



# VOTE SMART

## JUST THE FACTS

### Lesson 1 - Who is in Charge? The 3 Levels of Government

#### **Standards: National Council for the Social Studies**

NCSS 5: Individuals, Groups and Institutions

NCSS 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

#### **Objectives:**

SWBAT (students will be able to) recall the 3 levels of government.

SWBAT identify the head of each level.

SWBAT recognize the role and relationship between levels.

#### **Subject Matter:**

Governors, president, local, state, federal

#### **Materials:**

- Computer and projector (optional)
- Whiteboard
- Slips of paper
- Pencils
- Tape

#### **Procedure: (45-60 min)**

##### Introduction:

1. If you have a computer/projector, visit [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org) and identify the search bar at the bottom of the homepage.
2. Ask the students if anyone can name the President of the United States
  - a. Once you get the correct answer, type the President's name into [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org). You can visit his/her bios page to show the class.
3. Next, ask the student if anyone can name the Governor of your state.
  - a. Once you get the correct answer, type the Governor's name into [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org). You can visit his/her bios page to show the class.
4. Ask the class if they know who is in charge of the city/town?
  - a. The answer would be mayor or the name of the specific mayor.
5. Ask the class what they think the differences between a mayor, a governor, and a president are.
6. Ask the class if they can think of other people who are in charge.

- a. Examples:
  - i. Teacher is in charge of the classroom.
  - ii. Parents/caretakers are in charge of the house/family.
  - iii. The store owner is in charge of the store.
7. You might show your class a YouTube video describing the three levels of government. Vote Smart recommends [this](#) video.

Activity:

1. On the board, write three sections: FEDERAL, STATE, and LOCAL
2. Divide the classroom into three groups: one will be federal, one will be state, and one will be local
3. Each group will get slips of paper with the following titles:
  - a. Build the town roads [ANSWER: local]
  - b. Print money [ANSWER: federal]
  - c. Control of the hospitals within a state [ANSWER: state]
  - d. Give a driver's license [ANSWER: state]
  - e. Be the policeman or firefighter [ANSWER: local]
  - f. Give the town water and lights [ANSWER: local]
  - g. Keep the country safe with the military [ANSWER: federal]
  - h. Make the rules for teachers and schools [ANSWER: state, local]
4. Explain to the group that they must select which of these titles they believe fits within their section. Remind them that some of these titles might fit in more than one group. They should pick up the slip of paper, put tape on the back, and stick it under their level of government's label if they believe it falls under their level.
5. Once every group has placed their guesses, discuss as a class if there are any disagreements with what is on the board.
6. While in discussion, you should guide the classroom toward the correct answer.

Cool down:

Ask the class to recall the 3 levels of government. Ask them if, without looking at the board, they can give an example of what each level has power over. Give them suggestions and have them try to name all of the powers described in the activity above.