

# Summary: Tennessee's Government

## Citizens Decide

The United States is a democracy. This means that citizens help decide what the government will do. Citizens vote for their leaders. Leaders stay in power only by the consent of the governed.

In Tennessee, local governments in towns, cities, and counties make laws and provide services. Local governments also share responsibilities with state and national governments. They work together to make good public schools. Each level of government has its own responsibilities. The national government keeps the nation safe. State and local governments protect the citizens they represent.

## Structure of State Government

Tennessee's elected leaders work in the state capitol in Nashville. Tennessee has a constitution that describes the rights of its citizens and tells how the state should be run. All three branches of state government work together to run the state. Lawmakers work in the General Assembly. They speak for the people of the state and make the laws. The governor carries out the state laws and can also veto, or stop, new laws. Judges make sure laws follow the state and national constitutions. When laws are broken, they decide the punishment.

## Taxes and Services

Tennessee collects taxes on private goods and services, such as houses, clothes, and haircuts. The state uses tax money to pay for public goods and services, such as roads and parks. The governor's suggestions on how the state will spend its tax money may be different for different regions. This is because different regions have different needs.



### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**capitol** *noun*, the building where elected leaders meet to make laws

**governor** *noun*, the elected leader of a state

**tax** *noun*, a fee citizens and others pay to the government



### After You Read

**REVIEW** In what way do governments at the local, state, and national levels work together? Highlight the sentence that answers the question.

**REVIEW** What do members of Tennessee's General Assembly do? Draw a box around the sentence that tells the answer.

**REVIEW** Why does the government provide different services in different regions? Circle the sentence that answers the question.