



CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER

Who Represents You in Government?

LESSON PLAN AND ACTIVITIES

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Who Represents You In Government? Lesson Plan and Activities

Grade Level: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

Subject(s):

- Social Studies: U.S., State, and Local Government; and
- Language Arts: Reading, Writing.

Duration: 1-2 class sessions

Description: This lesson explores plurality, cumulative, and instant run-off voting systems. It asks students to evaluate the pros and cons of each system and to consider which one best represents citizens in a democracy.

Goals:

ISBE Standards

- A. *Social Science*: 14A, 14B, 14D; and
B. *Language Arts*: 1B, 1C; 3A, 3B, 3C; 4A, 4B; 5A.

CCR Anchor Standards

Objectives:

1. Explain who represents the students at various levels of government; and
2. Understand the basic roles and differences between each level of government.

Materials:

“Who Represents You” handout - attached

Instruction and Activity:

In explaining the various levels of government, have the students follow along with the chart handout. Ask students what they think each level is for before revealing the answers. The levels of government are layered like an onion and each level has a different purpose.

A. Federal Level: Deals with problems affecting the nation as a whole, such as commerce, foreign relations, the military, and the treasury

1. Executive

- a. President -- as of 2017, Donald Trump (R)
- b. Vice President -- as of 2017, Mike Pence (R)
- c. Non-elected officials -- the president’s cabinet, including secretaries who head up the various administrative departments (e.g. Departments of State, the Treasury, Justice, Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Education, Defense, etc.)

2. Legislative - Congress

a. Senate:

1. 100 members, two from each state, regardless of state population
2. Six-year terms
3. Current Illinois Senators as of 2017: Dick Durbin (D), Tammy Duckworth (D)

b House of Representatives:

1. The total number of representatives in the House is currently 435. In years past, the number of representatives was increased as the population increased, but it has now been maintained at 435 for nearly 100 years. States are assigned a number of representatives in proportion to their current population. The population is counted via the census every ten years, at which time the number of representatives allotted to each state is recalculated.
2. Two year terms
3. Each state is divided into local population districts and each local district has one Congressional representative. In 2011, congressional maps are redrawn following the 2010 Census. For the past decade, Illinois had nineteen seats in Congress; but because of the results of the 2010 Census showing a reduced population in Illinois in proportion to other states, Illinois will lose one seat and have only eighteen seats in the Congress until the 2020 Census when representation is re-evaluated.

3. Judicial -- Non-elected

- a. U.S. Supreme Court - currently nine justices; nominations to the Supreme Court are made by the President and must be confirmed by a 2/3 majority of the Senate
- b. Federal Appellate and District Courts - judges in each of these courts are also appointed by the President and must be confirmed by a 2/3 majority of the Senate
- c. Federal judges serve life terms

B. State Level: Deals with state issues like highway construction, in-state business, traffic, education, voting, etc. – Illinois

1. Executive

- a. Governor -- elected in 2015: Bruce Rauner (R) -- 4 year term
- b. Lieutenant Governor – Evelyn Sanguinetti (R)
- c. Secretary of State -- Jesse White (D)
- d. Attorney General -- Lisa Madigan (D)

2. State Legislature -- General Assembly

- a. Senate - 59 members
- b. House - 118 members

3. State Judiciary

- a. Circuit court judges - courts of 'original jurisdiction' - 23 circuits - 6-year terms
- b. Appellate court - 5 districts, 52 judges - 10-year terms
- c. Supreme court - 7 justices elected from 5 districts (three from District 1, Cook County; one each from the remaining four districts) - 10-year terms

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C. County Level: Deals with specific issues such as water and sewage, health services, regional planning

There are 102 counties in Illinois. DuPage County is divided into six districts, each with three elected representatives who sit on the County Board serving four-year terms. There is also an elected Chairman of the Board.

DuPage County encompasses the 18th Judicial Circuit of the state court system; there are four additional single-county circuit districts in the state.

Other County-level elected officials include the sheriff, county clerk, state's attorney, clerk of the court, auditor, recorder, treasurer, and coroner.

D. Township Level: Provide services such as general assistance programs for qualifying residents, assessment of real property taxes and maintenance of certain local roads

In Illinois, 84 counties are divided into townships, while 17 are divided into precincts. The City of Chicago at one time was divided into eight townships, but abolished those divisions in 1902; the remainder of Cook County still retains its township divisions. There are nine townships within DuPage County. Townships boundaries are determined geographically, each covering an area of 36 square miles. Population numbers may vary considerably from township to township and township borders often do not coincide with municipal boundaries.

Townships are governed by an elected Board consisting of a Supervisor and four Trustees. Township governments also typically include an elected assessor and highway commissioner. Some argue that township level government is redundant, providing the same services as other levels of government in the same area. On the other hand, there are many areas which are not incorporated into other levels of government where township services may be invaluable. It is possible to dissolve township level government by referendum

E. Municipal Level: Deals with local laws (ordinances) related to building codes, zoning, and regulation of nuisances, such as noise levels

Municipalities include cities, towns, and villages. Municipal boundaries are not necessarily the same as township boundaries or county borders. There are 39 municipalities which lie at least partially within DuPage County.

F. Special Districts

A variety of smaller districts serve specific purposes: school districts, park districts, library districts, police districts, fire protection districts, etc.

Activity One: Who Can Help You?

Goal: Identify which level of government is most appropriate to address certain day-to-day problems and issues.

Activity: Brainstorm a list of issues facing students, their friends and their families today. Then go through the list, deciding which level of government is most appropriate to deal with each

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issue. For example, if you want a stop sign installed at the end of your block, you would not go to a federal representative for assistance; to protest a war, you would not look to your mayor for help.

More examples to follow:

Building a skate park - Municipal

Property taxes - Township

Stop sign at the end of your street - Municipal

School funding - State legislature

Reinstatement of the draft - US Congress

Any issue dealing with war - US Congress

Starting a recycling program - Municipal

Activity Two: Who Represents You Locally?

Goal: Identify who represents students in their state and local governments.

Activity: Either as a take-home assignment or in class, have students research who their representatives are at the local, state, and federal levels. Resources may be found on-line or in the library. Use the attached handout as an illustration. One way to do this activity is to divide the students up into groups assigned to research each of the various levels: Federal, State, County, Township, and Municipality.

Resources:

Illinois Government Handbook and other IL government information:

<http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/publications/handbook/home.html>

Official Website for the State of Illinois, Government:

<https://www.illinois.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Welcome to Illinois Courts:

<http://www.state.il.us/court/default.asp>

The County of DuPage:

<http://www.co.dupage.il.us/>

Project Vote Smart:

<http://www.votesmart.org/>

HOW MANY REPRESENTATIVES DO YOU HAVE AND WHO ARE THEY?
Give the number of representatives and their names for each level of government.

Federal Government

President _____

Congress: Senate _____

House _____

State Government

Governor _____

Legislature: Senate _____

House _____

County Government

Chairman _____

Board of Representatives _____

Township Government

Supervisor _____

Trustees _____

Municipal Government

Mayor/President _____

Aldermen/Trustees _____

Special Taxing Districts

School Board _____

Park District _____