



# ARIZONA'S GOVERNMENT



It takes many people to make sure that a state runs smoothly and everyone gets the protection he or she deserves. Imagine what Arizona must have been like during the **pioneer** days. The first settlers traveled along the Santa Fe Trail, claimed land, and started mining, farming, and ranching. There weren't many people in Arizona at that time. The pioneers could do pretty much as they pleased. As more people entered Arizona, they too claimed land and built houses wherever they wanted. There was no weekly trash collection. People threw their garbage in the streets and the rivers. When arguments broke out, they settled them with fists and guns. The biggest and meanest people usually got what they wanted. There were no rules in place, so people took whatever they wanted. Nobody felt safe.

Fortunately, things have changed in Arizona. Just like in all other states, there are people who make the laws, people who make sure the laws are obeyed, and others who take care of law breakers and punish them. These people are all part of Arizona's government.

## ARIZONA'S CONSTITUTION

A **territory** that wants to become part of the United States must first write a **constitution**. In 1910, fifty two **delegates** from Arizona wrote and **adopted** a state constitution. The original constitution stated that Arizona's **legislators** and the **governor** would be **elected** every two years. The constitution also gave Arizonans the right to remove any judge or government leader who wasn't doing a good job. On February 9, 1911, the constitution was approved by voters. It was then sent to President William Howard Taft for his approval.

President Taft refused to approve Arizona's constitution or grant statehood for Arizona. He didn't like the idea that judges could be removed from power. He sent the constitution back to Arizona without his signature. By the end of 1911, Arizona had changed its constitution. On February 14, 1912, Arizona became the 48th state to join the Union.

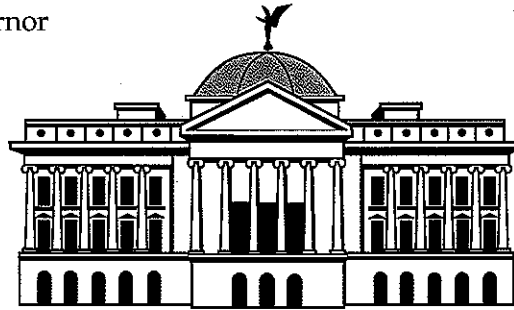
Arizona's original constitution is still used today. Like the other 49 states, Arizona's constitution outlines the way the state's government will be run. Over the years, Arizona's constitution has been amended, or changed, more than 100 times. All amendments must be approved by a **majority** of the voters. Voters must be at least 18 years old. Many agree that granting women the right to vote in 1912, was one of Arizona's most important amendments to the constitution.



## ARIZONA'S STATE GOVERNMENT

The state government makes laws for the whole state of Arizona. The head of the state government is the governor. Arizona's governor is elected by the people once every four years. The governor has many men and women to help make and **enforce** the laws of the state.

Construction on Arizona's State Capitol Building started in 1898. It took three years to build the Capitol's thick stone walls and copper dome. When it opened in 1901, the Capitol Building was 40,000 square feet, large enough for the governor's office and all of Arizona's legislators.



ARIZONA'S STATE CAPITOL

Today, the Capitol Building is a museum. More than 60,000 people visit the Capitol Museum each year. New buildings near the Capitol Building serve as offices for the governor and Arizona's other state leaders. Many important decisions are made in these offices.

## THREE BRANCHES OF STATE GOVERNMENT

Arizona was the 48th state to join the United States. Forty seven other states had already set the standard for the way Arizona's government would be run. In fact, 125 years before Arizona became a state, the United States Constitution was written and clearly outlined the rules for state and national governments. All state and national governments, including Arizona, are divided into three branches. These branches of government are the legislative, executive, and judicial (joo•DIH•shul) branches.

## THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The legislative branch is the part of the government that makes the laws. The legislature has two parts, the Senate and the House of Representatives. Arizona is divided into 30 legislative districts. The voters in each district elect one senator and two representatives. This means that there are 30 senators and 60 representatives elected to make the laws in the state of Arizona.

Senators and representatives must be at least 25 years old. They serve in the legislature for two years. During their term in Arizona's state government, the senators and representatives discuss new laws for the state. **Citizens** can also contact the state legislators to suggest new laws. All laws start as bills in the legislature. To become a law, a bill must be voted on and win approval in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. As a final step, the approved bill must be signed into law by the governor.

### FAST FACTS



- In 1863, when Arizona became a territory, its **capital** was in Prescott. In 1867, the capital was moved to Tucson, and then back to Prescott ten years later. It was finally moved to Phoenix, where it remains today.

## THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The executive branch is in charge of carrying out the laws and running the state. The governor is in charge of the executive branch. The executive branch also writes a budget and decides how much money the state will spend each year. If, for example, the legislative branch voted to build a new park in your neighborhood, it would be the executive branch's job to buy the land and make sure the park gets built.

Since the governor can't do everything in a state as large as Arizona, he or she must have hundreds of people to help run the state. Some of these people are elected by voters. They include the **secretary of state**, the **attorney general**, the state mine **inspector**, and the **treasurer**, just to name a few. Some members of the executive branch are chosen by the governor.

The governor communicates with the Senate and the House of Representatives by telling the legislators the types of laws he or she would like to see passed. The senators and representatives listen to the governor, but they do not have to do everything the governor wants. Their first responsibility is to the citizens of Arizona who voted for them.

### FAST FACTS



- The town site of Phoenix, Arizona's capital, was chosen in 1870. It was located where downtown Phoenix is today. Home lots in Phoenix were sold for \$40.00 each. Today, these same lots sell for thousands of dollars.
- In 1920, women throughout the United States were given the right to vote. Arizona gave women the right to vote in 1912, eight years before many other states.
- In 1914, the first two women were elected to Arizona's state legislature. In 1981, Arizona resident Sandra Day O'Connor became the first female member of the United States **Supreme Court**.
- Barry Goldwater was one of the most famous Arizonans of all time. He was born in Phoenix in 1909 on New Year's Day. He was a United States Senator and even ran for president. Although he didn't win, he served for 30 years in the Senate. Before his death in 1998, he used his power in government to improve Phoenix and other cities.
- John McCain moved to Arizona after being held as a prisoner during the Vietnam War. He served for two terms in the United States House of Representatives and in 1998, he started his third term as a United States Senator. McCain ran for president of the United States and has fought for many changes in Arizona.

## THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

The third branch of Arizona's state government is the judicial branch. The judicial branch makes sure the laws are followed. It is responsible for enforcing traffic laws and punishing criminals. The judicial branch operates the state's jails and prisons and protects the **civil rights** of Arizona's citizens.

Remember the park that the legislative branch voted to build in your neighborhood? The executive branch purchased the land and built the park. Visitors to the park are not following the rules. They are fishing in the park's lakes and staying in the park after dark. The judicial branch would make sure that these law breakers were warned, and if necessary, punished.

The Supreme Court is in charge of the judicial branch. There are five judges who sit on the Arizona Supreme Court. Three lower level courts are under the Supreme Court. These courts decide on crimes from **jaywalking** to murder. Arizona's courts also deal with family matters like divorce and **child custody**. If a decision is made in one of the lower courts that a person feels is unfair, he or she can **appeal** to a higher court. Some cases go all the way to the Supreme Court. The decisions of the Supreme Court are final.

## A SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES

Each of the three branches of the state government uses its powers to check and balance the other two branches. Balance in the three branches of government is important so that one branch doesn't become too powerful. For example, if the executive branch, run by the governor, did something wrong, the judicial branch, run by the Supreme Court, could stop the governor. If the governor **abused** his or her power, the judicial branch could even remove the governor from office.

Another example of this balance requires that all laws passed by the legislative branch be approved by the executive branch. Let's say that the governor did not want a new park built in your neighborhood. The governor could **veto** the new park and refuse to approve it. The legislative branch could vote on the park again. If two-thirds, or at least 98 senators and representatives agreed, the park could be built without the governor's signature.



## REFERENDUMS AND INITIATIVES

Ordinary citizens also help balance the power of Arizona's state government. They do this through referendums and initiatives. If citizens don't like a law that was passed by the legislature, they may gather signatures on a **petition**. If enough signatures are gathered, they could force the law to be voted on in the next election. This is called a referendum.

An initiative is used by voters when they want to have a new law passed. Initiatives are also used to make a change to the state constitution. Again, signatures must be gathered on a petition for the initiative to be voted on during the next election.

## ARIZONA'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The governor is the head of the state, but he or she cannot be everywhere. For this reason, Arizona has been divided into 15 smaller sections, or counties. Each county has its own officers to help enforce the laws made by the state government. The county officers are elected, just like the governor. County officers serve the people in their counties for four years.

The county officers have a main office, just like the governor. The office is called the county seat. The county seat is located in a city or town within the county. The county government keeps records of everyone's property, issues marriage licenses, builds roads, and provides the county with parks and libraries.

The map below shows you Arizona's 15 counties and where the main office, or county seat, is located.

### ARIZONA'S COUNTIES AND COUNTY SEATS

