

# Summary: State and Local Government

## State Government

The state of California has its own constitution. It is like the national constitution in many ways. Both constitutions are based on the consent of the people. They are based on the rule of law, which means that the law applies to everybody, and everyone is equal under the law.

California's government makes laws that only apply to the state, but the laws must follow the guidelines of the U.S. Constitution. The state government provides people with many services and sets rules in many areas, including education, and health and safety. California collects taxes for these services. State leaders also make rules on how local elections will be run, who can have a driver's license, and how many days students go to school.

## The Three Branches

California state government is divided into legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The two houses of the legislature are the Senate and Assembly. They try to make laws to solve problems and meet future challenges. The governor heads the executive branch, which is responsible for carrying out laws. The judicial branch includes the California Supreme Court, which has seven judges. Other courts are also part of the judicial branch.

## Local Government

California has 475 cities. In some small communities voters elect city councils. The council may choose one of its members as mayor, or perhaps hire a city manager to take care of daily business. In large cities, voters elect a mayor.

California has 58 counties, each with its own government. Voters elect five people to serve on each county board of supervisors. Members of this group make decisions about county property. California Indians have local governments of their own on rancherias and reservations.

Local governments provide services such as fire and police departments, trash collection, parks, schools, and libraries. The state is also divided into about 5,000 special districts. These districts were created for special purposes, such as recycling, irrigation, or insect control.

### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**city manager** *noun*, a person who takes care of the daily business of running a city

**county** *noun*, a section of the state that has its own government

**rancheria** *noun* (Spanish), land protected for California Indians

### After You Read

**REVIEW** What is one similarity between the California and national constitutions? Draw a box around the paragraph that gives you at least one similarity in the state and national constitutions.

**REVIEW** What are the three branches of California government? Underline the sentence that names the three branches.

**REVIEW** What are some of the services provided by local governments in cities? Circle the sentence that names some of the services.