

Florida's State Government

The Florida Constitution sets up the framework for our state government. Florida has an executive branch, a legislative branch, and a judicial branch, just like our national government! Each of these branches has different structure, function, and powers. This prevents one branch from becoming too powerful. The Florida Constitution also includes a Declaration of Rights, which protects the rights of Florida residents. This is like the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution. It's important to have the rights of citizens outlined in our constitutions so they remain protected.

Legislative Branch

The state's legislative branch is made up of two houses. This includes a House of Representatives and a Senate, just like our national government. The Florida House of Representatives has 120 seats, and representatives serve two-year terms. The Florida Senate has 40 seats, and senators serve four-year terms. They make and pass bills (laws). The lawmakers discuss the issues facing Floridians. A bill is introduced to either house and then is voted on. If the majority of the House and Senate pass the bill, it moves to the governor's desk. Another power given to the legislative branch is increasing taxes and fees. The collected taxes and fees help the government fund different agencies and programs for the state.

Florida's Senate



Florida's House of Representatives



Executive Branch

In the U.S. Constitution, the president and vice president lead the executive branch. In Florida, our executive branch includes the governor, lieutenant governor, and cabinet members. The job of the state executive branch is to enforce the laws. They make sure that the laws are followed. A governor signs and vetoes (says no to) bills, fills Florida Supreme Court vacancies (openings), and calls in military help during state emergencies. The cabinet's job is to oversee the state departments assigned to them.



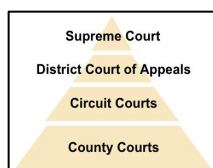
Florida's state capitol



Florida's cabinet members and governor (2023)

Judicial Branch

The state judicial branch interprets the laws. At the national level, the highest court is the Supreme Court. In Florida, we have the Florida Supreme Court, the highest level court for the state. We also have lower courts like the District Court of Appeals, Circuit Courts, and County Courts. These courts handle civil and criminal cases, hear appeals from lower courts, and make sure that laws passed align with the Florida Constitution.



Florida's judicial branch



Florida's Supreme Court justices (2023)