

Our State Constitution - A Student's Guide to the Missouri Constitution

STUDENT NAME _____	CLASS _____
TEACHER _____	ROOM NUMBER _____

Student Welcome 3

Unit 1 Missouri History and Government 4

Unit 2 Celebrate the Missouri Bicentennial 6

Learning Aid **State Seal and Map Exercise** 8

Unit 3 Overview of the Missouri Constitution 9

Learning Aid **State Government Fact Sheet** 11

Unit 4 State Legislative Branch..... 12

Unit 5 State Lawmaking Process 14

Learning Aid **How a Bill Becomes Law in Missouri** 15

Unit 6 State Executive Branch 16

Unit 7 State Judicial Branch..... 18

Unit 8 Voting and Elections..... 20

Unit 9 Municipal Government..... 22

Unit 10 Local Government..... 23

Unit 11 Financing State and Local Government 24

Unit 12 City of Chicago 25

Learning Aid **Missouri Unit Outline** 26

Learning Aid **Review Questions - Missouri Unit** 28

Learning Aid **Missouri Constitution Self-Test** 30

Learning Aid **Your Government and State Officials** back cover



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Our 200th Birthday

The citizens of Missouri are ready to recognize and celebrate an important milestone in state history. August 10, 2021, will mark the 200th anniversary (or *bicentennial*) of Missouri's entry as the 24th state of the United States.



You will become familiar with the above logo as we head into the many state-sponsored activities and celebrations. This vital work began more than five years ago when the 97th Missouri General Assembly issued House Concurrent Resolution 7 (HCR7) tasking State Historical Society of Missouri (SHSMO) to develop “plans, ideas, and proposals to commemorate and celebrate” the Missouri Bicentennial, and to provide “guidance and direction to a statewide effort to promote and celebrate the State of Missouri’s rich and complex history.”

This led to the House Concurrent Resolution No. 105 from the 99th General Assembly. Below are excerpts from the resolution:

House Concurrent Resolution No. 105 99TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

WHEREAS, the land that would become the state of Missouri was included in the Louisiana Purchase, in which the United States acquired 828,000 square miles of the Louisiana Territory from France for \$15 million dollars in 1803; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Territory, including the future Missouri, was explored by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark at the direction of President Thomas Jefferson from 1803 to 1806; and

WHEREAS, William Clark was appointed governor of the Missouri Territory in 1813; Missouri attained statehood in 1821; and

WHEREAS, Missouri’s statehood occurred at a pivotal time in United States history; and Missouri’s admission to the Union was in doubt due to concerns in Congress about maintaining the balance of slave states and free states; and

WHEREAS, the Missouri Compromise, one of the great pre-Civil War compromises in American history, allowed the admission of Missouri as a slave state and the simultaneous admission of Maine as a free state; and

WHEREAS, Missouri’s history, beginning even before its statehood, is rich in colorful characters, adventure, bravery, and the embodiment of the American dream; and

WHEREAS, the Ninety-seventh General Assembly, First Regular Session, directed the State Historical Society of Missouri to develop plans, ideas, and proposals to commemorate and HCR 105 to celebrate the Missouri bicentennial and ready itself to provide guidance and direction to a statewide effort to promote and celebrate the State of Missouri’s rich and complex history.

The logo’s three stars represent the past, present, and future of the Show-Me State. “The new logo focuses on the bicentennial as an important moment in Missouri’s history,” stated Christian George, an SHSMO associate. “Our story is one that is still being written. We all have a say in what it will mean to be a Missourian in the future.”

You will also see the bicentennial honored with license plates, which went into circulation in October of 2018. Most Missouri



registration holders will be required to purchase the new bicentennial license. The license plate’s color palette honors the Missouri state flag with the use of red, white, and blue. Waves in the bands of color represent a river. Rivers are an important symbol for Missouri, as waterways figured prominently in the state’s historic role as a gateway for American exploration and transportation.

Bicentennial Celebration Details

You may find many details of the celebration activities at www.missouri2021.org. The mission is to promote a better understanding of Missouri and its regions, communities, and people, both past and present. The Missouri Bicentennial provides opportunities for citizens to celebrate, explore, and share perspectives on the state’s rich history and culture.

This once-in-a-lifetime event will offer many opportunities to celebrate. A successful commemoration of Missouri’s 200th year will engage all 114 counties and the city of St. Louis in a meaningful look at the Show-Me State’s past, present, and future. Missourians will reflect on the events that have shaped their communities, counties, regions, and the entire state while starting a new chapter in its unique history.

The goal is to inspire Missourians to be proud of their great state. There will be several forums, including social media, photo contest, and quilt design, to share your love of Missouri and the land where we live. A statewide campaign will celebrate its influence on the world through music, sports, agriculture, literature, commerce, history, technology, innovation, transportation, art, and architecture.

Celebrate Our Great History!

This celebration is a good time to remember from where we came. This should make all citizens proud and inspire them to become reacquainted with our distinguished state. We have mentioned several of these historical moments in earlier sections of this book. A sampling of other historical highpoints are listed on the next page.

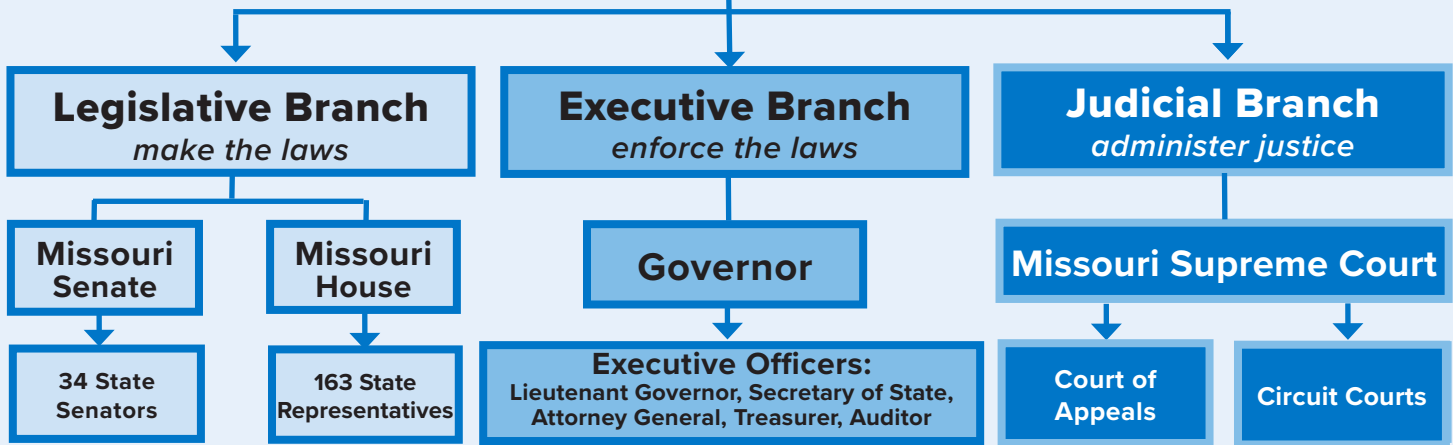
continued

The Missouri Constitution

PRESENT ONE ADOPTED IN 1945

The Voters of Missouri

Qualified voters choose our elected officials



Legislative Branch Quick Facts

The Missouri General Assembly is made up of the state Senate and state House of Representatives.

body	members	terms	annual salary	qualifications
Senate	34	4 years (2-term max)	\$35,915	30 years old, qualified voter for 3 years, resident citizen for 3 years, resident of legislative district for 1 year
House	163	2 years (4-term max)		24 years old, qualified voter for 2 years, resident citizen for 3 years, resident of legislative district for 1 year

Executive Branch Quick Facts

The Constitution provides for six executive officers.

executive officer	terms	annual salary	notes
Governor	4 years (2-term max)	\$133,821	To be eligible for each of the executive offices of Missouri, you must be a U.S. citizen for 15 years, at least 30 years old, and a resident of the state for 10 years.
Lt. Governor	4 years (no term limit)	\$86,484	
Secretary of State	4 years (no term limit)	\$107,746	
Attorney General	4 years (no term limit)	\$107,746	
State Treasurer	4 years (2-term max)	\$107,746	
State Auditor	4 years (no term limit)	\$107,746	

Judicial Branch Quick Facts

The Missouri Court System.

Circuit Court	Court of Appeals	Supreme Court
• organized within 45 judicial circuits	• divided into three judicial districts	• final court of appeal for state matters
• courts of original civil or criminal jurisdiction	• intermediate appellate court handling appeals from circuit courts	• seven Supreme Court judges (chief justice and 6 associate justices)
• circuit court judges serve six-year terms	• governor appoints judges from a list of commission approved candidates	• governor appoints judges from a list of commission approved candidates
• associate judges serve four-year terms	• judges serve 12-year terms with no limit	• judges serve 12-year terms with no limit

1. Every state law starts with an idea.



The lawmaking process starts with an idea from you, the voting public, a state legislator, or someone may say to a legislator, "There ought to be a law for"

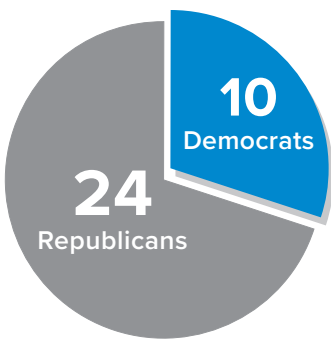
2. The bill is introduced.



A bill may start out in either the House or the Senate of the Missouri General Assembly. Each bill must be read by title three different days in each chamber before it can be passed.

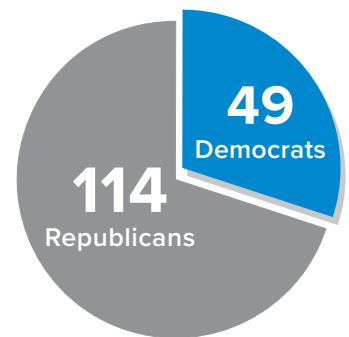
3. Your state legislators at work, discussing and debating.

Missouri Senate - 34 Members



When the bill is first filed, it is assigned a bill number and read to the Legislature for the first time. Senators and representatives meet in small groups to research, discuss, and make changes to the bill. The state law-making process uses committees much like the federal government. Here the bill may have changes (amendments), get killed, get passed, have public hearings, or require more debate. Lobbyists may also meet with lawmakers.

Missouri House - 163 Members



4. The Missouri Legislature keeps favorable bills moving.

Approved by committee

— If a majority vote favors the bill, it moves forward.



Second reading to the full legislative body

— Amendments can still be proposed.



Third and final reading

— After the final debate, the chamber votes on the bill. A simple majority is needed, 18 in the Senate and 82 in the House, for most bills to pass. Bills that are approved here move to the other chamber, following the same process.



Approval from the other chamber/house

— Once both chambers agree on the same version of the final bill, it is sent to the governor.

5. Governor's action.



When the bill reaches the governor, he or she has 15 days to take action or 45 days if the General Assembly is not in session. This may involve: (1) approving the bill by signing the bill into law, (2) vetoing with recommendations for changes, (3) vetoing it absolutely, (4) doing nothing and the bill will automatically become law after the 15- (or 45-) day period.



If a bill is vetoed, a two-thirds (2/3) vote of both houses (23 in the Senate and 109 in the House) can override the governor's veto. The signed bill becomes law based upon the date noted on the bill.

Upcoming Elections in Missouri

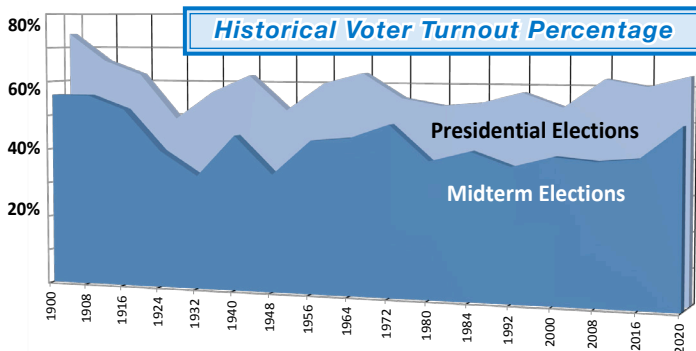
Upcoming Missouri General Elections: 2022, 2024 (will include gubernatorial election), 2026

Upcoming Presidential Elections: 2024, 2028

*General elections are always held on the Tuesday following the first Monday of November in even-numbered years.

Voter Turnout

The chart below shows the voter turnout in the United States and shows the fluctuations in presidential and midterm elections. In recent elections, leading up to the 2020 election, about 60 percent of the voting-eligible population participated in presidential elections, and about 40 percent voted during midterm elections. The 2020 election turnout of 66.2 percent set a record, with the highest turnout in 120 years. Turnout is lower for odd-year, primary, and local elections.



Voter turnout can vary considerably from one state to the next. Minnesota had the highest voter turnout in the 2020 presidential election, with 76.9 percent of the state’s voting-eligible population casting a ballot. Of the about 4.3 million registered voters in Missouri, 70 percent made it to the polls on Election Day.

There also are striking disparities in participation among different demographic groups. For example, the turnout rate among people ages 60 and over was about 70 percent, compared to a little over 40 percent among 18- to 29-year-olds.

The United States has historically trailed most developed countries when it comes to getting people to cast a ballot for their elected officials. The record-breaking turnout in 2020 reaffirmed that voting is a right Americans are no longer taking for granted.

The Two-Party System

Our political party system is called the *two-party system* because most elections are won by a candidate from either the Democratic or Republican Party. The much smaller or special-interest parties in the country may

also try to elect a candidate. These smaller parties are called *third parties* and may include the Constitution, Libertarian, and Green parties.

Political Parties

A discussion of our system of government would not be complete without a discussion of political parties. While the Founding Fathers did not plan political parties and they are not mentioned in the Constitution, political parties are a vital part of our governmental system. Political parties developed quite early in our history, even as the debate raged over whether or not to adopt the Constitution. The *Federalists* and the *Anti-Federalists* were the two groups that represented the beginning of our political parties.

Politics often has a bad reputation. An expression like “dirty politics” indicates how some people feel about the subject. Contributing to this feeling are the frequent news stories about corrupt and dishonest political figures. Citizens are responsible for the quality of politics, and it’s necessary for citizens to be involved in the political system to ensure that the quality remains high.

QUESTIONS

FILL IN THE BLANKS / SHORT ANSWER

- When is the next presidential election? _____
- When is the next Missouri gubernatorial election?

- If you are going to be absent on election day, how can you still vote? _____

- What are the requirements for voters? _____

- What is the purpose of a primary election? _____

TRUE OR FALSE? Write a T or F in the space provided.

- ____ 1. You must be at least 18 years old to vote.
- ____ 2. A person serving a jail sentence temporarily loses the right to vote.
- ____ 3. Presidential elections have the largest turnout.
- ____ 4. General elections are only held when the president is being elected.
- ____ 5. Political parties are mentioned in Article 7 of the United States Constitution.
- ____ 6. The Federalists and the Anti-Federalists evolved into political parties.
- ____ 7. The 26th Amendment changed the voting age to 18 years old.
- ____ 8. Non-citizens can vote in every election.

The following test will help you prepare for your final Missouri Constitution test. It has questions similar to ones you will find on your final. It is suggested you write your answers on a piece of paper so you can take the test a number of times. You will find the correct answers at the bottom of Page ⁸⁰.

Hard work on this page will assure you of a better grade on your final exam. Be sure to look up any answers you don't understand or see your teacher for an explanation.

MATCHING. Match the person or body in **Column A** with the correct branch of state government in **Column B**. Put the letter of the correct answer in the space provided.

Column A

- _____ 1. The Missouri Governor
- _____ 2. The Missouri House of Representatives
- _____ 3. The Missouri Supreme Court
- _____ 4. Missouri Circuit Courts
- _____ 5. Lieutenant Governor
- _____ 6. Missouri State Senate
- _____ 7. Attorney General

Column B

- a. The Legislative Branch
- b. The Judicial Branch
- c. The Executive Branch

FILL IN THE BLANKS. Write the correct answer in the space provided.

- _____ 8. Who can veto a bill passed by the General Assembly?
- _____ 9. If the governor dies, who becomes governor?
- _____ 10. The river that makes up the easterly border of Missouri.
- _____ 11. The highest court in Missouri.
- _____ 12. Voters not only vote for state officials, they sometimes vote on public issues or questions. What are those types of elections called?
- _____ 13. The governor of Missouri.
- _____ 14. The next presidential election will be in what year?
- _____ 15. How many days does the governor have to consider a bill when the General Assembly is in session?
- _____ 16. How many constitutions has Missouri had?
- _____ 17. Who may call special sessions of the General Assembly?
- _____ 18. The executive branch officer that keeps the "Great Seal" and maintains the official records of the state.
- _____ 19. Who is the chief legal officer of the state of Missouri?
- _____ 20. The Missouri Constitution guarantees the right of trial by _____.
- _____ 21. Name the election used to select candidates for the general election.
- _____ 22. The capital of Missouri.
- _____ 23. How many branches of government in Missouri?
- _____ 24. If the General Assembly wishes to pass a bill over a veto, what fractional vote is necessary?

continued