

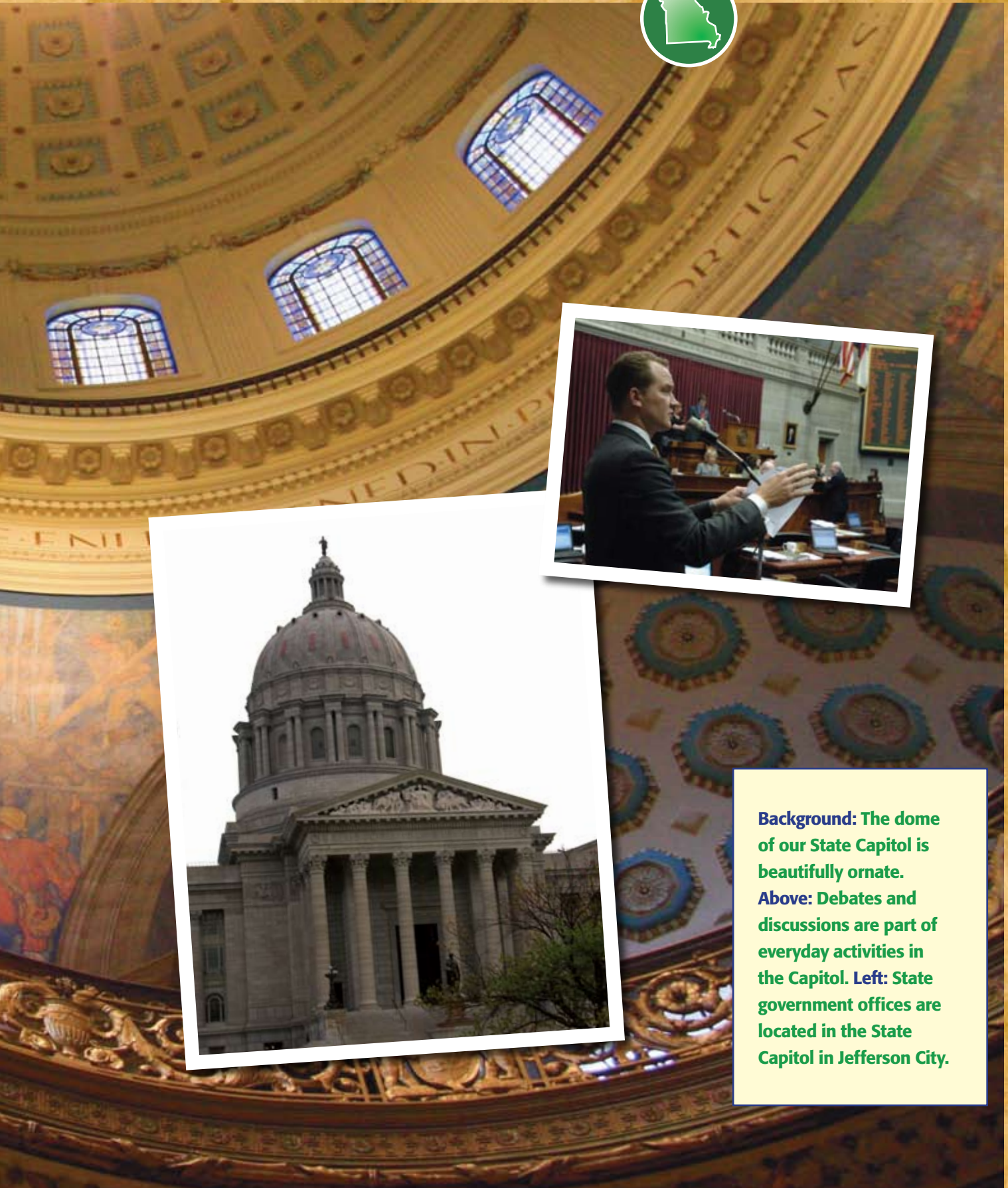
Chapter 5

Government in Missouri



The State Capitol, the building in which the General Assembly meets, is located in Jefferson City high on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River. Carved above the door of the Capitol are the Latin words *Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto*. These words are the state motto. In English, the motto means, “Let the Welfare of the People be the Supreme Law.” The motto is meant to guide the state legislators, officials, and employees as they work. What kind of work do these people do? And what kind of work do the officials in your county and city do?





Background: The dome of our State Capitol is beautifully ornate. **Above:** Debates and discussions are part of everyday activities in the Capitol. **Left:** State government offices are located in the State Capitol in Jefferson City.

Missouri Close Up



Missouri's Capitol

Number of Capitol buildings Missouri has had:
Six (the current one is the third in Jefferson City)

Year current Capitol completed: 1917

Construction cost of the Capitol: \$4,125,000

Height of the dome: 238 feet

Building dimensions: 437 feet long and 300 feet wide in the middle and 200 feet wide in the wings; five stories high without the dome

Floor space: 500,000 square feet

Missouri Government

Minimum age to be governor: 30 years old

Minimum age to be a state senator: 30 years old

Minimum age to be a state representative:
24 years old

First day General Assembly meets:
First Wednesday after the first Monday of January

Last day General Assembly meets: May 30

Months the Supreme Court meets: January, May,
and September

Section 1

State Government

As you read, look for the following:

- the three branches of government
- the duties of each branch
- how members of each branch are selected
- vocabulary terms **constitution, General Assembly, bill, constituent, amendment, compromise, governor, veto, appeal**

Before Missouri could become a state, its territorial government had to write a **constitution** that explained how the new state would be governed. That constitution has been rewritten five times. The constitution we use today was written in 1945, but it has been changed and updated many times since then.

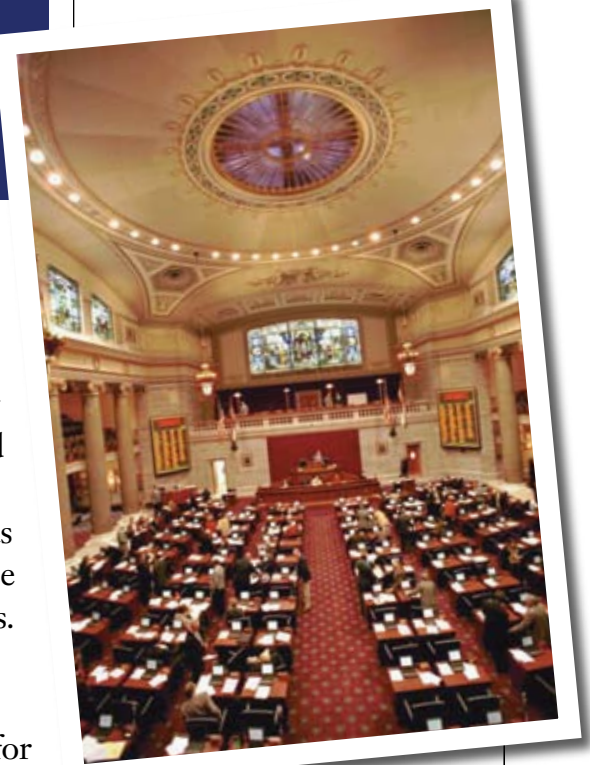
The constitution explains that Missouri's government has three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. The three branches share power equally, but each has different duties.

Legislative Branch

The legislative branch is the group that makes laws for Missouri. Missouri's state legislature is called the **General Assembly**. It has two houses or parts: the House of Representatives and the Senate.

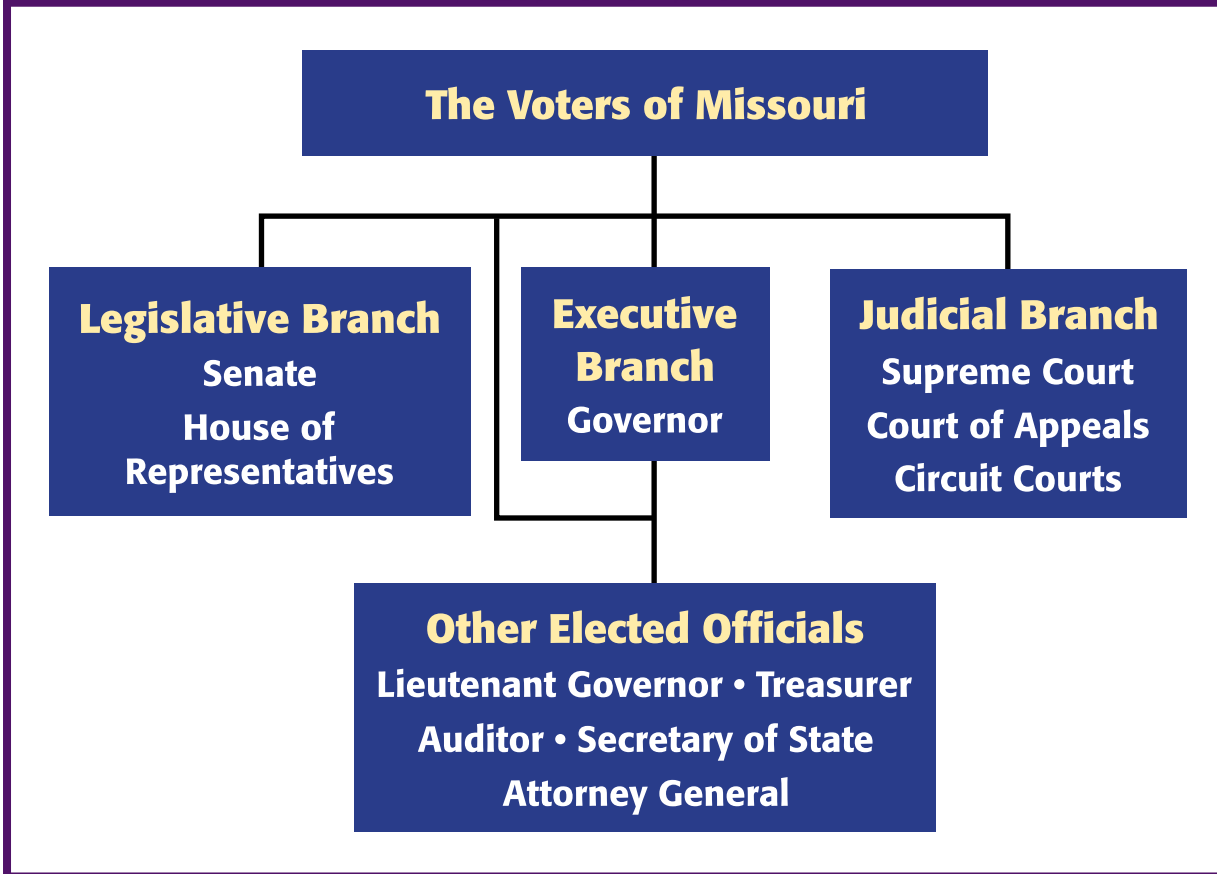
The General Assembly

There are 163 state representatives and 34 state senators. Each person represents a particular district in the state. Each House district has about the same number of people in it. Each Senate district has about the same number of people. One representative and one senator represent each Missourian.



Above: The House chamber inside the State Capitol.

Figure 7
Missouri State Government



Did you know?

During the early days of the Civil War, the General Assembly fled from Jefferson City to Neosho and voted on October 28, 1861, to join the Confederate States of America.

Representatives are elected to 2-year terms. Senators are elected to 4-year terms. Members of the General Assembly can serve no more than 8 years in either the House or the Senate and no more than 16 years total in both houses.

Each house of the General Assembly has a leader elected by its members. The representatives elect a *speaker of the House* who presides over House sessions. The senators elect a *president pro tem*, who presides over Senate sessions when the lieutenant governor is absent.

The General Assembly is in session (meets) from early January until the end of May of each year. Sometimes it meets in special session in times of an emergency or to work on special legislation at the request of the governor.



Making Laws

A **bill** is a suggested law. A bill can be introduced in either the House of Representatives or the Senate. Let us follow a bill that is introduced in the House (the procedure is the same for the Senate) as it becomes a law.

One part of a legislator's job is to listen to his or her **constituents**, the people who live in his or her district. Constituents let their representative know what laws might be needed or changed and how they believe the state's money should be spent. The representative uses this information when writing a bill. More than one legislator may work on writing a bill, and their staffs assist them.

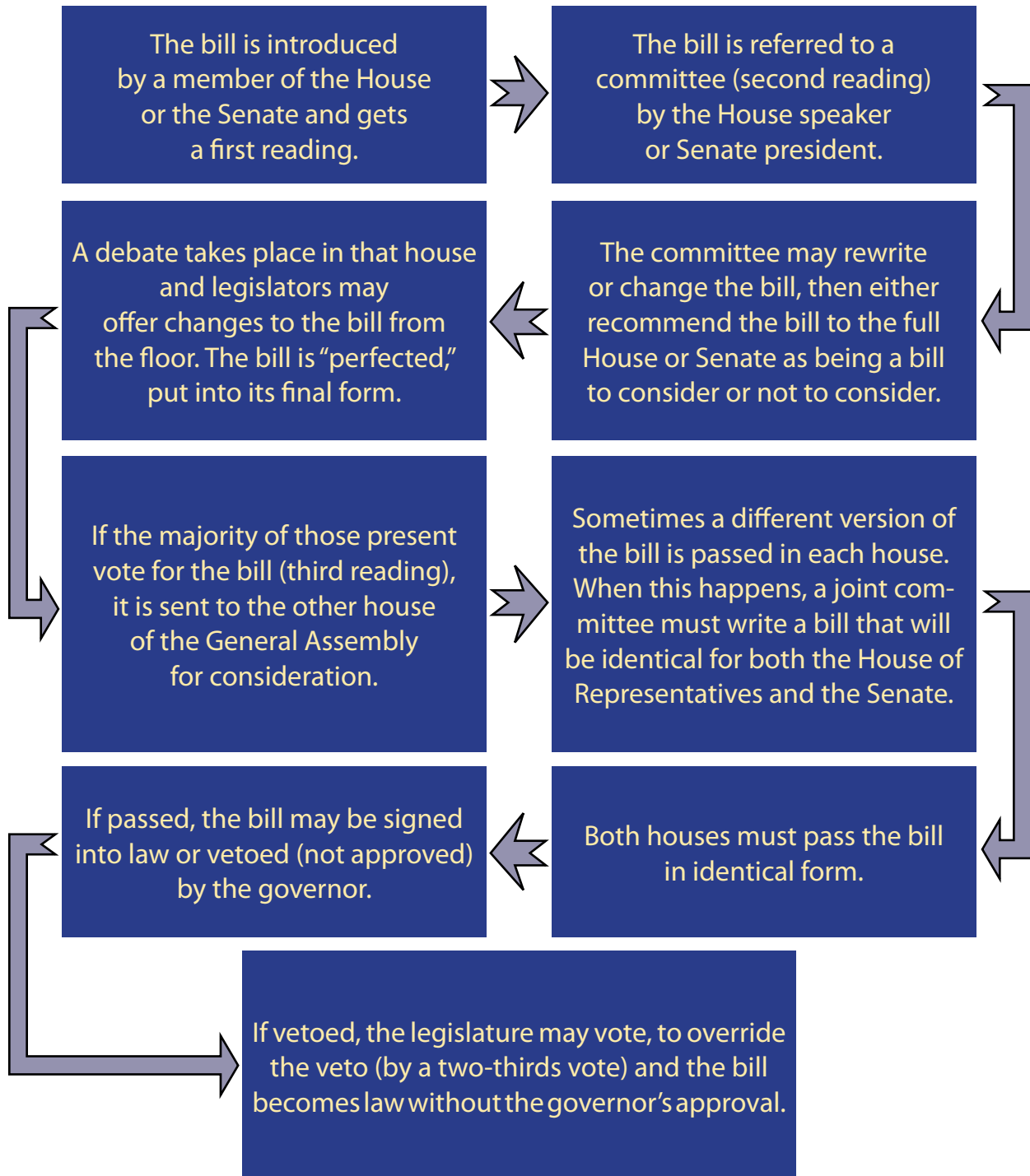
After writing the bill, the representative introduces it, bringing it before the rest of the House. The bill is sent to a *committee*, a group of representatives who study the bill. Suppose the legislator wants to help solve a problem farmers in his district have. Because the bill is about farming, it would probably go to the House Agriculture Committee, whose members are chosen by the speaker of the House because they have experience in agriculture. Some of them might even be farmers.



Above: Legislators rely on input from assistants and people they serve. Below: A bill is debated in the state legislature.



Figure 8
How a Bill Becomes Law



The committee might hold public hearings on the bill, allowing citizens to speak for or against the bill or to make suggestions for changes. When the committee has finished its work, it may send the bill back to the House, sometimes with **amendments** (changes), for a vote. The full House votes on the bill. Sometimes other representatives make amendments to the bill before the final vote. The bill passes if a majority of the representatives vote for it. It is then sent to the Senate (just as bills first passed by the Senate are sent to the House).

The Senate might send the bill to one of its own committees to study it and make changes. If the committee thinks the bill should become a law, it then sends the bill to the full Senate for a vote. If the Senate has made changes to the bill, the House can vote to accept the changes. If the House does not accept the changes, then the bill goes to a *conference committee* made up of members from both the House and the Senate. They work out the differences and come up with a **compromise** version of the bill that is sent back to both the Senate and the House for a vote. If both houses approve the bill, it is sent to the governor to be signed into law.

Below: The legislature is about to take a vote on a bill. Bottom: Ornate columns decorate the chamber in the State Capitol.



Did you know?

Alexander McNair was elected the state's first governor when Missouri became a state in 1821.

Executive Branch

The executive branch is charged with making sure the state's laws are obeyed. The **governor** is the head of the executive branch and oversees the operation of the state. The governor is elected to a four-year term and is limited to two terms.

The governor appoints the heads and members of various commissions, the heads of some departments in the state government, and all state judges. The governor signs bills passed by the General Assembly, making them laws. The governor can also **veto**, or refuse to sign, the bills. In that case, the legislature must vote to override the veto or the bill does not become law. It takes the votes of two-thirds of the senators and two-thirds of the representatives to override the governor's veto.

Other officials in the executive branch include the lieutenant governor, treasurer, auditor, secretary of state, and attorney general. Each of these people is also elected to a four-year term.

If the governor dies, has to quit, is injured, or is too sick to work while in office, the *lieutenant governor* takes his or her place. The lieutenant governor also presides over the state Senate, meaning he or she runs the sessions when the senators are working.



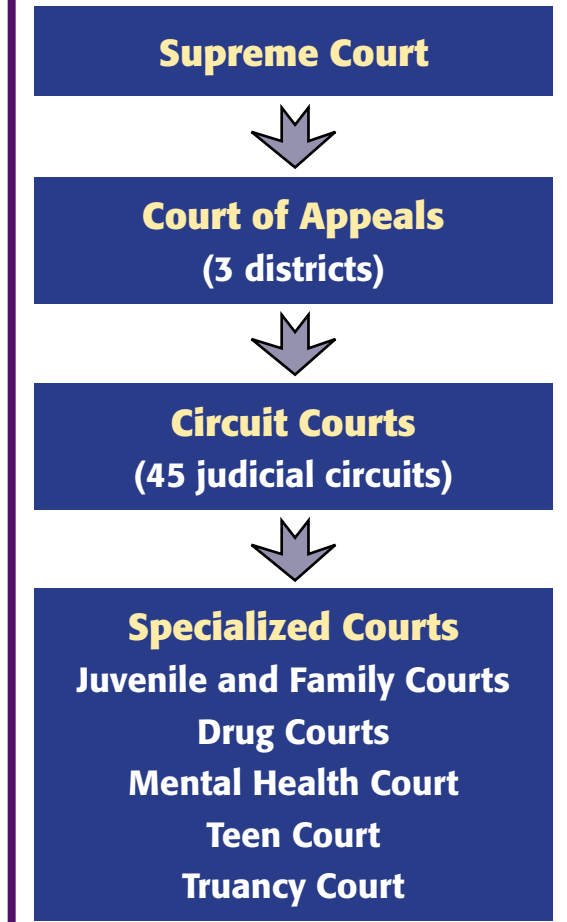
This Page: Governor Matt Blunt signs a bill into law. **Opposite Page:** The State Supreme Court Building in Jefferson City.

The *treasurer* is responsible for taking care of the state’s money. He or she places the money collected from taxes and fees and other sources into banks or invests it in ways that earn interest. The *auditor’s* job is to look into the way the different state agencies operate and to point out mistakes and suggest better ways to serve the people of the state. The auditor also makes sure the state’s money is spent properly. The *secretary of state’s* main task is to run statewide elections and to keep the state’s records. One of the services provided by the secretary of state is keeping the State Archives—documents, records, photographs, and other objects from the state’s past. The *attorney general* makes sure the state’s laws are enforced. In a trial, he or she represents the state (or, “the people” as the court clerk says at the start of a trial).

Judicial Branch

The judicial branch of government is made up of the courts and judges of the state. In Missouri, there are three levels of courts: the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, and the circuit courts.

Figure 9
Missouri’s Courts



When someone breaks a law or files a lawsuit, the case is heard by the *circuit court*. There are 45 judicial circuits. Some include just one county with a large population. Other circuits have two or more counties with smaller populations. Each circuit court is divided into divisions based on the types of cases to be heard. For example, cases dealing with broken laws are heard by the criminal court division. Cases dealing with someone's will or estate are heard by the probate court division. If the case involves someone your age, it is likely to be heard by the juvenile court division. Cases involving city laws or traffic offenses such as speeding are heard by a judge in the municipal division.

Each circuit has at least one circuit court judge, and each county has at least one associate judge. The associate judges hear the less serious cases or decide whether a case is serious enough to be heard by the circuit court judge.

In circuit court, there might be a trial or a judge might make a decision, called a *ruling*. In criminal cases, if the person is guilty, the judge may impose a jail sentence, a fine, or both. Sometimes the person found guilty of a crime does not agree with the jury's or the judge's *verdict*. If not, he or she can **appeal**, or ask a higher court to take another look at the case.

Right: The historic Jackson County Courthouse in Independence. Below: An attorney prepares to state his case in court.





The next higher court is the *Court of Appeals*. Persons in civil (noncriminal) cases can also appeal the decision of the jury or judge. The judges of the Court of Appeals are known as appellate judges. They look at the facts of the trial or the judge's decision and decide whether or not a mistake was made. If the Court of Appeals

finds that a mistake was made, it can order that a new trial be held or that the original judge look at the case again to correct the mistake.

If either side in a case disagrees with the Court of Appeals, it can then appeal to the next highest court, the Missouri Supreme Court. The seven judges on the Supreme Court look at the case and also decide whether or not mistakes were made. The Supreme Court can send the case back to the lower courts to correct the mistakes and see if the outcome would be the same.

Supreme Court and appellate judges and circuit court judges in Missouri's large cities are first appointed by the governor. In the next general election, voters decide whether they are to keep their jobs or be removed. This system of appointments followed by voter approval is called a *nonpartisan court plan*, meaning it is supposed to keep politics out of the process. The people elect the other judges in Missouri. Judges on the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals serve 12-year terms. Circuit court judges serve 6-year terms, and associate court judges serve 4-year terms.

Do You Remember?

1. What are the three branches of state government?
2. Find out which state representative and state senator represent you and your classmates.

Did you know?

Mathias McGirk, John Dillard Cook, and John Rice Jones were the first three judges on Missouri's Supreme Court in 1821.



Top Left: Supreme Court Chief Justice Ronnie White is welcomed by Lt. Governor Pete Kinder for a swearing-in ceremony.
Above Right: The Buchanan County Courthouse.

Missouri Places

Our State Capitol

Not too many people in the crowd on February 5, 1911, were sad as they watched the State Capitol burn. For years, the legislators, state officials, and state employees who worked there had complained it was too small, falling apart, and in need of modernization. But the General Assembly had not wanted to spend money to replace the building, which had been built in 1837.

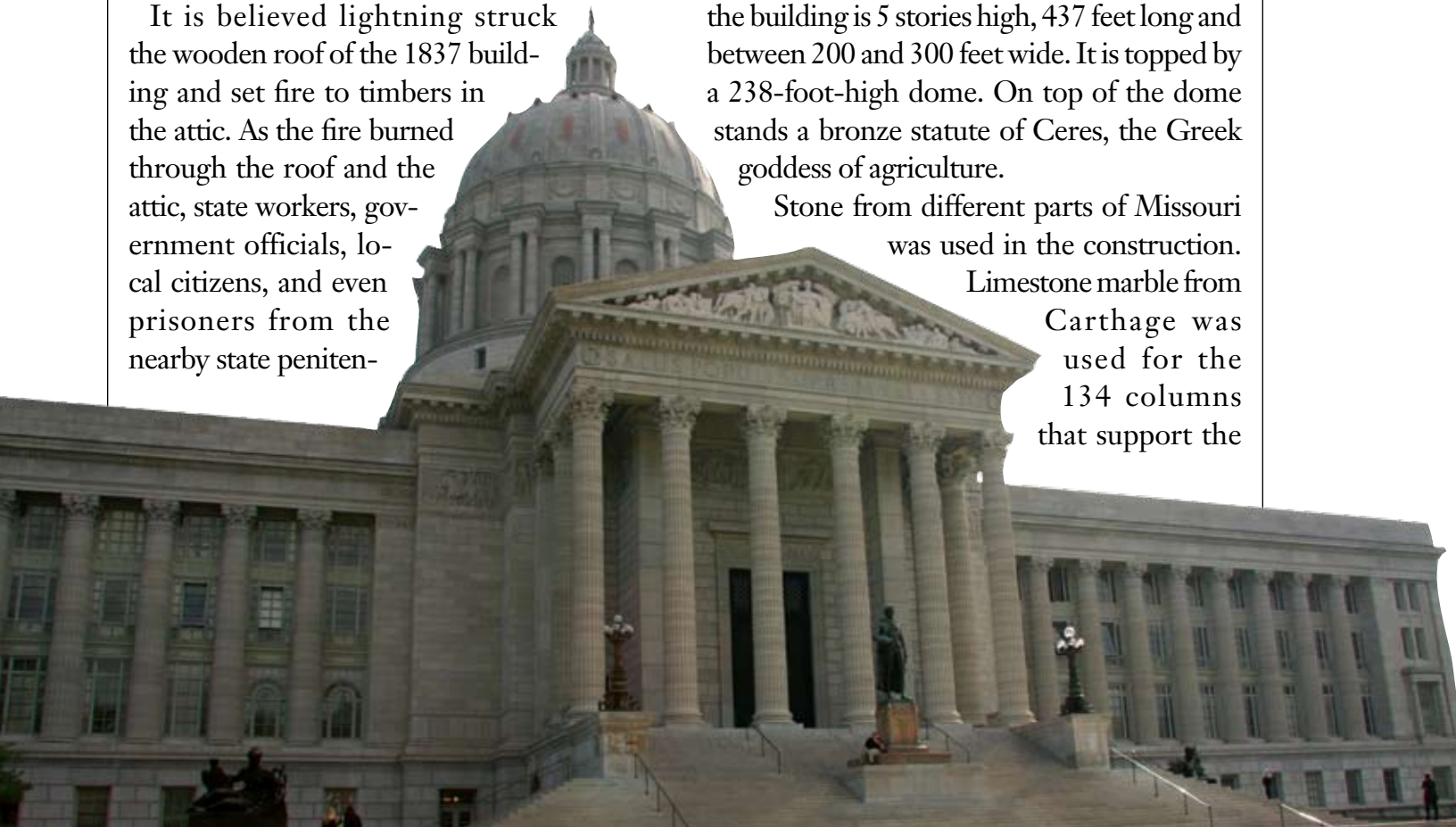
It is believed lightning struck the wooden roof of the 1837 building and set fire to timbers in the attic. As the fire burned through the roof and the attic, state workers, government officials, local citizens, and even prisoners from the nearby state peniten-

tiary rushed in and rescued most of the records and many of the valuable pieces of art. A few months after the fire, voters approved the spending of \$3.5 million on a new capitol.

Work began in 1913, but it was slowed at times by a shortage of steel during World War I. The main structure was completed in 1917; the interior was finished and the whole building dedicated in 1924. The main part of the building is 5 stories high, 437 feet long and between 200 and 300 feet wide. It is topped by a 238-foot-high dome. On top of the dome stands a bronze statue of Ceres, the Greek goddess of agriculture.

Stone from different parts of Missouri was used in the construction.

Limestone marble from Carthage was used for the 134 columns that support the



building (including the eight 48-foot-high columns in front of the building) and for the flooring in the corridors. A 30-foot-wide grand stairway leads to the front doors, which are made of bronze and measure 13 by 18 feet.

When the construction was finished, there was more than \$1 million left to decorate the building inside and out. Some of the most famous artists of the time were hired to create paintings, stained glass, statues, carvings, metalworking, and *murals* (large paintings on walls) depicting Missouri's history and natural beauty. The most famous of the murals, *The Social History of Missouri*, was done by Missouri artist Thomas Hart Benton.

The Capitol includes offices for all elected officials, legislators, and their staffs and for the two chambers where the House of Representatives and the Senate meet. There are also meeting rooms, a cafeteria, and a parking garage in the basement. The main level is a museum. One wing is devoted to the



state's history and the other to the state's natural resources.

Outside the building are more statues and memorials and a great view of the Missouri River. Within walking distance of the Capitol are many other state offices, the Supreme Court building, the Governor's Mansion, the Carnahan Memorial Gardens, and the Jefferson's Landing State Historic Site.

The Capitol is open most days of the year, including weekends, for tours either led by a guide or taken on your own. If you go to the Capitol, look for the state seal on all the door knobs and the water fountains with bears that shoot hot water out of their mouths if you know which button to push.

Opposite Page: State Capitol in Jefferson City. **This Page, Top:** The dome in our State Capitol is a splendid sight. **Above:** Students from around the state tour the building daily. **Left:** The murals of Thomas Hart Benton inside the building help show our state's history.



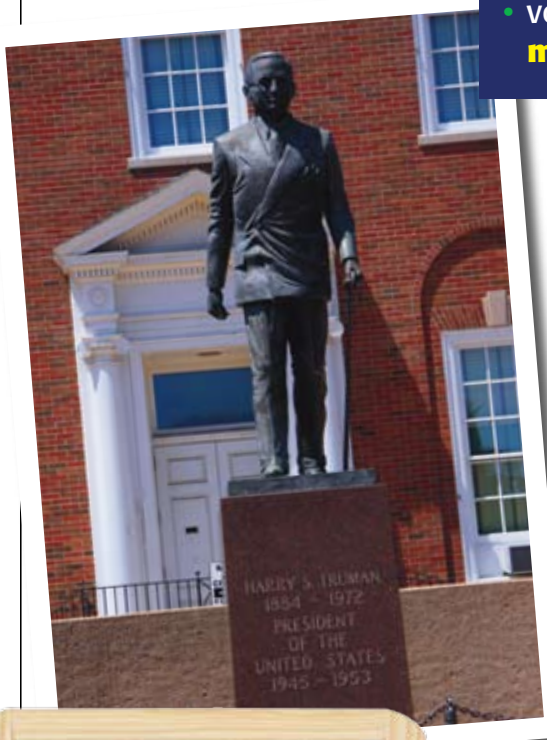
Used with permission, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

Section 2

Local Governments

As you read, look for the following:

- the different levels of local government
- the duties of each level
- vocabulary terms **county, county seat, charter, municipality, ordinance**



Did you know?

Washington is one of 15 Missouri counties named after generals of the American Revolution.

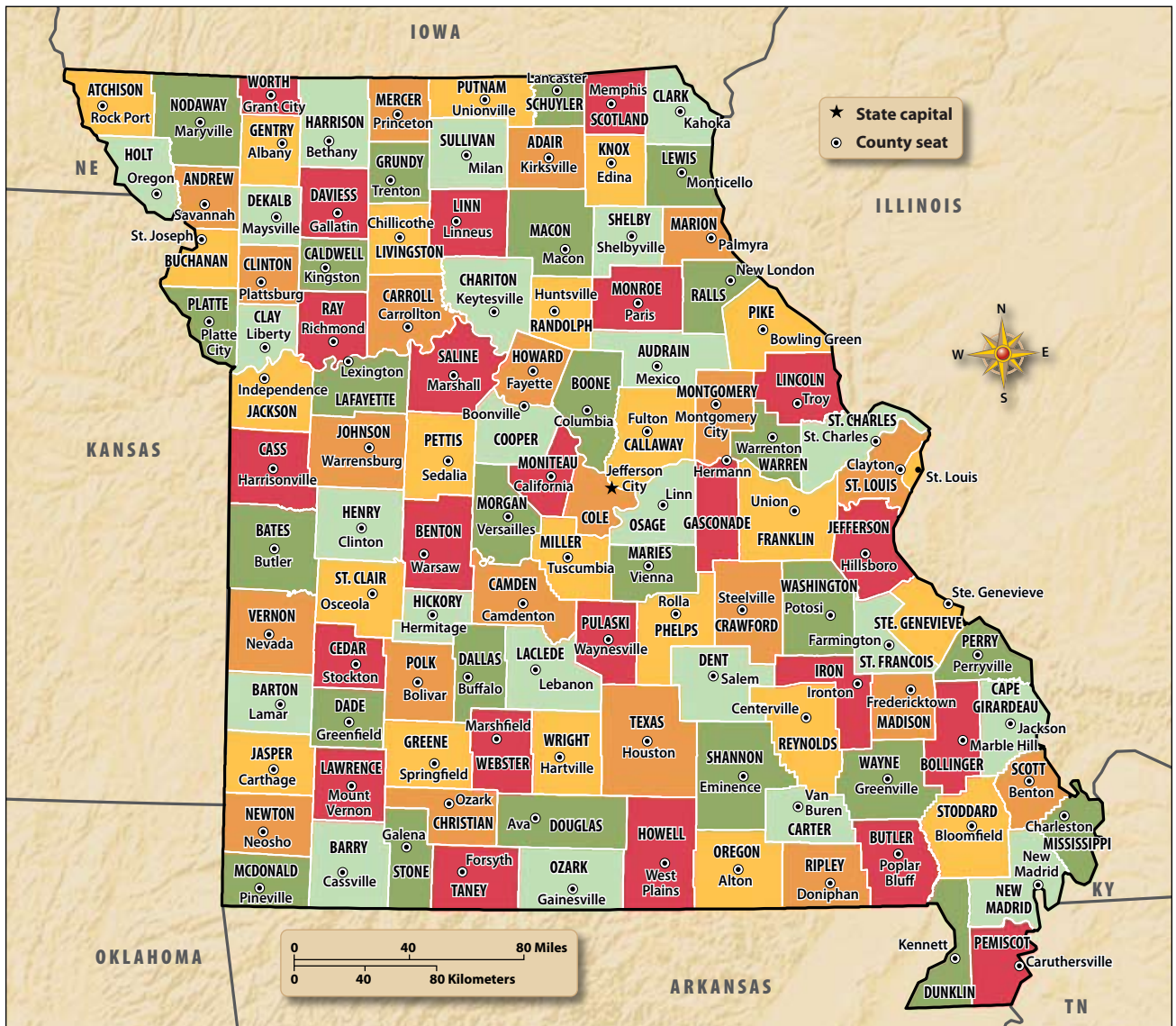
Missouri is divided into 114 **counties**, each with its own government. The city or town where the county government meets is called the **county seat**.

Within each county there are villages, towns, cities, school districts, and other special districts. Each of those has its own government.

County Government

Missouri's counties are divided into four classes, depending on how much money they collect in property taxes and their population. A county's class determines the type of government the county can have. Counties with large tax collections and populations of more than 85,000 persons are considered first-class counties. They can elect to have a charter with a *council* form of government. A **charter** is similar to a constitution and sets out how the county will be governed. Under the charter type of government, the county is divided into districts, and a council member is elected from each district. The members of the council and a county executive, who is also elected by the voters, make all the decisions for the county and can pass certain laws.

Most Missouri counties are second- or third-class counties. A *commission* governs these. The commission is made up of



Map 16
Missouri Counties
Map Skill: What is the county seat of Franklin County?

two commissioners who are elected from districts and one commissioner who represents the whole county. The commission decides how to spend the county's money, but it cannot pass laws. Laws for second- and third-class counties are passed by the General Assembly.

County officials such as the clerk, sheriff, collector, and prosecuting attorney are either elected or appointed, depending on the size of the county and its laws.

Opposite Page, Above:
 This statue of President Harry S. Truman stands outside the courthouse in Independence, Missouri. **This Page, Left:**
 Lafayette County Courthouse in Lexington.



Below Left: City Hall in Kansas City. Right: A view inside a typical Missouri courtroom.

City Government

Municipalities (villages, towns, or cities) in Missouri are also divided into classes, depending on their population. A municipality with fewer than 500 people is called a *village*. Benton City is a village. Cities with more than 500 people but fewer than 3,000 are fourth-class municipalities.

Verona is a fourth-class city. Those with more than 3,000 but fewer than 30,000 people are third-class. Kennett is a third-class city. Most of Missouri's cities and towns fall into these classes. Cities of more than 5,000 people may choose to be *constitutional charter cities*. St. Louis is a constitutional charter city. There are also eight *special charter cities*. Chillicothe is one.

The classes determine what type of government a municipality can have. For example, a village is only allowed to have a *board of trustees*. Third- and fourth-class cities can have some combination of mayor, city council, city manager, or city commission. Constitutional charter cities and special charter cities have the type of government set out in their charters.

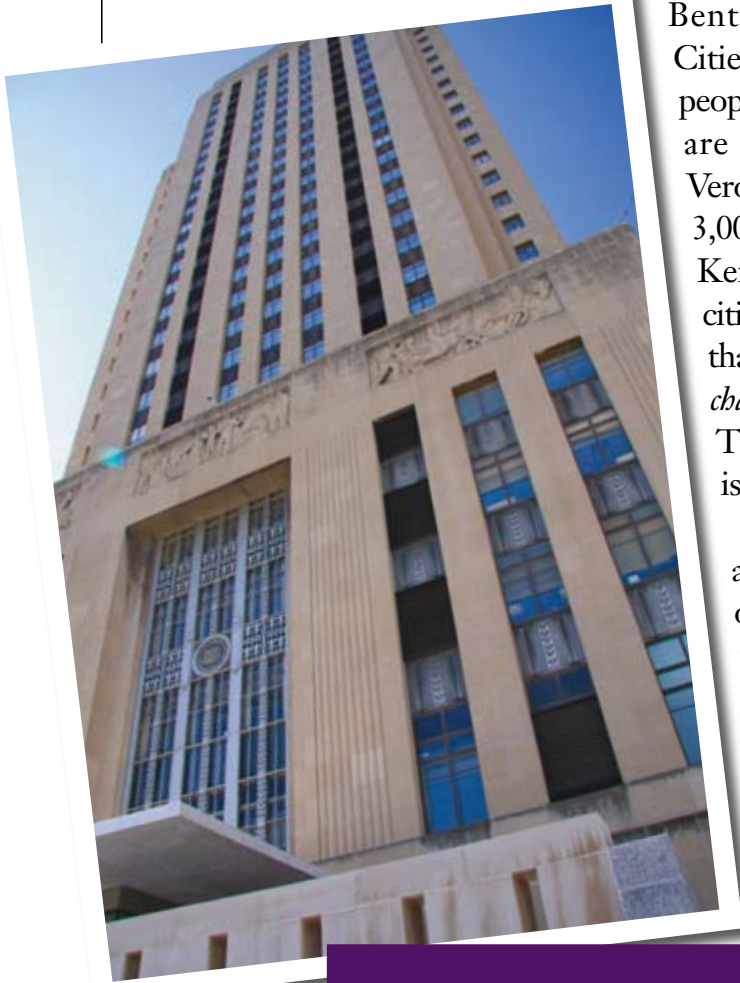


Figure 10
Missouri's Cities By Classification

Class	Population Required	Number
Village	Less than 500	260 (approx.)
Fourth Class	500–2,999	500 (approx.)
Third Class	3,000–29,999	57
Constitutional Charter	more than 5,000	36
Special Charter	no requirements	8

A city's classification also determines what type of **ordinances**, or laws, it can pass. In most cases, state laws govern Missouri's smaller municipalities. Larger cities that have written a charter can pass their own laws and govern themselves. That is why larger cities are sometimes said to have "home rule."

Other Local Governments

There are other types of local government in Missouri. Your local public school is part of a school district governed by an elected school board. The school board decides how the district's money will be spent. It also hires the superintendent, teachers, and other employees and makes some of the rules.

Your county might also have a library district, a fire protection district, a water and sewer district, an ambulance district, and a soil conservation district. A board elected by the people living in the district governs each. These special boards decide how special taxes and other money collected by the districts are spent. The boards also hire a director and other employees.



Do You Remember?

1. What is a charter?
2. Find out the class of the county in which you live.

This page: Local governments are responsible for fire departments, schools, and libraries in your community.



Section 3

Making It Work

As you read, look for the following:

- the different services provided by government
- how governments pay for those services
- vocabulary terms **revenue, taxes, assessment**



Running a state, county, city, or school district takes people and money. Some of the people are elected; those who are elected hire others to do work. To be elected—or to vote in an election—a Missouri citizen must be at least 18 years old and a *registered voter*. To be elected to some offices, a person must be older than 18. For example, to be elected governor, you must be at least 30 years old.

People

The people we elect to serve in the legislature or county council or school board decide what services will be provided. But they usually don't do the work themselves. That is the responsibility of the employees of the different departments and agencies.

On the state level, there are sixteen departments that provide a wide variety of services. Within each department, there are offices that offer specific services. For example, the



Department of Mental Health has an office that serves people with developmental disabilities, another that helps treat and prevent drug addiction, and another that provides services to persons with mental illnesses.

Almost every part of our lives depends on a state agency and its employees. Try to imagine any of the following without a state employee helping to make it possible. Your parents need a record of your immunization. Your school needs to find a qualified teacher. You visit a state park or travel on a highway. Your parents file a tax return or buy meat from a butcher. Your cousin needs job training, or your uncle goes hunting. State employees also keep our highways and waterways safe.



They protect our natural resources. They teach in our public colleges. They guard our prisons. The list goes on and on.

The same can be said for county and municipal employees. Your county has a department to maintain roads and another to operate a health clinic. It has a sheriff's department and an office that keeps records of weddings, births, and deaths.

It might also have a parks department. Your city has a street department, a police department, and an office that issues licenses for pets, garage sales, and new businesses.

The school and special districts have employees too. They help keep the records, run the cafeterias, maintain the river levees, or keep the water flowing—just to name a few of the services they provide.

Did you know?

The State Highway Patrol and the State Water Patrol are parts of the Missouri Department of Public Safety.

Below Left: Students visit our State Capitol with the help of state employees. **Below Right:** Park rangers help teach children about nature.





Revenue

The money, or **revenue**, needed to run state and local governments comes from various sources. Governments get most of their money from taxes. **Taxes** are the money people (either as consumers or as property owners) and businesses pay to the government. The government uses the money to pay for the services it provides.

In Missouri, when you buy most items, you pay a *sales tax*. People who work in Missouri pay a *state income tax*. The state also collects *fees*, such as the fee to camp in a state park, the fee to get a copy of your birth certificate, or the fee for a driver's license.

Counties and cities also collect fees, sales taxes, and

Figure 11
Where Missouri's
Revenue Comes From

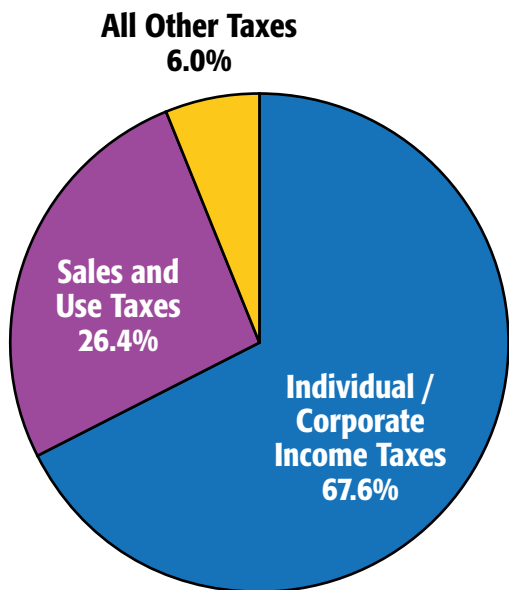
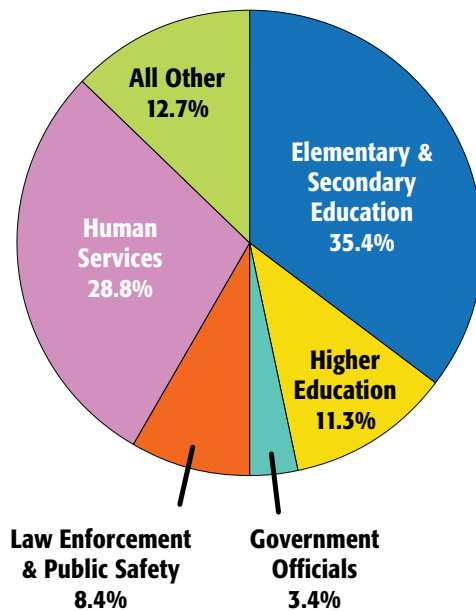


Figure 12
How Missouri Spends Its
Non-Highway Revenue



property taxes. A *property tax* is a tax assessed or charged on property owned, such as a house, land, a business, or a vehicle. The amount owed is called an **assessment**. It is based on the value of the property. School districts and other special districts each get a part of the property taxes collected by the county.

Missourians also pay *federal taxes*. Some of that money comes back to the state and local governments. It comes back when the federal government buys goods made in Missouri such as airplanes and food. It comes back in the salaries it pays federal employees who work in Missouri or in the money spent to build interstate highways, improve sewer systems, pay for medical services, and to operate public schools.

Local, state, and federal taxes also pay for streetlights, police protection, the military, colleges, parks, airports, public school and university teachers' salaries, and all the other services our government provides.



Do You Remember?

1. How old must you be to register to vote in Missouri?
2. Name one source of revenue for the state. Name one revenue source for your county.



Above: Both old and new homes are assessed for property taxes. Left: The entrance to the Academic Hall at Southeast Missouri State University. Opposite Page, Top and Bottom: Taxes help to pay for our school buses and parks.

Spotlight

Boys State and Girls State

Each summer, nearly 2,000 Missouri high school students gather on the campus of the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg to learn how government works. In mid-June, about 1,000 boys meet for eight days at Boys State. A week later, about 750 girls meet for Girls State.

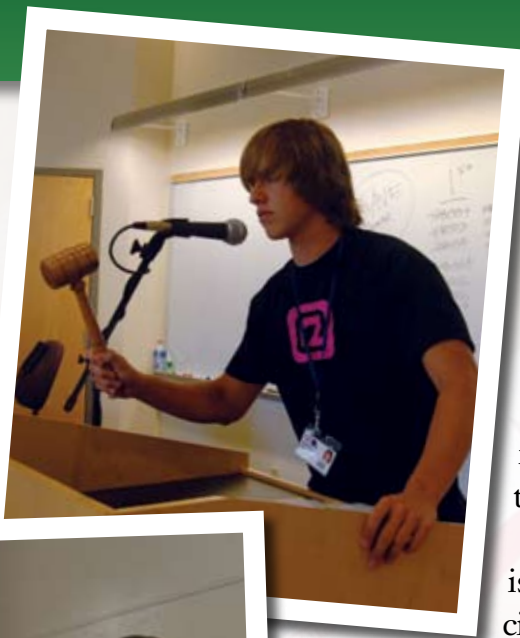
Sponsored by the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary, Boys State has been meeting since 1938 and Girls State since 1940. (Neither program met in 1943 or 1945 because of World War II travel restrictions.) High school juniors apply to attend and are selected by their school counselors and local Legion posts.

When they arrive on the UCM campus, the students, called *citizens*, are divided into cities. They quickly elect city and county officials

and representatives and senators to the Boys State or Girls State General Assembly. Those elected city officials appoint other city officers, such as police chiefs and municipal judges. The governor elected the previous summer appoints nonelected state officers, such as a Highway Patrol. The General Assembly



begins considering legislation and a budget for the coming year. The Boys State and Girls State General Assemblies use the same procedures the Missouri General Assembly does when considering bills and passing laws.



Not every citizen at Boys State or Girls State is involved in politics or holds an appointed position. Some work on the daily newspaper or the television and radio newscasts that report on the day's activities.

And not all of the time is spent on running the cities, counties, and state.

Citizens attend classes on law, government, the media, and law enforcement and can earn college credit (and win college scholarships). Throughout the week, the citizens hear lectures from real state and national politicians and heads of government agencies. At the end of the week, two delegates each to Boys Nation and Girls Nation are selected to go to Washington, D.C., in July.

There is also time for fun. The Boys State cities compete against each other in daily athletic events. The Girls State citizens have a talent show, and those with musical talent can join the band or chorus.

Many of the citizens from past Boys State and Girls State sessions have gone on to be civic and business leaders and have been elected to local, state, and national office. Two Missouri governors, numerous U.S. senators and representatives, and members of the Missouri General Assembly have attended Boys State or Girls State.



At the same time, candidates for state offices like governor and secretary of state and the Supreme Court begin campaigning for elections that are held later in the week. Those elected serve until the next election the following year. The candidates learn about campaigns, speech writing, and public speaking skills. They must also be able to debate issues like the economy, health care, and the environment facing the real state of Missouri. There are two political parties at Boys State and Girls State: the Federalists and the Nationalists.

Chapter Review

Summary



In this chapter, you learned how state and local governments work, how they are organized, and how their members are elected or appointed. You read about the three branches of state government and how legislation is passed and signed into law. You also learned how the courts are set up to handle different types of cases.

This chapter also covered the way Missouri's counties and municipalities are classified and governed. There was information about school districts and other special governing districts.

You read about government employees and the services they provide and how the government collects revenue to pay for those services.

Remember



Create a crossword puzzle using the following vocabulary words. Create clues for the words.

amendments
appeal
bill
compromise
constituents
constitution
county
General Assembly
governor
municipality
revenue
taxes
veto

Understand



1. Which branch of state government makes the laws?
2. Name at least two elected members of the executive branch besides the governor.
3. How are county governments in Missouri divided?
4. Name at least two types of other local government or districts in Missouri.
5. What criteria must all people in Missouri meet if they want to vote?
6. Give at least two ways Missourians depend on state agencies and their employees.
7. Where does Missouri get the revenue to run the state?
8. Who painted the famous mural *The Social History of Missouri*, which appears in Missouri's State Capitol?

Think About It



1. Make a list of offices that might be found at the State Capitol. Write a brief description of the work done at each office.
2. Do you think that voting is a right, a responsibility, or both? Explain.

Write About It



1. Reread the section on how a bill becomes a law. In your own words, write a short paragraph explaining how this process takes place in Missouri.
2. Research and write a short report about the famous Missouri painter Thomas Hart Benton.

Use The Internet



1. Use your favorite search engine to research the State Highway Patrol and the State Water Patrol. Write a short report explaining how those groups help keep Missourians safe.
2. Log on to your local city government website. Who is your current mayor?

Work Together



With one or more of your classmates, create a chart showing the three branches of Missouri's government. Include the heads of each branch and the responsibilities of each branch.