

# Civics & Economics CE.3 -

## State Government in Virginia: Structure, Powers, and Federalism (new 2023 standards)

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### CE.3a Structure and Powers of Virginia's State Government

a) describe the **structure** and **powers** of the state government (the **three branches** of government)

Virginia's **state government** is based on the **Virginia Constitution**, which explains how the government is **organized** and what **powers** each branch has.

Virginia's government has **three separate branches**, just like the national government:



The **Legislative Branch**, called the **General Assembly**, makes the laws.

- The General Assembly is **bicameral**. It has two parts: the **House of Delegates** and the **Virginia Senate**.
- Members are elected by the **people of Virginia**.
- The **General Assembly** meets annually for a fixed number of days. It **creates laws**, approves the state **budget**, and respond to **issues** that affect Virginians.

#### Executive Branch – Enforces the laws

- Led by the **Governor**, who is elected by voters for a **four-year term**.
- Other important officials include the **Lieutenant Governor** and **Attorney General**.
- The Governor works with **executive agencies** and **regulatory boards** to carry out the laws and manage state programs like **transportation**, **public safety**, and **education**.

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#### Judicial Branch – Interprets the laws

- Includes the **Supreme Court of Virginia**
- **Court of appeals**
- **Circuit courts**
- **District courts** ( including small claims courts and juvenile and domestic relations courts.

These courts make sure state laws follow the **Virginia Constitution** and help settle **disputes**.

This system **separates powers** so that no single branch becomes too **powerful**.

### CE.3b The State Lawmaking Process

b) explain the **state lawmaking process**



#### VA House of Delegates

**Making laws** in Virginia involves several steps—and it takes **teamwork and cooperation**.

Here's how it works:

1. **Idea** – A legislator or citizen comes up with a **proposal** for a new law.
2. **Introduction** – A legislator introduces the idea as a **bill**.
3. **Committee Work** – A small group reviews and **debates** the bill.

4. **Governor's Action** – The Governor can **sign** the bill into law or **veto** it.
  5. If **Vetoed** – The General Assembly can **override** the veto with enough votes.
- **Compromise.** is often needed to get enough support from both sides before a bill can become law.
  - **Citizens and interest groups** (like environmental groups or business organizations) can speak up to **influence** laws and public policy. They might contact lawmakers, testify in committee, or organize campaigns.

**The primary issues** in the legislative process at the state level

- **Education:** To promote an informed and engaged citizenry (i.e., establish minimum standards for local schools)
- **Public health:** To promote and protect the health of its citizens
- **Environment:** To protect natural resources (i.e., improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay)
- **State budget:** To approve a biennial (two year) budget proposed by the governor
- **Revenue:** To levy and collect taxes

### CE.3c The Executive Branch and Regulatory Boards

*c) describe the roles and powers of the **executive branch** and regulatory boards as they affect states*

The **Governor** not only **enforces** laws but also helps shape public policy by **proposing** **laws**, preparing the **budget**, and working with the General Assembly.



- **Regulatory Boards** are groups within the **executive branch** that help **enforce rules** in specific areas like health, education, or transportation.
- These **boards** have the power to **create** **regulations**, issue **licenses**, and make decisions that **affect businesses and individuals**.

Ways the **executive branch** influences policymaking

- Proposes biennial **budget**
- **Proposes** legislation
- Approves **veto** or line-item veto bills

The **governor of Virginia** exercises the formal powers granted by the **Virginia Constitution**.

In carrying out both the formal and informal powers of the office, the governor fills **several roles**, including

- **chief of state:** ceremonial head of the state government
- **chief legislator:** proposer of the legislative agenda
- **chief executive:** head of the executive branch of state government
- **party chief:** leader of the political party that controls the executive branch
- **chief citizen:** representative of all Virginians

**Cabinet secretaries** and departments, **agencies, commissions, and regulatory boards**

- **administer laws** and enforce laws
- create **regulations** to monitor aspects of business and the economy
- provide **services**.

### CE.3d Federalism and the Relationship Between State and National Government

*d) explain the relationship between state governments and the national government in the federal system, referencing **Federalist No. 10** and **Federalist No. 51***

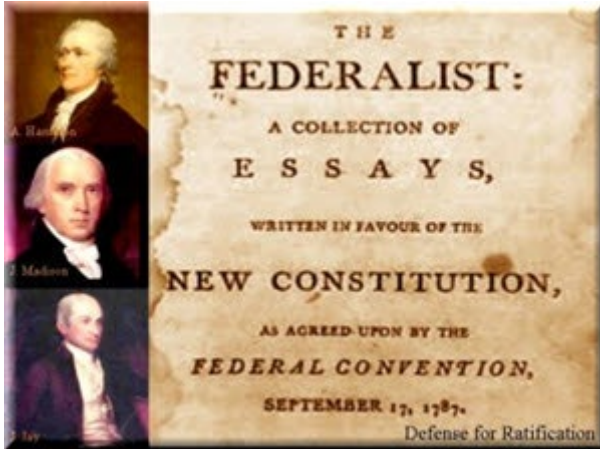
Virginia is part of the United States, so the state government **shares power** with the **national (federal) government**. This system is called **federalism**.

Here's how **federalism** works:

- The U.S. Constitution established a **federal form of government** in which the **national government is supreme**.
- The Constitution gives certain **powers** to the **national government**—like printing **money** conducting **foreign**

**policy**, making **treaties**, regulating commerce, providing for the common **defense**.

- Powers not given to the national government are **reserved for the states**. Examples: running **schools**, holding **elections**, promoting **health, safety and welfare**.
- Some powers are **shared (called concurrent powers)**—like collecting **taxes** or building **roads**.



The **Federalist Papers** are a collection of essays written by Alexander **Hamilton**, James **Madison**, and John Jay to help people understand the **principles behind the Constitution**, such as **separation of powers** and **federalism**.

- **Federalist No. 10** (written by James **Madison**) explained that a **strong central government** was needed to control the effects of **factions** (groups with special interests) and keep the country stable.
- **Federalist No. 51** talked about the importance of **separation of powers** and **checks and balances** so that no part of the government gets too strong.

Sometimes there's **conflict** between the **state and national governments**—especially if the federal government **requires states to do something without giving them money** to pay for it. This can cause **tension**.

## CE.3e Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances at the State Level

*e) explain the principle of **separation of powers** and the operation of **checks and balances** at the state level*

Just like the U.S. government, Virginia **separates power** among the **three branches**:



## Checks & Balances

- The **legislative** branch **makes laws**.
- The **executive** branch **carries them out**.
- The **judicial** branch **interprets** the laws.

Each branch can **check** the others so that no branch becomes too powerful. For example:

- The **Governor** can **veto** laws passed by the General Assembly.
- The **General Assembly** can **override** a veto.
- The **courts** can rule a law **unconstitutional** if it goes against the Virginia Constitution.

This system of **checks and balances** helps protect our freedoms by keeping government **power under control**.



### Key Concepts to Know:

- Virginia has a **state constitution** that sets up its government.
- The government is divided into **three branches** to balance power.
- Laws are made by the **General Assembly** through a process of collaboration and compromise.
- **Citizens** and **interest groups** can have a voice in the lawmaking process.
- Virginia **shares power** with the national government, but also has its own powers.
- **Federalist Papers** support a system of federalism with checks and balances to protect democracy.