

Summary: Florida's State Government

The Constitution of Florida

Like the federal government, Florida has a constitution. The state constitution describes the plan for state government. Florida's first constitution was written in 1838. Every twenty years, Florida's leaders meet to talk about making changes to the constitution. Voters decide whether or not to make these changes. Florida's government and the federal government also share many of the same goals. They both work for the common good and protect citizens' rights.

Florida's constitution lists the rules for its government. The constitution explains how the state can make laws. It also says the governor must create a balanced budget. This means the state cannot spend more money than it collects. Florida's constitution also tells how the state divides power with Florida's counties and cities. The state government is responsible for public education, conservation of natural resources, and other public services. City and county governments provide services such as local police, libraries, and schools.

State Government

The state government is in the state's capital, Tallahassee. Like the federal government, the state government has three branches. The executive branch carries out state laws. The governor is its elected leader. The governor serves a term of four years.

The legislative branch makes state laws. It has two parts, the state senate and the state house of representatives. The senate has forty elected members who serve terms of four years. The house of representatives has 120 members who serve terms of two years.

The judicial branch includes state courts and judges. Its highest court is the Florida Supreme Court. Its seven judges settle disagreements about laws.

Florida's government raises money by collecting taxes from citizens and businesses. Florida also collects money from fees. For example, people who want a driver's license must pay a fee. The money from both fees and taxes helps to pay for state services.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

common good *noun*, things that are good for people in a community, state, or nation

budget *noun*, a plan for spending money

After You Read

REVIEW What is the purpose of Florida's constitution? Underline the sentence that tells the answer.

REVIEW Why must citizens pay taxes? Underline the sentence that tells what state fees and taxes pay for.