



# Branches of Government



ur system of government in Washington State is based upon separation of powers as framed in the United States Constitution. This means that our governmental structure is divided into three separate branches. Each branch deals with a different aspect of governing. The legislative branch passes laws. The executive branch enforces laws. The judicial branch interprets laws.

## CITIZENS

### Legislative

Passes the laws

### Legislative Branch

The legislative branch makes new laws and modifies existing laws. The legislature includes elected representatives from the various regions of the city, county or state.

On the state level this branch is called the state legislature.

On the county level it is called the board of county commissioners (county council in charter counties).

On the city level it is called the city council.

### Executive

Enforces the laws

### Executive Branch

The executive branch enforces laws passed by the legislature. The governor is elected to be the head of the executive branch in the state. The governor has power to sign or veto laws passed by the legislature. The chief executive has authority over a wide range of agencies and departments that assist in the enforcement of laws and oversee how the government spends the taxpayers' money.

On the state level the governor is the chief executive.

In most counties the board of county commissioners exercises the executive power as a whole and may delegate some executive authority to a county administrator should they choose to do so. Charter counties may have a separate county executive who is the chief executive.

On the city level the mayor or city administrator is the chief executive.

### Judicial

Interprets the laws

### Judicial Branch

While the legislative branch approves the court budget, the presiding judge manages the court and staff as a separate branch of the government. This process provides a place where people can go to resolve disputes peacefully according to law, through an unbiased and fair process, free of influence by the other branches of government. Judges can be either elected or appointed.



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