American Government B

**Unit 6: Governments and Policies**

**Unit Summary:** Government creates laws and rules to balance the rights of the individual and the needs of the collective group. In our country, power, roles, and responsibilities are traditionally divided among local, state, and national, or federal, levels. There is an assumption that governments address issues at appropriate levels, connecting to the will of the people. At the core of American governance is the belief in personal liberty and basic human rights.

**Unit Timeline:** This timeline provides *some* events included in this unit’s learning. The goal is to assist understanding chronologically.

1778 – United States signed the Treaty of Fort Pitt with the Delaware Nation

1789 - United States and the Cherokee Nation entered into the Treaty of Tellico

1830 - Congress passed the Indian Removal Act

1838 - The U.S. Army began the forcible removal of the Cherokee Nation to what later would become the state of Oklahoma

**Lesson 2 – Levels of Government**

**Objective 1:** Identify the services provided by different levels of government.

**Big Ideas**: The U.S. Constitution established a *federal system of government*, or a system with three levels of management and control: local, state, and national. This allows services to be delivered by different levels of government based on the need. This creates a hierarchy, where local governments manage city- or town-level issues, state governments manage state affairs, and the federal government manages national affairs.

**Local Government**: Local government exists to serve the residents of a community. Local government provides services including municipal activities like trash pick-up and water services as well as local permit granting and ordinance control.

**State Government**: The services provided by this level of government include issuing business licenses, the regulation of commerce, and setting the rules for elections. State governments oversee areas such as school curriculum, the rules for and printing of driver's licenses, state police forces, and the enforcement of state laws.

**National Government**: The departments, agencies, and commissions that make up the national, or federal, government each carry out policy initiatives to best serve citizens on a massive scale. Examples include managing public land and protecting American people via the U.S. military.

Among local, state, and national governments, some overlap of services exists. This question can also have a downside as sometimes, knowing who is most responsible to step in can lead to a slower response. Still, the local, state, and national governments work together to cover most services required by the citizens of the U.S.

**Objective 2:** Compare the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal and state governments.

**Big Ideas:** Both state and federal governments have an executive branch, a judicial branch, and a legislative branch. State governments focus primarily on the welfare of their individual citizens, while the national government focuses on the military, international trade, and resolving issues between the states.

Similarities in Federal and State Governments

* Both state and federal governments have an elected leader who heads the executive branch. In the federal government, this position is called a president, while states use the term governor for their elected leader of the executive branch.
* Both federal and state levels of government have a legislative branch that writes laws for the region they are elected to represent and serve. The legislative branch also approves a budget for either the federal or state government, giving it the power to control spending in the government.
* The judicial branch of each level of government consists of lower courts and a Supreme Court. The vast majority of trials are held in the district courts, while people appeal decisions to appellate courts. Whether a state or the federal Supreme Court, this top-level court’s main purpose is to interpret and uphold the Constitution and to protect it from abuse from unjust laws or overreach by the executive branch.

Differences in Federal and State Governments

* The executive branch oversees enforcing laws. At state levels, this is headed by a governor. At the federal level, the president of the U.S. heads the executive branch and enforces laws written by the legislative branch.
* The legislative branch oversees writing laws. At the state level, legislators are elected by citizens within individual states, and they write laws specific to the state they serve. At the federal level, members of Congress come from all 50 states and write laws that apply to the entire country.
* The judicial branch is tasked with interpreting laws. All sections of the judicial branch work in a hierarchy of jurisdiction, which determines who oversees certain legal questions, with the Supreme Court of the U.S. being the definitive last court of appeal for making rulings on the law.

**Objective 3:** Create a graphic organizer that compares and contrasts the structures and functions of local, state, and federal governments.

**Big Ideas:** All three levels of government share some similarities. These include providing for the general welfare of citizens, collecting taxes, and maintaining infrastructure. These similarities are also related to the structure of the governments, particularly as both state governments and the federal government have executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

Each level of government differs in its structure and the services it provides. One major difference is the reach of each level. Local governments oversee a local area, while state governments must manage the affairs of the entire state. The federal government oversees the whole country, and the federal government alone can resolve disputes between different states.

A diagram of government and state government

Description automatically generated

**Objective 4:** Critique the relationship between state and local governments.

**Big Ideas:** State governments, as originally laid out by the U.S. Constitution and the Tenth Amendment, are responsible for providing and fulfilling all rights and citizens’ requirements not listed in the first nine amendments of the Bill of Rights. This enables states broad latitude in crafting laws that fit their citizens’ needs. The broad power of state governments can lead to issues with local governments.

Theoretically, local governments fall below state governments in the hierarchy of services and scale. The presence of incredibly large metropolitan areas within a state can cause a power struggle over resources, implementation of laws, and the idea of who carries out what services.

**Keywords**:

* **bureaucracy – the group of departments, agencies, and commissions that make up the executive branch**
* **checks and balances** – the power and the ability given to each of the three branches of government to check the others to ensure that no one branch obtains excessive, unchecked power
* **executive branch** – the federal and the state branches of government that enforce laws
* **federal system of government** – a national government that shares some responsibilities and powers with the state governments, but is ultimately seen as the supreme law
* **judicial branch** – the federal and the state branches of government that interpret laws
* **legislative branch** – the federal and the state branches of government that pass laws
* **local government** – a government, including cities, municipalities, and counties, designed for serving local citizens on a small scale and focusing on municipal and local services
* **municipal** – relating to the running of a town
* **state government** – a government designed for managing state-level affairs, including maintaining state highways, upholding state laws, and collecting taxes

**Quick Check**

Question 1: Identify a service that would be fulfilled by a local government.

* **filling potholes in a community**
* defending the border from invasions
* managing state-wide higher education services
* resolving disputes between two states

Question 2: Compare how state governments and federal governments structure their different branches.

* States have a judicial branch and a legislative branch, but there is only an executive branch at the federal level.
* **State and federal governments have the same three branches of government, but they differ in size and scope.**
* States have an executive branch, a legislative branch, and a judicial branch, but they have little power compared to the federal government.
* States have an executive branch and a legislative branch, but the federal government alone has a judicial branch.

Question 3: In creating a Venn diagram to compare levels of government, what information can you convey?

* the relationship between different types of local government
* the conflicting relationship between state governments and the federal government
* the power of the executive branch as compared to the different levels of government
* **the similarities and differences between the different levels of government**

Question 4: Local governments would solely be in charge of which of the following services?

* **trash collection**
* civil service pensions
* military spending
* enforcing laws

Question 5: How might you critique the relationship between state and local governments?

* The relationship between state and local governments can be hyper-polarized.
* **State and local governments can come into conflict over who is responsible for which services.**
* State and local governments can provide too many services for customers to utilize.
* The relationship between state and local governments is faulty as there is little interaction between them.

**Lesson 3 – Local Government**

**Objective 1:** Describe how local governments receive their power under the Tenth Amendment as well as describe the structure of local governments.

**Big Ideas**: The Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was written to reinforce the concept of federalism in the new country. By its words, the states can create local governments. The Tenth Amendment states: The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

The Constitution provides a strong national government that is united. But through the Tenth Amendment, it also provides that states have the power to determine their local governments. Because the Constitution gives states this power, they can set up their local governments in any way they choose. Thus, in the U.S., local governments are structured differently in each state but always aim to perform the functions necessary to create a peaceful and prosperous existence for every resident.

Each state in the U.S. has its own constitution which describes how its local governments will be structured. Also, the state constitution describes what powers the local governments will possess. A state can change the form of its local governments through a state constitutional amendment if the local systems in place no longer serve the needs of the state.

The organization of a county varies from state to state. Sometimes the organization is based on population. Counties are called boroughs or parishes in some states. Also, the presence of counties will vary from state to state.

Counties are divided into townships or municipalities in different states. These units of government are structured differently in each state. Both townships and municipalities are smaller local units and are sometimes also called cities, towns, and villages.

There are some very specific governmental units in local communities. For example, a school board exists in most local governmental systems. Citizens are elected to administer the local school system.

**Objective 2:** Identify policy concerns at the state level.

**Big Ideas:** States bear more of the burden of addressing policy concerns than the federal government because state government is closer to the people and can better understand their concerns sooner than the federal government can.

**Infrastructure**: Maintaining the infrastructure of a state is very important for a variety of reasons. First, having well-maintained roads, bridges, and transportation structures in place allows residents of the state to travel to and from work and creates a productive, high-quality workforce. If states plan their cities and towns properly, they will attract more residents to live there and contribute money to the state in property taxes. Maintaining all other parts of the state’s infrastructure will allow states to earn the money to spend on higher educational institutions. It’s really a circle, in that the more the state maintains its property, the more people will want to live and work there and pay property tax there that the state can use to continue to provide these services.

**Economic Activity**: The more people who are attracted to a state, the more money the state will make. One strategy states use to attract people is to offer incentives to work in certain businesses. States also create labor policies concerning their workers. For example, if a state sets a higher minimum wage than the federal minimum wage, labor will be attracted to that state.

States understand that the more businesses they attract, the more people they will attract. Thriving business in a state, along with a good population, means that the state can make money to support those people and businesses. It also means that the state can grow and develop with the extra money it makes. States develop policies that attract businesses, such as offering property tax breaks.

Many taxing policies help states raise money to grow and thrive. Most states charge sales taxes on goods and services that are purchased. Sales tax is the most common way for states to make money. However, certain states, like New Hampshire and Oregon, don’t have sales tax as a source of revenue, and so they impose an excise tax on certain goods like tobacco, alcohol, and gas.

Environmental Policy: States realize that more people will be attracted to a state with a healthy environment, and the state will be able to grow and flourish. States use zoning policies to create neighborhoods and keep all areas the way the state planned them. Policies that promote one type of energy over another can provide jobs for the labor force and can dictate if a state will be more rural or more urban. Land use policies can increase the price of land in a state and attract more wealth to that state.

**Objective 3:** Analyze the powers and roles of city council members, including the mayor.

**Big Ideas:** The elected mayor and the elected city council have important roles in setting and executing local governmental policy, overseeing municipal operations, and managing local budgets.

A mayor is an elected official who must consider the needs and wants of their constituents when making decisions that affect the area. Along with the demands of constituents, the mayor must work with the legislative body in the municipality.

If a city or town chooses to govern by city council, each member of the city council will be elected by the residents. The city council is the lawmaking body of the city or town. Its members write and pass laws and ordinances that will help govern the area. City council members must work with the mayor to achieve their legislative goals.

**Objective 4:** Analyze the relationship between different types of local governments.

**Big Ideas:** The state constitution can set the type of local governments that will be formed in that state.

The council-mayor form of government creates two branches of government. The mayor is elected to serve as the executive and drafts the city/town budget, oversees all departments within the local government, and appoints executives to assist in the enforcement of all local laws and ordinances.

In the council-manager form of local government, the council is often comprised of elected officials. that meet and vote on laws and ordinances that will govern the town. A city/town manager is appointed by the members of the council. This person oversees the day-to-day management of each department that allows the city/town to function.

Usually, a commission is made up of from five to seven members, and it has both executive and legislative powers. As legislators, commissioners pass laws and ordinances that assist the functioning of the city/town. As executives, each member heads a department of the town and manages that department to make sure it is functioning according to the laws and ordinances passed. Today, less than 1 percent of cities and towns function with a commission. Most cities and towns want their executive and legislative branches to remain separate so that each branch can check the other branch and no one branch can become too powerful.

**Keywords**:

* **city/town commission** – the five to seven people who are individually elected to serve together as both the lawmakers and those who make sure the laws are executed
* **city/town council** – the people who are elected to enact laws for the city/town
* **city/town manager** – the person who is hired by the city or town to make sure the laws are enforced and the government runs smoothly
* **constituent** – a person who resides within an elected official’s state or district
* **county** – the largest of the local government divisions
* **excise tax** – a tax on specific items that are purchased, most commonly tobacco, alcohol, and gasoline
* **federalism** – the system of government in which a national government shares some responsibilities and powers with the state governments but is ultimately seen as the supreme law
* **infrastructure** – the public works that include transportation systems (roads, bridges, railroads, airports) and water systems essential for economic activity
* **mayor** – a person who is elected to be the head of a city or town
* **municipality** – provides the governance of a local area, smaller than a county; examples include cities, towns, and villages
* **ordinances** – laws passed by a local government
* **revenue** – the income received
* **sales tax** – a tax on items sold
* **school board** – elected citizens who make decisions to administer the local school system
* **special district** – a form of local government that provides one special service or type of services not covered by the county or municipality
* **tax** – a compulsory contribution made by residents to federal, state, or local revenue for goods, services, or some other transaction
* **township** – a type of local government that is a smaller division of a county in some states

**Quick Check**

Question 1: Describe the structure of government that the Tenth Amendment allows.

* **The Tenth Amendment allows states to make decisions about how they will be governed, such as by creating local governments.**
* The Tenth Amendment allows states to have more power over taxes than the federal government does.
* The Tenth Amendment acknowledges that the federal government has all the control over states and local governments.
* The Tenth Amendment states that local governments must contain townships within each state’s boundaries.

Question 2: Which of the following describes a difference between counties and municipalities?

* **Counties serve a larger portion of the state than municipalities do.**
* Counties can have mayors head them, while municipalities run national elections.
* Counties collect state taxes, while municipalities collect federal taxes.
* Counties are specialized boards, while municipalities serve a larger portion of the state.

Question 3: Identify a policy that states use to attract businesses.

* a high property tax policy on businesses
* strict land-use policies
* **a low minimum wage policy**
* a high minimum wage policy

Question 4: Analyze the difference between the roles of mayor and city council members.

* The mayor is the legislator, and city council is the executive branch.
* The mayor is the executive, and the city council members are the department heads.
* The mayor is the legislator, and the city council is the judiciary.
* **The mayor is the executive, and city council members are legislators.**

Question 5: Analyze the difference between the commission form of local government and the council-manager form of local government.

* In the former, the manager is the head executive, and in the latter, the mayor is the head executive.
* In the former, the commissioners are from England, and in the latter, the council is chosen by the governor.
* **In the former, the same people have equal voice on executive and legislative issues; in the latter, different people decide executive and legislative issues.**
* In the former, different people decide executive and legislative issues, while in the latter, the same people have equal voice on executive and legislative issues.

**Lesson 4 – Tribal Government**

**Objective 1:** Examine the interaction between tribal governments and national, state, and local governments.

**Big Ideas**: Before the first Europeans came to the Americas, there were Indigenous Americans. Indigenous Americans had a diverse culture that consisted of different tribes and nations.

**The National Government and Indigenous American Tribes**: Under the U.S. Constitution, Indigenous American tribes were treated as independent entities. Tribes were not taxed, the government established treaties with them to obtain their land, and Congress engaged with them in commerce in the same way it regulates commerce with other countries. Also, Indigenous Americans were not considered citizens of the U.S. until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is a part of the Department of the Interior and is the primary agency responsible for interacting with groups of Indigenous Americans. Rather than trying to change Indigenous Americans, the BIA attempts to promote the welfare of the people they serve. One example the BIA provides to support economic development is the Indian Business Incubators Program. It provides grants for the creation of business incubators. A business incubator is an organization that supports businesses during their startup period. Another area in which the BIA works with Indigenous Americans is gaming. Gaming is the business of gambling and casinos. This is an area in which national, state, and tribal governments interact.

**State Governments and Indigenous American Tribes**: Tribal governments have sovereignty over Indigenous Americans who are on tribal land. Therefore, the state government has no authority over tribal members on tribal land, unless the tribe gives the state this authority. However, the tribes do not have authority over people who are not Indigenous Americans. In the *McGirt v. Oklahoma* decision, the Supreme Court declared that a major portion of Oklahoma was still considered tribal land. As a result, the state lost the authority to prosecute criminal cases against Indigenous Americans in that area.

While states do not have authority over tribal land and the Indigenous Americans within those boundaries, they do have authority over Indigenous Americans when they are not on tribal land. Tribal members are also citizens of the states where they live, and they are entitled to all of the rights and benefits, such as voting, education, and social services.

**Local Governments of Indigenous American Tribes:** Tribal governments provide a host of local services such as:

* Fire protection
* Ambulance service
* Hospitals
* Law enforcement
* Education
* Water

In many of these areas, tribal governments provide services to tribe members and non-tribal members. For example, the Lighthorse Police of the Chickasaw Nation protects the safety of tribal members and anyone near tribal land. This is possible through cross-deputization agreements. Cross-deputization allows one law enforcement agency to “deputize” members of another law enforcement agency.

**Objective 2:** Examine how the U.S. government treated Indigenous Americans with respect to the treaty obligations it had with them.

**Big Ideas:** Under the Constitution, Indigenous Americans were originally considered citizens of their tribes and not citizens of the United States. Throughout its history, the United States has entered into a series of treaties with Indigenous American tribes. However, these treaties represent, for the most part, little more than broken promises.

In 1778 the United States signed the Treaty of Fort Pitt with the Delaware Nation. However, in 1782 members of the Pennsylvania militia attacked the village of the Delaware after they erroneously believed that the tribe had attacked white settlers. The result of this was another treaty where the Delaware surrendered more of their land.

**The Cherokee Experience:** In 1789, the United States and the Cherokee Nation entered into the Treaty of Tellico. Among its many provisions was a guarantee to Cherokee territorial integrity. Within forty years, the Cherokees were forced from their homes despite prior promises. The explicit promise to “guarantee to remainder of their country” was nothing more than words on a page.

Andrew Jackson’s Impact on Indigenous Americans: The policy of negotiating with Indigenous American tribes as sovereign nations began to change in the early 1800s. Andrew Jackson (president 1829-1837) did not believe the Indigenous American tribes were sovereign nations. He believed that the states had a right to govern the people that were inside their borders, including both U.S. citizens and members of Indigenous American tribes.

Jackson, like many White Americans of the time, viewed Indigenous Americans as uncivilized because their society and culture was different from that of European culture. Some Indigenous Americans desired to adopt the culture and practices of White Americans that they found useful. This was primarily seen in the Cherokee, Muskogee (Creek), Seminole, Chickasaw, and Choctaw nations. As a result of this, these tribes were referred to as the “Five Civilized Tribes.” Again the use of “civilized” in this context implied that since Indigenous culture was different than the culture of White Americans, it is inferior to it.

In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act. This Act allowed the president to negotiate with the Indigenous American tribes to cede land in the eastern parts of the U.S., in exchange granting them land in the western territories of the U.S.

In an effort to put pressure on the Cherokees to accept resettlement, Jackson cut off payments to the Cherokees that the United States was obligated to pay under the terms of previous treaties. In 1838 the U.S. Army began the forcible removal of the Cherokee Nation to what later would become the state of Oklahoma. Thus began the Trail of Tears, the dangerous and deadly journey of the Cherokees.

**Keywords**:

* **Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)** – the primary agency responsible for policies related to Indigenous Americans
* **Indian Citizenship Act of 1924** – the act that granted citizenship to all Indigenous people who had not already become citizens
* **Indian Removal Act** – a law passed by Congress designed to move Indigenous Americans from the areas in the eastern United States to the West
* **Indigenous Americans** – the first inhabitants of the Americas, prior to European explorers’ travels
* ***McGirt v. Oklahoma*** – the Supreme Court decision that determined that large portions of the state of Oklahoma were still considered to be part of the reservations of several tribes
* **sovereignty** – a person or government’s right to rule themselves
* **Trail of Tears** – the dangerous and deadly journey of the Cherokees from their traditional lands to present day Oklahoma
* **Treaty of Tellico** – an agreement between the U.S. government and the Cherokee Nation that gave Cherokee land to the U.S. government

**Quick Check**

Question 1: Which of the following best describes the change over time in the relationship between Indigenous tribal governments and the U.S. government?

* **Initially dominated by the U.S. government, their relationship is now more oriented toward equality.**
* Initially dominated by sovereign Indigenous tribes, their relationship is now more oriented toward equality.
* Initially characterized by equality, their relationship is now more oriented toward the U.S. government.
* Initially characterized by equality, their relationship is now more oriented toward Indigenous tribal governments.

Question 2: Which of the following statements best describes why interactions between tribal governments and local governments are often complicated?

* **Tribal land often crosses local and state government boundaries.**
* The national government eliminated the authority of local governments.
* State governments have eliminated the authority of local governments.
* Tribal land was dissolved and incorporated into local counties.

Question 3: How did most Indigenous Americans acquire U.S. citizenship?

* **through treaties and federal law**
* through treaties and state law
* through state and local law
* through state law and federal law

Question 4: Which of the following statements is the best critique of the U.S. government’s engagement in treaties with Indigenous Americans?

* The U.S. government engaged unfairly with Indigenous Americans, because Indigenous Americans were forbidden from adopting customs of White Americans.
* **The U.S. government engaged unfairly with Indigenous Americans because the U.S. government continuously broke the terms of treaties they entered into with Indigenous Americans.**
* The U.S. government engaged fairly with Indigenous Americans because they fulfilled the promises made in treaties.
* The U.S. government engaged fairly with Indigenous Americans because Indigenous Americans willingly relocated to new areas to avoid contact with White Americans.

Question 5: *Use the excerpt to answer the question.*

“And is it supposed that the wandering savage has a stronger attachment to his home than the settled, civilized Christian? Is it more afflicting to him to leave the graves of his fathers than it is to our brothers and children? Rightly considered, the policy of the General Government toward the red man is not only liberal, but generous. He is unwilling to submit to the laws of the States and mingle with their population.”

President Jackson’s sentiments expressed in the above text are most closely aligned with which of the following documents?

* U.S. Constitution
* Treaty of Tellico
* A Century of Dishonor
* **Indian Removal Act**

**Lesson 5 – Local, State, and National Issues**

**Objective 1:** Identify issues that are typically addressed at different levels of government: local, state, tribal, and national.

**Big Ideas**: Any policies the government comes up with to solve a problem are going to cost money. This is true at the tribal, national, state, and local levels of government, making taxes themselves an issue for all levels of government. If taxes are too high, people will move away from those heavily taxed areas; if taxes are low in certain places, people are more likely to move to those areas.

Some people say that only the people who are benefiting from the government’s services should pay. An example of this type of tax is a *user fee*. User fees are applied to individuals and businesses that use a government service. Think about toll roads. You may pay a fee to drive on a particular road or a bridge; individuals who do not use the road will not have to pay. Another example of a user fee would be a paid parking space in a city. We often find these user fees at the local government level.

Federal income taxes are called progressive taxes because the burden to pay them increases with the amount of money someone earns. The more you earn, the more you pay.

On the other hand, taxes paid on the consumption of goods or services, like sales tax, are considered regressive taxes. These taxes create more of a burden for those who earn less.

Property taxes are usually assessed based on the property’s value; if your property’s value goes up, you are going to pay more. In areas where there is great demand, property values go up, which means more money for the government to provide services. The opposite is also true; when communities are in less demand, property values go down and their governments get less money.

**Objective 2:** Evaluate the similarities and differences in governmental decision-making procedures at the local, state, national, tribal, and international levels.

**Big Ideas:** Regardless of the level of government, decision-making procedures follow the steps of policy making.

The first step is agenda setting. The agenda is a list of issues or concerns that an individual or an institution has regarding a problem that needs to be solved. The primary differences between the different levels of government are the area and people affected by their decisions. A mayor and city council have authority over a city, a governor has authority over a state, and the president and Congress are decision-makers for the federal government, which can trickle down to the state and local levels.

Formulation is the second step. This step deals with coming up with a solution to the problem. One important element of government decision-making is that those at the local level are most familiar with the issues in their community. They, therefore, are often better equipped to come up with local solutions.

The third step is adoption. Politicians do not always know the best strategy for adoption. However, using public opinion polls to find support for ideas plays a great role. Money is another consideration with adoption. Not everyone will want to pay for a policy, even if they think it might work.

Implementation requires coming up with procedures or actions for individuals, groups, or teams to perform.

Evaluation involves the critiquing of a policy by looking at how it has met predetermined standards or outcomes. This last step of the process is important because it will provide feedback to help improve the policy.

**Objective 3:** Develop a logical argument using examples from texts to support the idea that certain issues are better handled by either local governments, state governments, or the national government.

**Big Ideas:** A system that divides power between national and state governments is called *federalism*. Federalism was designed to prevent the federal government from holding too much power.

The three types of government are local, state, and national. Each level of government holds specific responsibilities and is led by different types of leaders.

* Local Government: Local governments handle issues that directly affect citizens. Local governments deal with traffic regulations, public transportation, driver’s licenses, roadwork, police and fire departments, employment, and crime. Mayors, city council members, police chiefs, and county judges are some of the elected officials delegated to handle local government issues.
* State Government: The Constitution guarantees states’ rights through reserved powers, or powers that are not explicitly given to the federal government. State responsibilities include the ability to administer elections, issue marriage licenses, regulate commerce within the state, and protect the public’s health and general welfare. Governors, state supreme court justices, and attorney generals are some of the elected positions that work on statewide issues.
* National Government: The powers that are given to the national government are stated within the Constitution. For example, the national government regulates foreign commerce, creates money, provides an army and navy, and declares war. Elected officials, such as the president and Congress, and Supreme Court justices determine countrywide issues.

**Objective 4:** Describe the various impacts of a recent government decision and decide if it was intended or unintended.

**Big Ideas:** The decisions government officials make impact citizens. Most of the time, these decisions have an *intended impact*, or a desired outcome. Government officials often base their decisions on what will benefit society. However, at other times, these decisions might have an *unintended impact* on society. While the intent and goal of democracy is to improve and protect the livelihood of citizens, sometimes intent can have unintended consequences.

On December 31, 1970, President Richard Nixon signed the Clean Air Act into law. With the passing of the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency implemented new measures and enforced stricter anti-pollution regulations. The government’s decision was intentional. It intended to reduce air pollutants to improve public health. However, the government’s decision also had an unintended impact on the automobile industry. To become compliant, the automobile industry invested in research and innovative technologies. The investment and implementation of emission-reducing devices led to an increase in automobile production costs. Those costs increased the cost of the automobile, which impacted consumers.

**Keywords**:

* **adoption** – the stage of the policy-making process where you try to get people to agree to your solution or policy idea
* **agenda setting** – the first step in the policy-making process, which involves getting people to pay attention to a problem
* **buy-in** – the idea that people in the policy-making process are invested in and agree to the policy
* **evaluation** – the critiquing of a policy by looking at how it was met with predetermined standards or outcomes
* **excise tax** – a tax added to the value of a good or service
* **formulation** – the second step of the policy-making process that deals with coming up with a solution to the problem
* **implementation** – the step in the policy-making process that requires coming up with procedures or actions for individuals, groups, or teams to perform
* **progressive tax** – a tax that increases the burden on an individual or business who has an increase in income or revenue
* **property tax** – a tax assessed on the value of property
* **regressive tax** – a tax that poses a bigger burden on those individuals and businesses that make less money
* **taxes** – a transfer of money from individuals and businesses to the government
* **user fee** – a tax based on the use of something

**Quick Check**

Question 1: Identify an issue that relates to all levels of government.

* parking
* education
* defense
* **taxes**

Question 2: Evaluate the difference between the national government and local governments.

* The national government is primarily concerned with education, and local governments are primarily concerned with defense.
* **The national government is primarily concerned with foreign affairs, and local governments are primarily concerned with affairs of their communities.**
* Local governments are primarily concerned with treaties, and the national government is primarily concerned with foreign affairs.
* The national government is primarily responsible for agenda setting, and local governments are primarily responsible for implementing policies.

Question 3: Which of the following develops an argument as to why the issue of public transportation is better handled by local governments rather than national governments?

* Public transportation is better handled by local governments because the national government does not have time to discuss public transportation.
* **Public transportation is better handled by local governments because it will directly- impact and provide services to people within a specific community.**
* Public transportation is better handled by local governments because it is explicitly stated so in the Constitution.
* Public transportation is better handled by local governments because the national government does not have enough resources to fund transportation projects.

Question 4: Which of the following describes intended impacts of a government’s decision?

* The government’s decision to implement FEMA to regulate air quality reduced air pollutants and improved public health.
* The government’s decision to pass the presidential disaster declaration reduced air pollutants and improved public health.
* **The government’s decision to pass the Clean Air Act of 1970 reduced air pollutants and improved public health.**
* The government’s decision to implement a Hazard Mitigation Program reduced air pollutants and improved public health.

Question 5: What is one reason the government decided to create the Environmental Protection Agency?

* People residing within Louisiana suffered severe damage from tornados.
* **People residing within high industrial urban areas were developing lung diseases.**
* People residing within Texas suffered severe storm damage from Imelda.
* People residing within industrial areas had homes damaged by smog.

**Lesson 6 – Monetary and Fiscal Policy**

**Objective 1:** Explain the tools and strategies employed by the Federal Reserve System to influence the U.S. economy, including monetary policy, open market operations, reserve requirements, and discount rate.

**Big Ideas**: The Federal Reserve System (the Fed) is the central bank for the nation. It is responsible for regulating member banks as well as formulating monetary policy. It serves as the bank for the federal government.

To ensure stability and growth, the Federal Reserve System employs a few tools to influence the money supply. These include:

* *open market operations* – buying and selling U.S. Treasury and other securities on the open market as a strategy to regulate the supply of money available in U.S. banks; allows the Fed to manipulate interest rates
  + Buying securities in the open market operations puts more money in the economy and allows interest rates to decline, making loans easier to obtain.
  + When securities are sold, there is less money in the economy. As a result, rates increase and borrowing decreases.
* *the discount rate* - When commercial banks and other financial institutions take short-term loans from the Federal Reserve Bank, the discount rate is the interest rate that they are charged.
* *reserve requirements* - central bank regulation that sets the amount of cash that banks must have in their vaults or at the closest Federal Reserve Bank; Reserve requirements are used by the Fed to increase or decrease the money supply in the economy and to influence interest rates.

**Objective 2:** Assess the ways monetary and fiscal policy impact the health of the economy and help achieve socioeconomic goals.

**Big Ideas:** *Monetary policy* is the power to control the amount of money in circulation. The Federal Reserve relies on several tools to execute its monetary policy, including open market operations, reserve requirements, and discount rates.

*Fiscal policy* is the power to tax and spend, and it refers to the government’s ability to influence economic conditions through spending and tax policies. To choose the correct policies, the government needs to know what’s going well in the economy and where problems might lie. To make those determinations, the government looks at key economic indicators.

**Economic Indicators:** Various metrics are used to assess, measure, and evaluate the overall health of an economy. The gross domestic product (GDP), consumer price index (CPI), and the unemployment rate are all examples of economic indicators.

* Gross domestic product (GDP) – the dollar measure of goods produced by the economy; indicates whether the economy is expanding by producing more goods and services or contracting due to decreased output
* Consumer price index (CPI) – a measure of the prices of goods and services within the economy
* Unemployment rate – measure of the percentage of individuals looking for employment

Policy and Socioeconomic Goals:

* Unemployment: When workers are unemployed, the problem not only impacts the individual and their families, but also impacts society and the economy. Fiscal policy solutions to unemployment may include job creation through government-funded projects or a reduction in the tax rates for individuals. Low unemployment is also a goal for monetary policy. A tool at the Federal Reserve’s disposal is to manipulate interest rates. By doing so, the economy will see either increases or decreases in borrowing, spending, and savings rates. With lower interest rates, individuals and businesses are willing to borrow and spend more. When businesses have more money, they can hire more workers and offer better benefits.
* Economic Growth: Economic growth is measured by how much the value of goods and services created by a country increases over a given period. Economic growth works in a cycle in which an increase in tax revenue can lead to investment in the public sector to improvements in overall quality of life. To correct a downturn and stimulate economic growth, monetary policy may utilize the option to lower interest rates. Reducing interest rates will spur spending, which injects cash into the economy.
* Inflation: When businesses incur an increase in their production costs, that increase is passed on to the consumer. This is called cost-push inflation. Inflation may also be caused by a surge in demand for a good or service if consumers are willing to pay more for the product; this is considered demand-pull inflation. During times of inflation, monetary policy can increase interest rates. Higher interest rates will in turn slow economic growth and curb inflation. Some economists argue that controlling the supply of money is the best solution to control inflation. A fiscal policy solution to curb inflation would include an increase in income tax so the government would have more revenue to put toward spending.

**Objective 3:** Describe regressive, progressive, and proportional taxes; the purpose of each tax type; and how tax revenues are used for the public good.

**Big Ideas:** Taxes are mandatory contributions made to the federal government by individuals and businesses. There are three categories of tax systems in the U.S.: regressive tax, progressive tax, and proportional tax. The revenues collected through taxes are used for the public good to fund and support the U.S. federal government and the services it provides to its citizens. Tax revenues are used for building and maintaining the infrastructure within the country such as roads, schools, and public transportation as well as government-funded programs such as Medicare and Medicaid, Social Security, and defense spending.

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**Objective 4:** Explain why the power of taxation by a government system is important.

**Big Ideas:** The American economy relies on the power of taxation to provide our system of government with the revenue it needs to effectively protect the citizens from foreign invaders, regulate commerce within our country, as well as provide services to the public. While federal governments rely mainly on income taxes for its revenue, state governments depend on income and sales taxes. Most city and county governments use property taxes to generate revenues.

The main types of taxes that are collected by governments include:

* Income tax: A tax collected by the federal and some state governments on financial income generated by individuals and businesses.
* Corporate tax: A type of tax collected by the federal government that is imposed on the profit of a business.
* Capital gains: A tax collected by the federal and some state governments on any capital gains or profits made by people or businesses from the sale of certain assets including stocks, bonds, or real estate.
* Property tax: A tax collected by a local government and paid for by the owner of a property. This tax is calculated based on property and land values.
* Inheritance tax: A type of tax levied by state governments on individuals who inherit the estate of a deceased person.
* Sales tax: A state tax on goods or services that are consumed or purchased.

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**Keywords**:

* **capital gains** – tax collected by the federal and some state governments on any capital gains or profits made by people or businesses from the sale of certain assets including stocks, bonds, or real estate
* **central bank** – a financial institution given control over the production and distribution of money and credit for a nation or a group of nations
* **consumer price index (CPI)** – a measure of prices of goods and services within the economy
* **corporate tax** – a type of tax collected by the federal government that is imposed on the profit of a business
* **discount rate** – the rate of interest that a central bank charges on its loans and advances to a commercial bank; also known as the bank rate
* **economic indicator** – a macroeconomic measurement used by analysts to understand current and future economic activity and opportunity
* **excise tax** – a tax on specific items that are purchased, such as gasoline and airfare
* **federal funds rate** – the interest rate that commercial banks charge each other for overnight loans
* **Federal Reserve System** – the central bank of the United States responsible for regulating member banks as well as formulating monetary policy; serves as bank for the federal government and is also known as “the Fed”
* **fiscal policy** – the power to tax and spend
* **gross domestic product (GDP)** – a dollar measure of the goods produced by the economy
* **income tax** – a tax collected by the federal and some state governments on financial income generated by individuals and businesses
* **inflation**– a condition of the economy in which prices become so high that purchasing power diminishes
* **inheritance tax** – a type of tax levied by state governments on individuals who inherit the estate of a deceased person
* **Internal Revenue Service** – the government agency that collects federal income taxes in the United States
* **macroeconomics** – the branch of economics that studies the economy as a whole
* **monetary policy** – the steps a nation’s central bank takes to control the quantity of money and credit available in an economy as well as the methods by which new money is supplied
* **open market operations** – the activity by a central bank to give liquidity in its currency to a bank or a group of banks
* **progressive tax** – a tax based on the taxpayer’s ability to pay where higher tax rates apply to higher levels of income and a lower tax rate on lower-income earners
* **property tax** – a tax collected by a local government and paid for by the owner of a property. This tax is calculated based on property and land values.
* **proportional tax** – a tax system where all levels of yearly income are taxed at the same rate
* **recession**– a condition that occurs when there are two economic quarters of negative GDP
* **regressive tax** – a tax that decreases when income increases
* **reserve requirements** – the central bank regulation that sets the minimum amount that a commercial bank must hold in liquid assets
* **sales tax** – a state tax on goods or services that are consumed or purchased
* **tariffs** – a tax by a country on an imported good
* **unemployment rate** – a measure of the percentage of individuals actually looking for employment who cannot obtain employment

**Quick Check**

Question 1: Which statement best explains U.S. monetary policy?

* Monetary policy ensures steady job growth.
* **Monetary policy includes the steps the nation’s central bank takes to ensure a healthy economy.**
* Monetary policy prevents future economic downturns and financial panics.
* Monetary policy includes the exchange rate on the U.S. dollar in foreign markets.

Question 2: Which statement is the best example of the Federal Reserve employing open market operations?

* decreasing the federal budget proposed by the president
* decreasing the salaries of federal workers
* buying more commercial banks
* **buying securities to put more money into the economy**

Question 3: Assess the following statements. Which one best describes monetary policy?

* **Monetary policy focuses on the money supply.**
* Monetary policy was discredited in the 1970s.
* Monetary policy focuses on spending and taxation.
* Monetary policy tries to create the highest economic growth rate.

Question 4: Which statement best describes a proportional tax?

* **a tax where all levels of yearly income are taxed at the same rate**
* a tax that places levels of income into brackets
* a tax on consumable goods or services such as gasoline
* a tax where lower-income earners are charged at a higher rate

Question 5: Which of the following best explains why taxation is important to a government?

* to collect money for foreign aid
* to fund businesses and make a profit
* **to collect revenue and provide for the public good**
* to collect revenue for personal citizen salaries

**Lesson 7 – Public Policy Portfolio**

**Objective 1:** Analyze how government makes decisions and forms public policy.

**Big Ideas**: One of the primary goals of government is to create public policy. Public policy is a set of laws, rules, and regulations that are designed and implemented to solve public problems. The process can be complicated, and many scholars divide the process of policy making into five distinct stages.

**Stage 1**: **Agenda Setting -** Someone brings a proposal to the attention of elected officials.

**Stage 2: Policy Formation** – Committees and subcommittees in Congress begin writing the policy. During this time, members of Congress study potential solutions to problems and may hold hearings, at which they obtain information from experts, or conduct investigations to discover what actions are recommended. The disagreements that members of Congress have among each other can make it difficult for a consensus to form on potential legislation. Frequently, members disagree on so many details that policies become vague instead of precise. When Congress writes vague policy, executive agencies need more information about how to implement the policy. This information frequently comes from interest groups, creating an iron triangle. In an iron triangle, an interest group has significant power over how legislation is written and implemented.

A diagram of a government

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**Stage 3: Decision-Making** - The House of Representatives and the Senate each must pass the same bill, or proposed law. If their bills differ in language, a committee with members from each chamber meet to work out the differences. After the bill passes both chambers, it goes to the president for a signature. If the president agrees to the bill, they will sign it, and it becomes law. If the president does not agree, they can veto it. A bill vetoed by the president can still become law if two-thirds of each house agrees to override the veto.

**Stage 4: Policy Implementation** - Once a policy is approved by Congress and signed by the president, it goes to the executive branch for implementation. This occurs because the Constitution states that the president is the chief executive, and it is their role to execute (or implement) the law.

**Stage 5**: **Evaluation** - Government agencies study if a specific policy creates the change it was meant to make. If a policy works well, then it is usually left alone. However, many policies create new, unexpected problems. When this happens, government agencies recommend changes in the policy to Congress. If Congress agrees that a newly identified problem needs correction, it will revisit the policy to make changes.

**Objective 2:** Analyze how government policy is changed.

**Big Ideas:** Frequently, policy evaluation is forced by a *sunset provision*, a clause of the policy that provides an expiration date. After the date, the policy will expire automatically unless it is expressly renewed by Congress. Placing sunset provisions in policies ensures that Congress and other government agencies study how effectively a policy fixed the problem as intended. To do this, a formal evaluation is required. After the evaluation, Congress may decide to let the law expire, allow it to continue as is, or make revisions and implement it again.

Review congressional changes to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to understand how evaluation creates policy change.

* The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) made it illegal to restrict the right to vote based on race or color; it banned literacy tests that some states used to prevent Black citizens from voting; and it allowed the federal government to oversee the state-based voter registration process. The original VRA included a sunset provision requiring the act to expire in 1970 unless Congress renewed it. This forced Congress to evaluate the policy and to make changes if necessary.
* 1970 Evaluation and Amendments - Congress evaluated the impact of the VRA, agreed that it was working well, and decided to strengthen it. One improvement was to abolish state requirements that citizens live in their state for a certain amount of time before registering to vote. Another change was to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 for federal elections. Congress approved these changes to the VRA, and President Nixon signed the amendments into law in 1970. These amendments included a new sunset provision, and the act was due to expire in 1975.
* 1975 Evaluation and Amendments – Congress reevaluated the VRA decided to strengthen it further. To protect populations in the language minority, the 1975 VRA amendments added them as a protected class. Along with prohibiting the right to vote based on race or color, those whose primary language was not English would also be protected. Congress mandated that districts with large numbers of language minorities provide ballots in those languages. Congress continued its use of the sunset provision and extended the VRA with these amendments until 1982.
* 1982 Evaluation and Amendments - Again, Congress agreed that the law was still necessary and that it should be strengthened. Although many groups had clearly protected voting rights, some states were making it difficult for those voting rights to have meaning. Some states were gerrymandering districts so that racial minorities (usually Black people) could not form the majority in a district. To fight gerrymandering, Congress added amendments in 1982 that prohibited vote dilution, or the deliberate weakening of votes for specific racial groups. After these amendments made vote dilution illegal, many more Black representatives were elected to Congress. Congress also created a new sunset provision. The updated VRA was now due to expire in 2007. In 2007, President Bush signed a 25-year extension of the VRA without any major changes.

**Objective 3:** Learn how to use cost-benefit analysis to evaluate policy effectiveness.

**Big Ideas:** One way to analyze policy is to use a cost-benefit analysis (CBA). The CBA focuses on how much a policy will cost to implement and compares that cost with the expected financial benefits.

The basic method of CBA is adding up the total cost of a policy, subtracting the economic benefits, and looking at the total. If the total is negative (that is, if the policy costs more than the benefit it provides), the assumption is that it should not be implemented. If the total is positive (if the policy costs less than the benefit it provides), it is more likely to be supported.

**Keywords**:

* **agenda** – a list of items that Congress will discuss and vote on
* **bill** – a proposal for a new law
* **cost-benefit analysis** – a way to analyze the effectiveness of public policy by studying whether or not it will lead to a stronger economic condition
* **evaluation** – the study of how well a policy works and what changes need to be made
* **gerrymandering** – the manipulation of the boundaries of election districts to gain an unfair electoral advantage
* **hearing** – a meeting held by Congressional committees or subcommittees to find out what knowledgeable people think about a potential policy
* **implementation** – the process of enacting public policy
* **iron triangle** – a figurative relationship among Congress, bureaucracy, and interest groups
* **override** – the ability of Congress to pass a law after a president’s veto if two-thirds of each house agrees
* **public policy** – the government laws and regulations designed to help solve problems
* **veto** – the action taken by executive heads to block legislation from continuing
* **protected class** – a defined group of people protected from discrimination by law
* **sunset provision** – a statement built into a law that provides it with an automatic expiration date
* **vote dilution** – the use of gerrymandering to prevent racial groups from electing a candidate of their choice

**Lesson 8 – Governmental Decisions**

**Objective 1:** Evaluate the ways in which governmental policies and decisions impact society.

**Big Ideas**: One of the ways in which people feel the impact of governmental decisions is while shopping for basic goods and needs. The *consumer price index (CPI)* is used to track the prices of the goods that are commonly consumed. When the government makes decisions, prices will often change in response to new policy.

Governmental actions can also be measured by the changes in our country’s gross domestic product (GDP). When domestic production of goods and services is high, that often means that unemployment is low. This is because workers are needed to ensure this production takes place. When people are employed, they have money to spend, which will often drive even more production.

The government will often make decisions to try to stimulate GDP growth, such as signing tax cuts into law or sending stimulus checks to Americans. result in Americans having more money to spend. This increased consumption and production causes employment to increase.

Another tool of government to help stimulate GDP is an increase in government spending. Spending money on public works will often help create new jobs and drive production.

Decisions taken by the government will often be reflected in the response of the stock market. The stock market is made up of private companies that trade stock in different markets in the United States. People will often buy more stocks when they feel there is stability in the country. If the government announces a policy that may cause people to lose jobs, it will often be reflected with a decrease in the stock market.

Security is another way people feel the impact of the government in everyday life. People will often use crime rates as a measure of security. If crime rates increase, people may feel that the government is not doing its job in ensuring security.

**Objective 2:** Analyze the role of federal agencies throughout our country’s history.

**Big Ideas:** The term *federal agency* refers to federal departments, regulatory commissions, and corporations that are part of the executive branch. A federal agency serves to help execute the law.

The Departments of Treasury, War, State, and Defense were the first four federal agencies created when the U.S. was founded. The first federal agencies fulfilled the tasks that a new nation needed, from paying pensions to wounded revolutionary soldiers, to sending ambassadors to represent the United States in other territories.

As the needs of the country changed, new agencies were required to help execute the law.

Regulatory agencies oversee economic activity to ensure proper competition for all and to prevent a company from becoming a monopoly. The Interstate Commerce Commission became the first federal regulatory agency. Regulatory agencies were also created for the purpose of ensuring the safety of consumers. The Food and Drug Administration was established to create standards for safe food, medicine, and cosmetic consumption.

**Objective 3:** Develop an argument to defend a specific set of budget priorities at different levels of government.

**Big Ideas:** The president, governor, or local executive oversees the entire executive branch. One of an executive’s most important jobs is preparing a budget that includes the money necessary to fulfill the administration's agenda and complete their job.

At each level of government, the executive works with a team to create a budget proposal. At the federal level, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) works with the president and executive agencies to account for the money they need to do their jobs. The OMB must consider three factors when creating the budget:

* discretionary spending - spending done by choice and authorized by Congress; Discretionary spending includes new presidential initiatives and the money that agencies need to complete their duties.
* nondiscretionary spending - spending that automatically occurs due to prior legislation, such as unemployment benefits, Social Security, and Medicare.
* interest that needs to be paid on the U.S. debt

At all levels of government, the second step in the budget-making process is congressional review and approval. The legislative branch authorizes funds for the government. The budget is divided and discussed in committees, which decide how much money should be given to specific sectors. After debate, the members of the legislative branch resolve any problems, and an appropriations bill is passed.

Priorities of the Federal Government: The executive and legislative branches may have different priorities, and members within the legislative branch may have different priorities from each other. They must work together to solve problems to pass a budget to keep the government and its programs running.

Because of the nature of nondiscretionary spending, this is always a priority in the federal budget. Since the national government takes care of the entire country, it focuses on spending that is necessary for the safety and economic well-being of all citizens.

The Spending Priorities of the State: When it comes to preparing and passing the budget, each state has different necessities and thus different budgetary priorities. Factors such as location, needs, tasks, social demographics, ideology, and public opinion all influence a state’s budget. However, every state must make sure to fulfill basic necessities. States often prioritize spending on hospitals and health care. The state budget also includes money for higher education and training programs. Since each state earns a different amount of revenue, each state varies in its distribution of funds. Governors and state legislatures have to resolve their different priorities and ultimately agree on what they believe benefits the state.

Local Government and Spending: The spending of the local government is similar to the state in that its focus is the welfare of its citizens. Independence from the state when prioritizing the budget is important, since local communities have specific needs that are not shared by the state as a whole. This allows local governments to fulfill the needs of their community.

**Keywords**:

* **appropriations bill –** a bill that authorizes the spending of government funds
* **bureaucracy** – the group of departments, agencies, and commissions that make up the executive branch
* **consumer price index (CPI)** – a measure of prices of goods and services within the economy
* **discretionary spending** – the spending that is done by choice and must be authorized by Congress
* **gross domestic product (GDP)** – a dollar measure of the goods produced by the economy
* **inflation** – a condition of the economy in which prices become so high that our purchasing power diminishes
* **mandate** – an official instruction to do something
* **monopoly** – the exclusive possession or control of the supply of or trade in a commodity or service
* **nondiscretionary spending** – the spending that is automatically occurring from prior legislation
* **recession** – a condition which occurs when there are two economic quarters of negative GDP
* **regulatory agency** – an independent body of the government established to set standards in a specific field or industry
* **stimulus checks –** the money provided to Americans which aims to stimulate demand for goods and services resulting in higher gross domestic product
* **stock** – a piece of a company that is bought and sold

**Quick Check**

Question 1: Which of the following best evaluates the economic impact of decisions the government makes on society?

* reviewing rates of hospitalizations and deaths
* reviewing changes in foreign stock markets
* tracking changes in presidential approval rating
* **tracking changes in the consumer price index**

Question 2: Why is tracking GDP a good way to evaluate the impact of governmental decisions on society?

* The GDP is a marketplace in which stocks are bought and sold.
* **The GDP can help track changes in employment.**
* The GDP can help track the stability of prices.
* The GDP can help measure the total production of goods and services around the world.

Question 3: Which statement best analyzes the role of federal agencies through time?

* **Federal agencies have evolved over time as the need for the enforcement of specific tasks have arisen.**
* Federal agencies have been created only during times of national crisis.
* Federal agencies have only increased since the first presidential administration, as new agencies are created with each new president.
* Federal agencies have decreased over time as the country has grown.

Question 4: Which statement best develops the argument defending why states should prioritize spending on hospitals and health care?

* Governors are required by state legislatures to include hospital and health-care funding in their budget proposals.
* Citizens often vote for spending on hospitals and health care to be prioritized.
* The funding of hospitals and health care is part of the executive branch’s nondiscretionary spending.
* **It is the job of the state to provide for the welfare of its citizens, which includes ensuring access to hospitals and health-care programs.**

Question 5: Why does the executive branch at each level of government begin the budget-making process?

* because the executive branch has the power to fund government spending
* because the executive branch is the only branch responsible for making and passing the budget
* **because the executive branch enforces the law and knows how much money is necessary to execute the law**
* because the executive branch has access to information that other branches lack

**Lesson 9 – Public Policy Issues**

**Objective 1:** Describe a public policy issue in your local community.

**Big Ideas**: *Public policy* is the collection of laws and regulations that address problems and apply to all citizens. These policies can be created at the national, state, or local levels, and they address a wide variety of topics. While policies at all three levels impact the lives of citizens, some argue that local policies have the most impact. That is because local public policy will impact citizens at the city or county level, where people spend most of their time.

At a local level, there is a wide variety of topics that could be the focus of public policy. These issues range from housing to transportation to education and more. Government officials can work with stakeholders to come up with a list of potential solutions to an identified issue. Once government officials have several solutions to review, a committee may be created to make a decision about which is the best solution. No one solution is perfect, so the committee would be tasked with evaluating all possibilities.

Once a decision has been made about which solution is best, it is then the work of the government, in consultation with other organizations, to carry out the plan, including a critical first step of making sure a funding source is identified.

**Objective 2:** Analyze a contemporary public policy issue while integrating information from diverse sources.

**Big Ideas:** Public policy is the collection of laws and regulations that address the problems facing society. The power of public policy is that it is able to identify problems, evaluate solutions, and implement change for the betterment of society.

Foreign policy addresses issues with other nations. Problems that exist within a country’s borders are addressed through domestic policy.

Problems can be brought to the attention of government in a variety of ways. Citizens must realize that there are certain issues that will not, and should not, be addressed by the government. When deciding which problems to address, government officials need to think about the reach of their powers as well as other considerations. Some common policy areas to be addressed by the government include education, the environment, economics, transportation, energy, public safety, and public health.

There can be an almost endless number of solutions for a problem, and there are many factors that influence which solution may be selected. Government officials who are making these decisions need to consider how their constituents may be affected by the decision that is made.

Once a solution is selected, departments develop the regulations and allocate funds.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is an example of public policy because these are issues that affect all citizens in society, and rules and regulations need to be developed to carry out this act. Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act tries to help address the problem of vehicle emissions by improving public transit systems by implementing upgrades and investing in electric vehicles.

**Keywords**:

* **activist group** – a collection of people who have a common interest to promote
* **committee** – a group of people who come together to make decisions about issues
* **constituent** – a voter in a local community
* **domestic policy** – the set of public policies that address problems within a country’s borders
* **foreign policy –** how a nation’s government deals with other nations
* **public policy** – any government policy designed to help solve problems
* **stakeholder** – an individual who has a particular interest in an issue

**Quick Check**

Question 1: Which of these describes a public policy issue that could be addressed at the local level?

* amending the driving age
* income tax reform
* interstate commerce
* **vehicle emissions**

Question 2: Why would government officials work with stakeholders to come up with possible solutions to issues?

* Stakeholders are constituents, so they will be voting on these issues.
* Stakeholders belong to activist groups that care about some of these issues.
* **Stakeholders are people who have interest in a particular issue.**
* Stakeholders are paid to conduct research to provide to government officials.

Question 3: Which group would make the decision about which solution is best?

* **committee**
* constituents
* activist group
* lobbyists

Question 4: Analyze the role of the executive branch in developing public policy.

* **The executive branch develops the rules and regulations to carry out an act.**
* The only role the executive branch plays is when the president signs a bill.
* The executive branch develops the foreign policy that informs public policy.
* The executive branch writes primary sources after analyzing data.

Question 5: How does the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act try to help address the problem of vehicle emissions?

* **by improving public transit systems by implementing upgrades and investing in electric vehicles**
* by improving public transit systems by repaving unsafe roads
* by improving public transit systems by rebuilding aging bridges
* by improving public transit systems by replacing damaged and aging pipes

**Lesson 10 – Foreign Policy**

**Objective 1:** Compare the foreign policy powers given to the three branches of the United States government.

**Big Ideas**: Congress and the president share the bulk of the responsibilities of foreign policy in dealing with other nations on behalf of the United States. The Supreme Court weighs in on items that might violate the Constitution and acts to resolve disputes in foreign policy between the branches of government and other nations. The system of checks and balances allows the three branches of government to take on powers that are established in the Constitution. Some of the powers are explicitly stated, while others have been assumed over time. For each power assigned to a branch of the government, another branch has the ability to check that power to ensure that no one branch retains complete authority in foreign affairs.

**Foreign Policy and the Legislative Branch**: Congress is given explicit and implied powers in the Constitution relating to foreign policy, including:

* the power to declare war
* power to regulate interstate and foreign trade
* Senate is responsible for accepting or rejecting treaties and approval of presidential appointments

**Foreign Policy and the Executive Branch**: As head of the executive branch, the president is assigned duties that allow for the opportunity to work with leaders from other nations. The president is also the leader of the military forces. The president has the power to:

* send troops into other countries without a declaration of war by Congress
* negotiate treaties with other nations
* enter into executive agreements between the U.S. and other nations to sustain positive foreign relations
* appoint diplomats and cabinet positions involved in foreign affairs

Foreign Policy and the Judicial Branch: In matters of foreign affairs, the Supreme Court resolves policy differences that arise between the legislative and executive branches.

* The court is given original jurisdiction in all cases that related to constitutional or federal law.
* The Supreme Court reviews cases when disputes arise between executive and legislative branches.
* The Supreme Court has the ability to review any dispute that arises due to treaties made with other nations, as well as cases where the U.S. is being sued by another nation.

**Objective 2:** Differentiate between the United States foreign policy characteristics and basic goals.

**Big Ideas:** How the U.S. deals with other nations is referred to as *foreign policy*. The basic goals of foreign policy are national security, promoting democracy and human rights, educating the world on American values, and supporting diplomats and representatives. By engaging in foreign policy, the U.S. can promote peace and work side by side with other nations on common interests.

The U.S. has taken the stance of *isolationism* when that is in the best interest of the country at the time. For example, when the U.S. government was first established, or after the Great Depression and World War I, the country had to focus on domestic issues instead of international ones.

Over time, the U.S. government’s approach to foreign policy has evolved. By becoming involved in the interests and affairs of other nations, the U.S. can now be characterized as having an *internationalism* stance on foreign policy. U.S. foreign policy is now characterized as creating a balance of powers within the world to ensure that the U.S. is not taken advantage of and is participating in world issues as needed.

**Objective 3:** Interpret foreign policy issues that impact local community and state interests.

**Big Ideas**: Although foreign policy is often associated with overseas affairs, local communities are also impacted. For example, employment overseas may be economically advantageous regarding cheap labor; however, there are consequences to smaller communities within the U.S. Between the years 2001 and 2018, it was reported that U.S. trade agreements with China eliminated 3.7 million jobs for Americans. Seventy-five percent of these job losses were in manufacturing.

In the 1970s, President Nixon established an embargo on U.S. soy imports to Japan. Although this embargo only lasted a week, Japan quickly looked to Brazil for soy. Japan invested quality technology into the soy business in Brazil. This took an economic toll on the United States and created an ongoing environmental concern for Brazilian land.

Although the federal government has taken initiative to handle immigration issues, states like California and Texas handle immigration more frequently due to their geographical location. In this regard, state issues and policies often correlate with the influx of Mexican immigrants that arrive in the United States.

**Objective 4:** Summarize the influence that individuals, businesses, labor and interest groups, and other organizations have on United States foreign policy.

Big Ideas: The secretary of state, secretary of defense, and the national security advisor advise the president on decisions relating to a variety of international issues. Labor unions, nonprofit organizations, and lobbyists within the U.S. also are involved in foreign policy decisions.

After World War II, people in the United States realized how destabilizing war was in their own communities. People wanted to focus on how to resolve issues that directly affected them. Labor groups in the U.S. began pushing to have their voices heard during the Cold War. Labor unions critiqued how military spending for war resulted in inflation and scaled down wage increases and government programs.

Lobbying is when representatives from a variety of industries advocate to legislators to vote on political issues on behalf of their organization. Lobbyists attempt to persuade members of Congress to consider their ideas when voting on certain issues.

**Keywords**:

* **checks and balances** – the powers and the ability to check the other branches are given to each one of these three branches to ensure that no one section of the government could obtain excessive unchecked power
* **diplomacy** – working on international relations with other countries
* **executive branch** – the branch of government that enforces laws, consisting of the president, a cabinet appointed by the president, and various agencies and advisors
* **foreign policy** – how a nation’s government deals with other nations
* **internationalism** – supporting political and economic cooperation with other countries
* **isolationism** – remaining separate from other countries in political affairs and interests
* **judicial branch** – the branch of government that interprets laws, consisting of the U.S. Supreme Court and federal court system
* **legislative branch** – the branch of government that passes laws, consisting of the two houses of Congress
* **original jurisdiction** – the authority of the court to hear cases for the first time based on evidence

**Quick Check**

Question 1: How do the foreign policy powers of Congress compare to the foreign policy powers of the president?

* Congress can regulate trade, while the president can use judicial review.
* **Congress can declare war, while the president can make treaties.**
* Congress can appropriate money, while the president approves diplomatic appointments.
* Congress can command the military, while the president appoints diplomats.

Question 2: How does the Supreme Court participate in matters of foreign policy with the legislative and executive branches?

* **by performing judicial review in cases involving constitutional law between branches and other nations**
* by overseeing the appropriation of funds that is decided on by Congress
* by determining whether the president is able to take military action against other nations
* by approving the Senate’s majority vote for treaties and diplomatic appointments

Question 3: How does U.S. foreign policy today differentiate from foreign policy during the country’s founding?

* **The country’s foreign policy has shifted from an isolationism perspective to an internationalism perspective.**
* Foreign policy has gone back and forth between internationalism and isolationism perspectives.
* Foreign policy has shifted from an internationalism perspective to an isolationism perspective.
* Foreign policy has not changed throughout the country’s history

Question 4: The EBSCO article “The Two Prices of Soy” discusses Nixon’s decision to stop selling soy to Japan. Interpret which of the following describes the impact of Nixon’s decision.

* Nixon’s decision to stop selling soy to Japan has caused the U.S.’s soy business to prosper.
* Nixon’s decision to stop selling soy to Japan caused Japan to invest in agriculture in its own country.
* **Nixon’s decision to stop selling soy to Japan has caused environmental damage to Brazil’s agriculture.**
* Nixon’s decision to stop selling soy to Japan has caused a major soy shortage in Japan.

Question 5: Which statement summarizes the impact lobbyists have on foreign policy?

* A major soda company lobbies for soda to be provided in public schools.
* Lobbyists engage in demonstrations in order to have legislators understand how their company is affected.
* Lobbyists advise the president on what decisions to make on foreign policy issues.
* **A major soda company lobbies for free trade laws to expand their company.**