

Three Levels of Government

Everyone is a citizen at three levels. First, you're a citizen locally. Your local government sets laws for everyone in the community. For example, there are laws everyone follows about housing. Those are zoning rules. Did you ever wonder why there are stores in some areas and no stores in others. Local governments decide in which areas stores can be located. Then you're a citizen of the state of Illinois. The state provides services and laws for everyone who lives within the state borders. For example, every time you travel on a highway in Illinois, state police are on duty to make sure your trip is safe, that everyone is following traffic laws. Then you're a citizen of the nation. United States citizens have many services from the national government and follow national laws as well as local and state laws. For example, in the election this year, any citizen who is at least 18 years old can vote. That's a national law.

Local Government

Look in the Chicago Tribune to find examples of situations involving the local governments of this area. Write one example in the second column. In the third column, tell how that action could affect you.

	Current Situation	How It Could Affect Me
Local Law Enforcement		
Local Government Service		
Local Government Leader		

State Government

The state government provides many different kinds of services. If anyone in your family goes to a state university, that person is attending a school that the state supports. If you attend a public school, the state of Illinois has set the goals for your learning. Look in the Chicago Tribune to find examples of ways the state affects you. Look for information about the kinds of services that the state provides. You may find an example about traffic safety, about how the state helps businesses, about education, or about law enforcement. Look for situations in which the state’s government is helping to make Illinois a better place to live and work.

Government Action	How It Is Making Illinois a Better Place to Live and Work

National Connections

The national government affects every person who lives in Illinois. For example, the treasury department is responsible for the money we all use. Imagine what would happen if each state printed its own money. That’s just one example of how we need a national government. Here are some other parts of the national government that affect everyone.

- Department of Labor
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Federal Communications Commission
- Department of Transportation

Look in today's newspaper for examples of situations that involve a national law or agency. Then explain how that government action or situation could affect your own community.

National Law or Agency	How It Could Affect My Community

Discussion Points:

- Which level of government affects your community the most?
- What kinds of laws affect you the most?
- What are the responsibilities of a citizen to the different levels of government?

Think It Through

What are the qualities that make a good citizen? Make a list of those qualities. Then give an example of how a citizen could demonstrate those qualities.

Get It Across

Write a letter to a leader at the local level of government. One of the responsibilities of the citizen is to take an active role in government. In your letter, make a recommendation about local government services. Tell your idea of a way to provide more or better services to your community.

Newspaper Connection

Make a photo collection that shows government at all three levels: local, state, and national. Collect photographs from the newspaper that show activities of government at each level.