legislative branch is Congress which has two houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives. This branch is responsible for making laws for the whole country. The executive branch is responsible for enforcing the laws. The president is the head of the executive branch in the federal government. The judicial branch of the federal government is made up of the Supreme Court and other federal courts. Their responsibility is to determine what the laws mean. Some of the powers of the federal government are to coin (or create) money, to declare and conduct war, making treaties with other countries, and to tax the people to support the federal government.

Each of the state governments is also organized into three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. The legislative branch is made up of the state legislature. It also has two houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives. This branch is responsible for making laws for the state. The executive branch is responsible for enforcing the laws. The governor is the head of the executive branch in the state. The judicial branch is made up of the state Supreme Court and other courts. The job of the courts is to interpret the laws or decide what the laws mean. The state governments have the power to create public schools, to tax the people to support the state government, and to make laws about things such as speed limits on highways, marriage and divorce, and hunting and fishing. State governments also provide services for its citizens such as putting out forest fires, providing police protection, repairing roads, maintaining parks, and many more.

Each state is also made up of many local governments. Local governments are also divided into the three branches; legislative, executive, and judicial. The legislative branch of local governments is the city council. Their job is to make laws. The executive branch, led by the mayor, enforces the laws, and the judicial branch, the court system, interprets the laws.

Local governments are responsible for making laws that affect the community such as laws about the number of or kinds of pets people may own. Services are also provided by local governments. Some of those services include fire departments, garbage pick up, police protection, maintaining parks, and repairing roads.