

Understanding the Role of Government

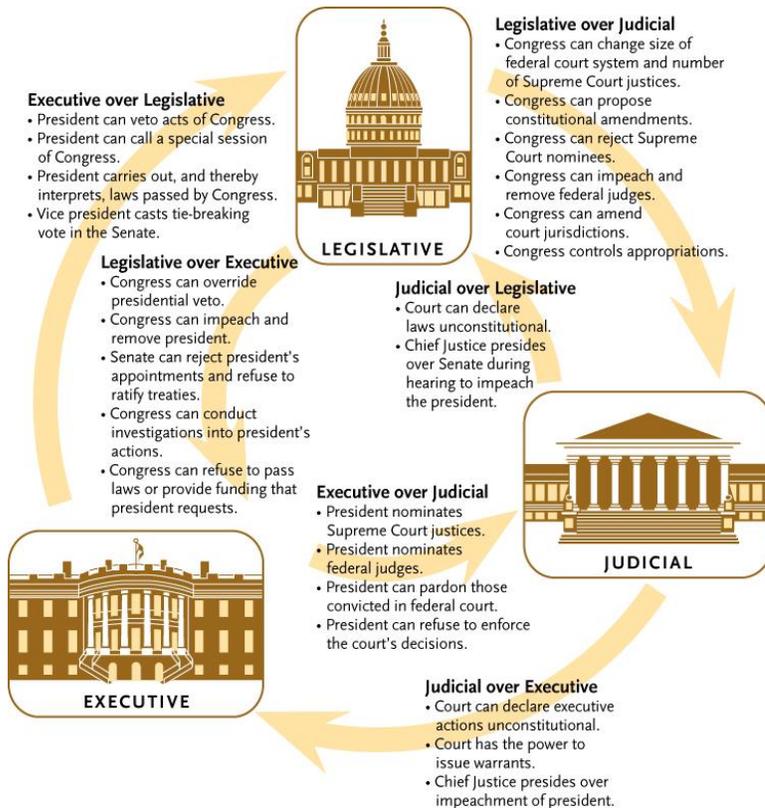
Images from Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere. *American Government, Power and Purpose*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2012.

Three Branches of Government exist on the state and federal level:

Legislative
Executive
Judicial

These three branches were set up with separations of powers. These separations create conflict, which prevents one of the branches from exerting too much power. A similar separation of powers can be seen at the state level. Each branch is given certain powers and responsibilities, as well as exerts checks on other branches.

LEGISLATIVE	EXECUTIVE	JUDICIAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passes federal laws Controls federal appropriations Approves treaties and presidential appointments Regulates interstate commerce Establishes lower-court system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforces laws Serves as commander in chief of armed forces Makes foreign treaties Proposes laws Nominates Supreme Court justices and federal court judges Pardons those convicted in federal court 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews lower-court decisions Decides constitutionality of laws Decides cases involving disputes between states



According to the US Constitution, the federal government is given expressed, implied, and inherent powers:

Expressed powers are those specifically mentioned in the Constitution, including: collecting taxes, coining money, and declaring war. **Implied powers** are those powers that come from the "necessary and proper" clause. These powers are not specifically spelled out. **Inherent powers** include powers that the federal government naturally has to represent the country in foreign relations/ diplomacy.

The states derive power from the Tenth Amendment that states "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people." Basically, powers that are not granted to the Federal government in the Constitution are left up to the states. Some of these powers include: education, setting up local government, raising money to support state activities, welfare/ entitlement programs, etc.

The Federal government can exert control over the states through mandates and grants. For the intellectual and developmental disability community (I/DD), these can be programs like Medicaid or Special Education.

State Government

In Colorado, the executive is the Governor who serves a four year term. Similar to the President, the Governor also makes appointments to state agencies and offices. The Governor draws up a budget and can exert veto power over the legislature. Governors are also term limited to two consecutive terms in office.

Just like on the Federal level, the State has two houses in the legislature- the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate is the upper house, and Senators typically represent larger districts. The House of Representatives is the lower house, and House districts are usually smaller. Senators hold four year terms, while Representatives hold two year terms. Term limits exist for both houses. Representatives are limited to four consecutive terms, while Senators are limited to two consecutive terms. Once the legislator reaches their

This document was created by Kim Tenure in 2013, and updated in 2015. If you have any questions about this document, please contact Kim at kim@arc-ad.org.

term limit, they can run again after a four year break. The legislature enacts laws, represent their districts, pass and amend the budget, confirm nominations, and oversight of the executive.

The judicial branch in Colorado consists of a State Supreme Court which, much like the US Supreme Court, is the court of last resort. In Colorado there exists, the Colorado Court of Appeals, District Courts, County Courts, Water Courts, Juvenile Courts, and Probate Courts. This branch is vested with the responsibilities of resolving disputes and supervising offenders on probation.

As you can see, state government and powers of the branches often mirror those at the federal level.

List of Federal Legislators

Colorado Senators

Senator Michael Bennet (Democrat)
www.bennet.senate.gov

Senator Cory Gardner (Republican)
<http://www.gardner.senate.gov/>

Colorado Representatives By District

Representative Diana DeGette (Democrat)
Colorado 1st Congressional District
Covers most of Denver County and parts of Littleton and Englewood
www.degette.house.gov

Representative Jared Polis (Democrat)
Colorado 2nd Congressional District
Covers Boulder, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Eagle, Gilpin, Grand, Jefferson, Larimer, Summit, and Park Counties
www.polis.house.gov

Representative Scott Tipton (Republican)
Colorado 3rd Congressional District
Covers western slope, southwestern Colorado, including Pueblo
www.tipton.house.gov

Representative Ken Buck (Republican)
Colorado 4th Congressional District
Covers eastern Colorado, including Weld County and parts of Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties
<https://buck.house.gov/>

Representative Doug Lamborn (Republican)
Colorado 5th Congressional District
www.lamborn.house.gov

Representative Mike Coffman (Republican)
Colorado 6th Congressional District
Covers parts of Douglas County, Arapahoe and Adams County, including Aurora, Centennial, Highlands Ranch and Brighton.
www.coffman.house.gov

Representative Ed Perlmutter (Democrat)
Colorado 7th Congressional District
Covers Jefferson and Adams County, including Arvada, Westminster, Lakewood and Commerce City.
www.perlmutter.house.gov

Find out your state legislators here: <http://openstates.org/co/> or <https://votesmart.org/>

Information on upcoming bills, committee assignments, and other legislative information, can be found at: <http://www.leg.state.co.us/>

Additional Resources:

Colorado Politics and Policy: Governing a Purple State By Thomas E. Cronin and Robert D. Loevy

American Government, Power and Purpose By Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth A Shepsle

A refresher from School House Rock:

- Separation of Powers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auV0Aj73Qy0>
- I'm Just a Bill: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyeJ55o3EI0>

This document was created by Kim Tenure in 2013, and updated in 2015. If you have any questions about this document, please contact Kim at kim@arc-ad.org.