

# Levels of Government

## City/Town Government

City/Town governments are the most local level of government in the United States. Residents elect a city/town council and a mayor to represent their interests at the city/town level. City/Town governments provide services such as police and fire protection. Each city/town government also establishes housing regulations and health regulations. City/Town governments are responsible for meeting the needs and interests of citizens on a community level.

## County Government

States are divided into counties. County governments form the next level of government in the United States. County representatives are elected by citizens of the county and meet as "boards" to organize county affairs. County government can levy taxes, such as property tax, on citizens.

## State Government

The states within the United States are responsible for governing affairs within their borders. State governments often mirror the federal government in structure, with a governor and a state legislature being elected by the citizens of each state. Each state has a legislative, judicial and executive branch. States control their own criminal codes, are in charge of constructing and caring for state roads, levy income taxes and oversee state welfare programs. States are governed by their own constitutions and retain any rights that the U.S. Constitution does not exclusively grant to the federal government. State governments are also responsible for carrying out federal laws and programs at the state level.

## Federal Government

The central and highest level of government in the United States, the federal government, is divided into three branches. These are the legislative, the executive and the judicial branches. Each branch has its own rights and powers, which are meant to check and balance the powers of each other branch. Citizens in the United States have the power to elect their representatives in the legislative branch and, through the Electoral College, have the ability to choose the president, or leader of the executive branch. The federal government has the power to regulate taxes, establish federal welfare programs and make laws in the interest of the nation as a whole. The federal government alone has the right to regulate currency, establish foreign policy and oversee the defense of the country.