

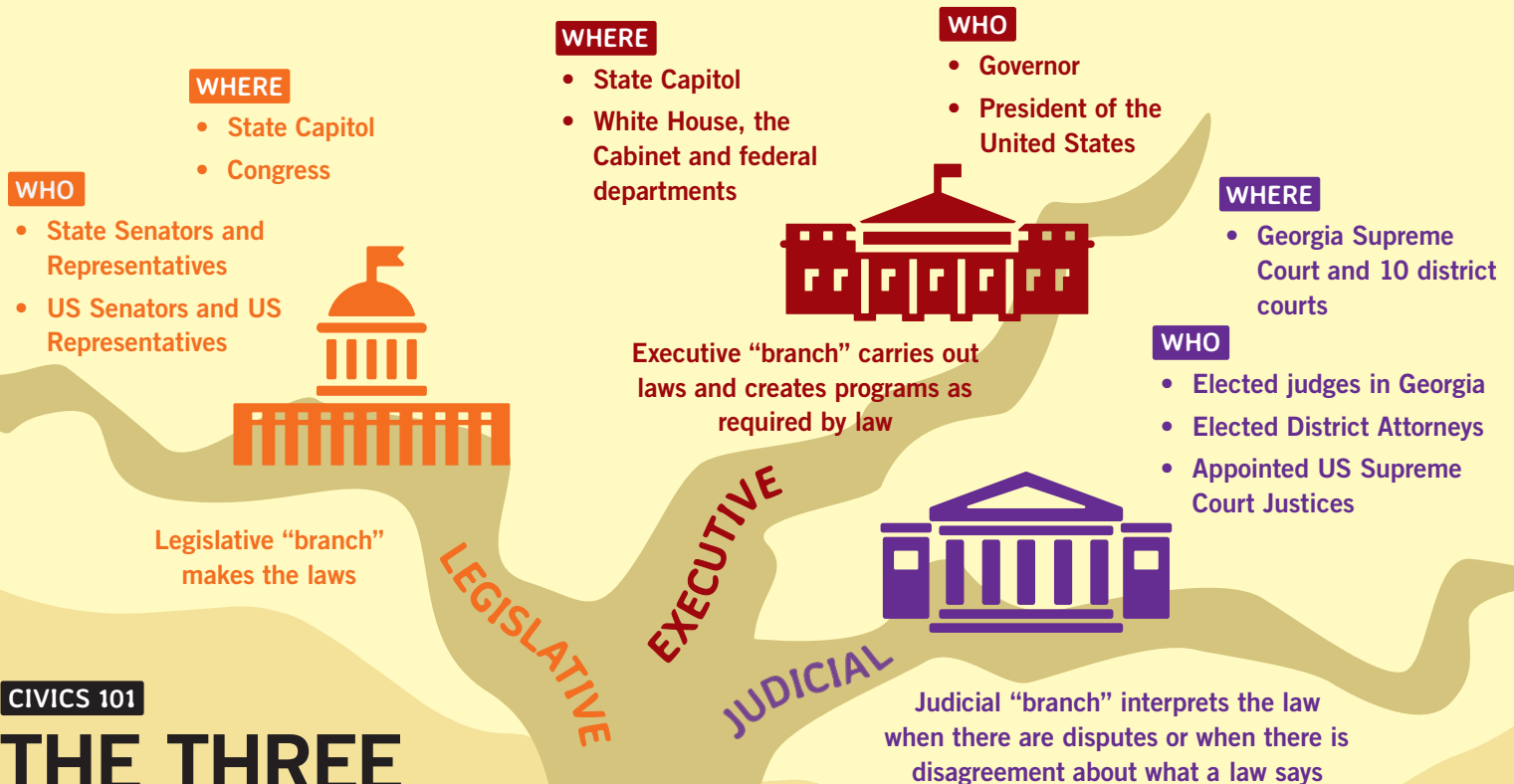
WHO'S WHO? in Georgia Politics



Voting is a public way of saying, “Our families count, and together we can make a difference!”

Elected leaders make decisions that either help or hurt our families. The simple fact is that politicians pay more attention to communities who get out and vote.

Who's Who? covers some general information about how our state government works across all three state branches, legislative, executive, and judicial. It also covers local governments. All of the positions featured in the *Who's Who?* — both elected and appointed — impact families in our state.



CIVICS 101

THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

There are three “branches” of government at both the federal and state level. The Executive and the Legislative are elected by the voters; the Judicial is appointed and elected.

FEDERAL ELECTED POSITIONS



The executive “branch” of government carries out laws and creates programs as required by law.

US PRESIDENT

Heads the executive branch of the federal government. Serves for four years with a two-term (eight years) maximum.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Oversees cabinet-level departments, including US Immigration and Customs Enforcement.
- Proposes the federal budget for approval by Congress.
- Has the power to veto (reject) bills passed by Congress; Congress can overturn a veto with a two-thirds majority vote.
- Serves as the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.
- Appoints federal judges.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU



Can take executive action to move Immigration and Customs Enforcement policy. For example, in 2015 the president authorized ICE raids that resulted in the deportation and separation of families.



Recommends funding levels for programs such as childcare, healthcare, and domestic violence services.



Nominates judges to lifetime appointments to Supreme Court who rules on issues such as equal rights and privacy.



The legislative “branch” of government makes the laws.

US CONGRESS • Congress is made of two separate bodies: The House of Representatives and the Senate. Together they form the legislative (law-making) branch of the Federal Government. There are no limits on the number of terms that a member of Congress can serve.

US SENATOR

There are 100 US Senators. Each state elects two senators in statewide election for six-year terms. Senate races are staggered so that only one senator in a state is up for election at a time.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Makes and passes federal laws.
- Decides the budget for federal programs.
- Determines federal tax guidelines.
- Can propose changes to the Constitution.
- Has the power to declare war.
- In addition, the Senate approves the President's appointments to important positions, including the U.S. Supreme Court and the Cabinet (the board that advises the President, consisting of top officeholders in key departments).

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU



Approves funding levels for federal programs such as Head Start, Medicaid, Cash Assistance, Social Security, relief for victims of natural disasters, military spending, child care, health care and domestic violence services.



Creates federal laws, including those governing immigration, healthcare, education, criminal justice, student loan interest rates, labor and environmental protections.

US REPRESENTATIVE

There are 435 members of the House of Representatives. All seats in the House are up for re-election every two years. The number of representatives from each state is based on population. Currently Georgia has 14 representatives.

LOCAL ELECTED POSITIONS



The executive “branch” of government carries out laws and creates programs as required by law.

GOVERNOR

Heads the state executive branch. Elected every four years. Can only serve two terms (eight years).

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Proposes the state’s annual budget for approval by the legislature.
- Has the power to veto bills passed by the state legislature. A veto can prevent the bill from becoming law.
- Appoints critical positions in state agencies, boards and commissions.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU



Can call a special session of the state legislature to deal with a specific urgent issue.



Submits budget that determines state funding priorities, such as for education or economic development.



Can sign into law or veto bills, including those relating to taxes for families and health care.



The legislative “branch” of government makes the laws.

GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY • Georgia’s legislature, its General Assembly, is made up of two chambers: the Georgia State Senate and the Georgia House of Representatives. Proposed laws must be approved by both chambers and not vetoed by the Governor, or the Governor’s veto must be overridden. The legislature meets every year for forty days. Special sessions can be called by a three-fifths vote of the legislature, or by the Governor.

GA STATE SENATORS

The state is divided into 56 state senate districts and each district elects one senator. State senate seats are up for election every two years.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Initiates state laws in areas such as state taxes, business regulation, education, child care and conservation of natural resources.
- Shares budget-making responsibilities with the Governor.
- Can override a veto by the Governor with a two-thirds majority vote in the legislature.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU



Makes decisions about state funding priorities, such as for public schools, higher education, or the CHIP program for low-income children.



Sets scope of state Medicaid program, determining how many low-income people receive federal subsidies for health insurance.



Can propose laws to: limit or expand access to state programs, such as health care, including reproductive health care; set the minimum wage; and influence other workplace practices including discrimination.

GA STATE REPRESENTATIVES

The state has 180 state house districts. Each district elects one representative. All House seats are up for election every two years.

COUNTY COMMISSION

County commissions are made of members, elected from districts.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Oversee county provision of metropolitan services like public transportation, county health clinics, public housing, and libraries.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU



Adopts a budget that provides financial support to programs and services such as adult behavioral health services, arts and culture, libraries and senior transportation.

WHAT IF I CAN'T VOTE

You must be at least 18 and a US citizen to vote. In Georgia, if you have a past felony conviction, you must re-register after completing the sentence and any parole, supervision or court ordered probation.

Whether you can vote or not, you can still make a difference!

- Encourage and educate people who can vote.
- Share this voter guide at your church or with your neighbors, friends, and family.
- Attend town hall meetings and other events hosted by your legislators to raise the issues that affect your family. Town hall meetings give you a chance to speak directly to your elected officials in a more informal setting.
- Testify on proposed bills that affect you and your family.
- Visit the Capitol with an advocacy organization that works on the issues that you care about.



SPARK REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE NOW is a reproductive justice organization based in Atlanta, GA, advocating for policies that protect and expand access to the full range of reproductive and sexual health services for women and youth of color in the state of Georgia. www.sparkrj.org

FEMINIST WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTER (FWHC) is Atlanta's leading non-profit women's health resource, empowering women through direct service, grassroots organizing and leadership development, education, and advocacy in order to promote reproductive rights, health and justice for all across Georgia. www.feministcenter.org


NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS ALLIANCE - ATLANTA CHAPTER is organizing for rights, respect and dignity for domestic workers in Georgia. Building the leadership and power of African-American domestic workers—including nannies, housekeepers and homecare workers. www.domesticworkers.org

NATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN WOMEN'S FORUM - GEORGIA is the only national, multi-issue organization in the United States advocating for social justice and human rights for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women and girls. www.napawf.org

WOMEN ENGAGED is a human rights organization developing the leadership of women and young adults of color through civic engagement, organizing, and public policy advocacy opportunities. www.womenengaged.org

STRONG FAMILIES is a national initiative to change how we think, feel, and make policy about families. Strong Families is a project of Forward Together. www.strongfamiliesmovement.org

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