

Tennessee Secretary of State

Civics Lesson Plans

My Local Government

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Grade Level: High School

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For additional lesson plans, visit sos.tn.gov/civics/lessonplans.



Introduction:

Students often feel confident in their knowledge of the national government, specifically with the three branches of government and the United States Constitution. However, when asked about state and local government, students generally have little to no understanding at all. This lesson plan is designed to introduce students to their local and state government, the state constitution that establishes the government's power, and ultimately how citizens play an important role in their state and local governments. There is also an extension option to expand this topic into a three day series.

Guiding Questions:

- Who is my local and state representation, including the Tennessee governor?
- What is the legislation and are issues that my local and state representatives have supported in the recent past?
- What issues are important to me and how can I share those issues with my elected officials?
- How can I get involved in local elections?

Learning Objectives: In the course of the lesson, students will...

- Name their local and state representation, including the Tennessee governor.

- Describe how local citizens can follow what their government is doing, ask questions of my elected leaders, and influence their decision making.
- Take an interest in a specific issue and engage my representatives on resolving that issue.
- Have the opportunity to register to vote (if eligible) and vote in the next possible election.

Curriculum Standards:

GC.60 Describe how citizens can monitor and influence local and state government as individuals and members of interest groups. (P, TN)

GC.62 Identify current representatives (per the student's respective district) in the Tennessee General Assembly and research their past and current proposed legislation that has significantly impacted the lives of Tennesseans. (P, TN)

GC.63 Identify the current governor of Tennessee and examine his/her platform for improving the quality of life in Tennessee. (P, TN)

Materials Needed:

- *Tennessee Blue Books* (or [online version](#))
- Internet Access
 - [Tennessee General Assembly – capitol.tn.gov](http://capitol.tn.gov)
 - [County Election Commissions](#)
- Worksheet (attached)
- District Maps
 - [Senate](#) (pg. 52)
 - [House](#) (pgs. 166-167)

Lesson Activities:

PART I: Who Represents Me at the State and Local Level? (5-10 minutes)

Using the Blue Book: Depending on the number of *Tennessee Blue Books*, divide the class into appropriate teams, pairs, or individually and have the students seek out who the leaders are that represent them in Tennessee government. Utilizing the worksheet (attached), students should be able to identify the name, party, and contact information for the following:

- [State Legislators \(House and Senate, pgs. 2-167\)](#)
- [State Executive \(Governor, pgs. 204-208\)](#)
- [State Judiciary \(State Supreme Court, pgs. 449-490\)](#)

Identifying individual legislators through the *Blue Book* can be challenging for students if it is their first time opening the resource. Enclosed in this lesson plan is a link to a PDF Tennessee District Maps ([Senate](#) & [House](#)) that can help locate the number of the elected official's individual district. Students can also search for their specific legislators online at the Tennessee General Assembly's website (www.capitol.tn.gov) to find their specific state legislators.

Once representatives have been identified, probe students for previous content knowledge.

- Has anyone met their elected officials?
- Has anyone heard any news stories about these individuals?
- Can anyone describe what they do or what they have done for the community?

PART II: What Do They Stand For and How Will I Get Involved? (20-30 minutes)

The Issues: Students should now search out the websites for state and local candidates running for office this year. To see who is running, check your local county election commission's website for a sample ballot. You can find your commission's website by clicking [here](#).

Once they've spent a few minutes reviewing the key issues or topics listed on the candidates' websites, allow the students a few minutes to discuss the topics, recognizing some issues may require teacher intervention when necessary.

After a few specific issues have been discussed and agreed upon, direct the discussion towards how issues and ideas can be shared with elected officials and brainstorm ways students can engage with their elected officials. Utilize pairs or small groups to begin brainstorming, then come back together to share what ideas were realized.

Some ideas, though not all, that teachers can offer if not already provided by the students include:

- **Direct Connections**
 - **Phone/Email/Visit:** Personal connections with local leaders allow constituents to have direct contact and influence with their elected officials.

These can range from a simple phone call or e-mail, to visiting the elected official in his or her office in the district or at the State Capitol.

- **Tips for Effective Communication:** The General Assembly has some tips for effective communication with your elected officials. Click [here](#) to see their suggestions.
- **Participation and Involvement**
 - **Volunteer**
 - **Phone Banking** – Making phone calls on behalf of the candidate.
 - **Door Knocking** – Talking to neighbors and others directly in the community with a face-to-face conversation.
 - **Attend Events** – Showing up for important events and rallies across the district.
 - **Voting**
 - **The easiest and most important way to directly impact issues.**
 - If some of your students will be 18 years old by the next election, encourage them to register to vote so they can exercise this important right. For more information, visit sos.tn.gov/elections.
 - **Candidacy:** **YOU** can run for office.

Teachers can use these conversations to tie back into the larger concept of voting and the importance of voting participation.

Homework (Formative Assessment): How Will You Get Involved?

Have students write a paragraph on each of the following questions:

1. Who are your specific **elected** officials at the state and local levels and give one interesting fact you learned about each.
2. How do you plan to become more involved in fulfilling your civic duty as an American citizen and Tennessee resident? Be sure to include at least one step that you intend to complete before the end of the school year.

Extension Options

If you have more time to spend on this topic, see the three day lesson plan version with additional lesson activities. Go to sos.tn.gov/civics/lessonplans and click on the “Extended Version” of this lesson plan.

MY STATE REPRESENTATIVES

STATE (LEGISLATIVE)

Senator: _____ DISTRICT #: ____ PARTY: _____

Contact Address: _____

Contact Phone Number: (_____) _____ - _____

Year of Last Election: _____ Election Results (% of Victory): _____

Sponsored Legislation

House: _____ DISTRICT #: ____ PARTY: _____

Contact Address: _____

Contact Phone Number: (_____) _____ - _____

Year of Last Election: _____ Election Results (% of Victory): _____

Sponsored Legislation

STATE (EXECUTIVE)

Governor: _____ PARTY: _____

Contact Address: _____

Contact Phone Number: (_____) _____ - _____

Year of Last Election: _____ Election Results (% of Victory): _____

Supported Legislation

STATE (JUDICIAL)

Chief Justice: _____

Justice: _____

Justice: _____

Justice: _____

Justice: _____