

GEORGIA STATE GOVERNMENT



SS8CG2: The student will analyze the role of the legislative branch in Georgia state government.

SS8CG3: The student will analyze the role of the executive branch in Georgia state government.

SS8CG4: The student will analyze the role of the judicial branch in Georgia state government.

SS8E4: The student will identify revenue sources and services provided by state and local governments

Georgia's State Seal

The symbol for Georgia's government is the State Seal and was adopted for use by the General Assembly in 1798. It includes four key elements that tell us about our state's government. First, the three columned structure symbolizes our three branches of government (legislative, executive and judicial). Second, the columns are connected by the arch (the Georgia Constitution) which unifies the three columns (or branches). Next, our state motto, "*Wisdom, Justice, Moderation*", is draped on each column inferring that each branch is described by these one of these words. *Wisdom* is associated with the legislative branch as a quality that the legislators must have in creating new laws and amending old ones for the state of Georgia. *Justice* describes the legal system of defending and interpreting the laws of our state. *Moderation* refers to the executive branch, the office of the governor, as a moderate (or balanced, not extreme) leader for Georgia making the best decisions for the citizens. The fourth element seen in the state seal is the soldier. This can be interpreted as a symbol of the Georgia National Guard. He is there as a defender of the Georgia Constitution and our state's commitment to wisdom, justice and moderation.



The Arch, on the campus of the University of Georgia, was patterned after the arch in the state seal. Legend says that any college student that walks under The Arch without graduating first, will never graduate!

Inside this issue:

Legislative Branch	2
Executive Branch	3
Judicial Branch	4
Sources of Revenue	5

Special points of interest:

- How a bill becomes a law
- Formal and Informal Powers of the Governor
- The difference between civil law and criminal law and the variety of courts that try these cases

The Legislative Branch – The General Assembly



Georgia's legislative branch is similar to the United States Congress in that it is *bicameral*, or has two chambers or houses. Georgia's legislative branch is called the General Assembly. Georgia has had a two house legislature since 1777, when the first state constitution was created. Today those two houses are called the House of Representatives and the Senate. The purpose of the General Assembly is to make laws.

SS8CG2 The student will analyze the role of the legislative branch in Georgia state government.

- Explain the qualifications, term, election, and duties of members of the General Assembly.
- Describe the organization of the General Assembly, with emphasis on leadership and the committee system.
- Trace the steps in the legislative process for a bill to become a law in Georgia.

	Senators	Representatives
US Citizenship	2 years	2 years
GA Citizenship	2 years	2 years
Resident of his/her district	1 year	1 year
Age	25 years old	21 years old
Term Length	2 years	2 years

The Committee System

All laws start as an idea from citizens. When the idea is formally written by a legislator it becomes a bill. The bill is read aloud to the members of the House or Senate during the legislative session. If the chambers decide that there is enough interest in the bill, it is sent to a group of representatives who are on a *committee*. These committees study and discuss the bill and decide if it should continue in the legislative process. This is where most of the work is done in the legislature.

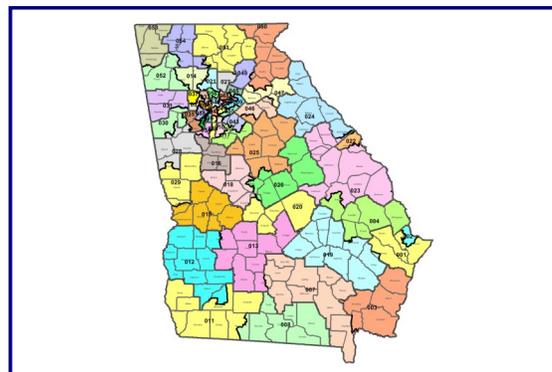
There are three main types of committees in the General Assembly:

- Standing** – more than 30 permanent committees that meet during the legislative session to discuss and study the major subject areas of legislation
 Examples: Education, Transportation
- Interim** – members meet and work between sessions on matters that require in-depth study
 Examples: Finance, Energy Sources
- Conference/Joint** – members from both houses meet to discuss 2 versions of the same bill
 Examples: Revenue, Tax Reform

Georgia House of Representative Districts 2012



Georgia Senate Districts 2012



The Executive Branch – The Governor, Constitutional Officers and Executive Agencies



SS8CG3 The student will analyze the role of the executive branch in Georgia state government.

- Explain the qualifications, term, election, and duties of the governor and lieutenant governor.
- Describe the organization of the executive branch, with emphasis on major policy areas of state programs.

Major Policy Areas

Georgia's budget allows for spending in seven key areas: education, health care, public safety, transportation, natural resources, economic development and general government. Various agencies in the executive branch are responsible for operating these policy areas. The governor and the House of Representatives work together to create spending bills for consideration in the House and the Senate.

Where does the money come from to keep our state running smoothly? Mostly from income tax, sales tax and user fees.

	Governor	Lt. Governor
US Citizenship	15 years	15 years
GA Citizenship	6 years	6 years
Age	30 years old	30 years old
Term of office	4 years (can serve 2 consecutive terms)	4 years (can serve an unlimited amount of terms)

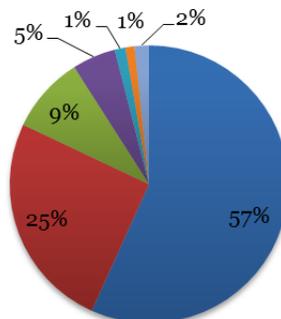
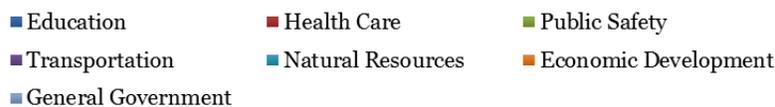
The purpose of Georgia's executive branch is to enforce the laws. The governor enforces laws when he signs a bill into law, requiring all citizens to follow that law.

The governor has formal and informal powers. Formal powers are stated in

the Georgia Constitution and informal powers are traditional in nature.

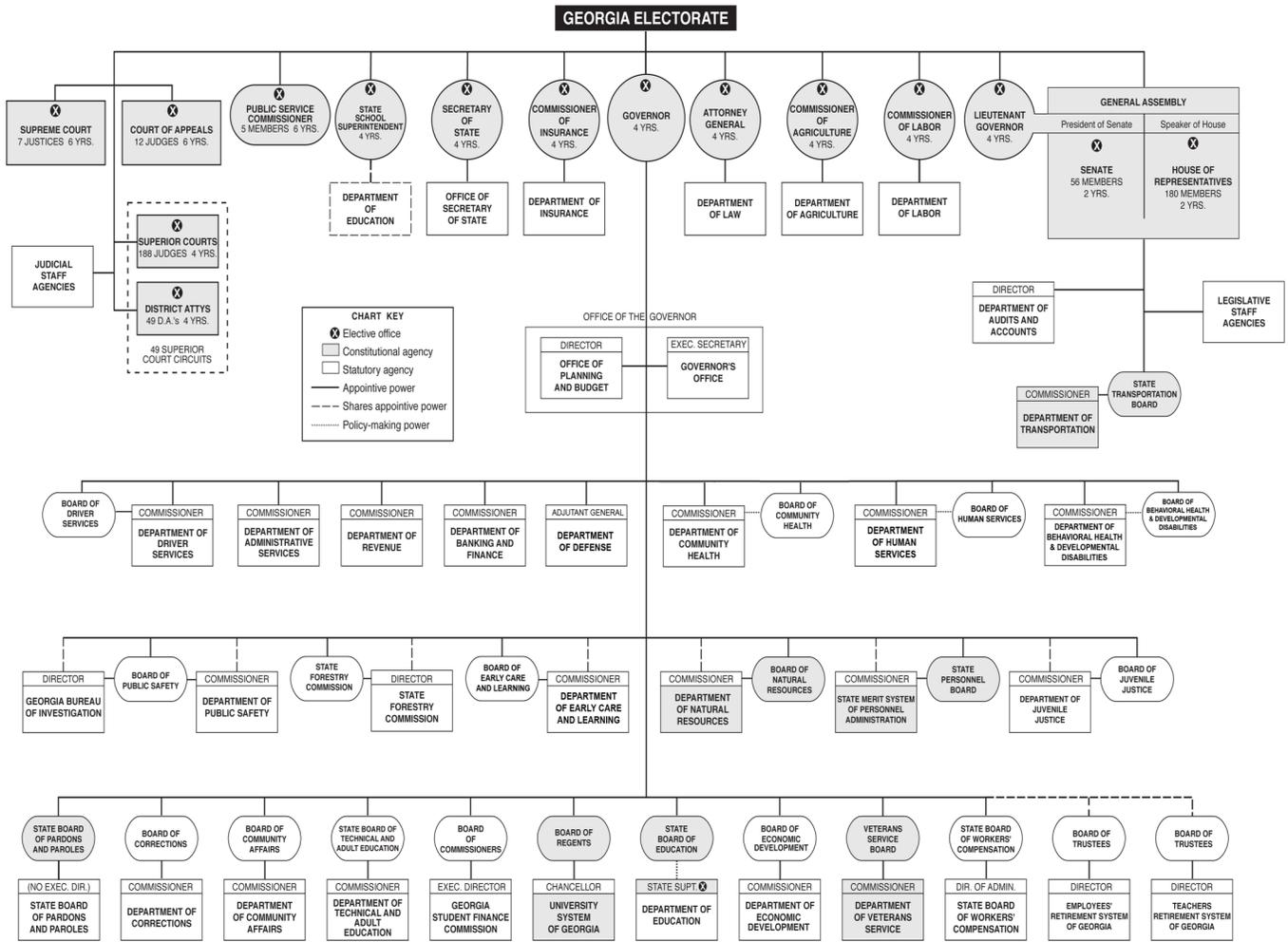
The Governor works with the Lt. Governor and Constitutional Officers and Executive Agencies to operate the State of Georgia.

Georgia State Government Expenditures



Organization of State Government

GEORGIA STATE GOVERNMENT



The Judicial Branch – Georgia’s Court System



Georgia’s Courts fall in one of two categories – *trial* or *appellate*.

Trial courts have original jurisdiction; they are the first court to hear a case. There are five types of trial courts: State, Juvenile, Probate, Magistrate courts and the most common trial court is the Superior Court. Each county in Georgia is required to have a Superior Court and will hear any civil or criminal case.

Appellate courts review cases that have already been decided by a lower court. The Court of Appeals of Georgia and the Supreme Court of Georgia each have specific cases they will hear, reexamining past decisions.

Judges for all courts, except the juvenile courts, are elected in non-partisan elections. Judges in courts with original jurisdiction are elected for four year terms; appellate court judges are elected to six year terms. However, the Governor has the power to fill vacancies between elections.

Criminal and Civil Law

Criminal Law – a crime has been committed against the state/a law has been broken

Civil Law – disputes over non-criminal laws between two persons

Plaintiff – the person bringing a complaint to the court

Defendant – the person the complaint is about

SS8CG4 The student will analyze the role of the judicial branch in Georgia state government.

- Explain the structure of the court system in Georgia, to include trial and appellate procedures, and how judges are selected.
- Explain the difference between criminal law and civil law.

Court	Duties
Superior (Civil and Criminal)	Felony cases, divorce, equity and cases regarding title to land
State (Civil and Criminal)	Misdemeanor violations, including traffic cases, all civil actions
Probate (Civil and if there is no state court in the county, criminal)	Validity of wills, administration of estates, appointment of guardians and involuntary hospitalization of incapacitated adults and other individuals, marriage licenses,
Magistrate (civil and criminal)	Civil claims of \$15,000 or less; certain minor criminal offenses; distress warrants and dispossessory writs; county ordinance violations; deposit account fraud (bad checks); preliminary hearings; and summonses, arrest and search warrants
Juvenile	Minors committing traffic violations or enlisting in the military services, consent to marriage for minors
Court of Appeals	The court of first review for many civil and criminal cases heard by the trial courts; it corrects legal errors or errors of law made at the trial level, not to alter jury verdicts or the outcome of bench trials
Supreme Court	Reviews decisions made in civil and criminal cases by a trial court judge or by the Court of Appeals; rules on questions involving the constitutionality of state statutes and all criminal cases involving a sentence of death. No trials are held at the appellate level, nor do the parties appear before the court