

Lesson 1

Nation and State

Governments make and carry out rules. They also settle arguments about rules. The rules that governments make are called laws. Towns and counties have governments. States, tribes, and nations do too.

In the United States, it is the **citizens** who give authority to governments.

Authority is the power to make people do things. This power is given through laws. The men who set up our country made the first and most important law. It is the Constitution of the United States (you read about this in Unit 1). The Constitution is the highest law in our country. All other laws are built from it. It says that our government will stand up for people's rights. Our government will also work for the good of all the people.

The leaders who wrote the Constitution wanted people to have the right

to change the law. Changes to the Constitution are called amendments. The first ten amendments are called the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights is about personal rights. It gives us freedom of speech. It says that all people can practice whatever religion they choose. It says that each citizen has a right to a fair trial. Later, the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the same rights as men.

The Constitution sets up the national government in Washington, D. C. It sets up state governments. It makes the states share power with the national government. Only the national government can do some things. Only the states can do other things. Some things both can do. The sharing of power in this way is called federalism.

Only the national government can declare war or make treaties with other nations. The national government can issue money. It can oversee trade among the states. The states cannot do these things.

States can ratify amendments to the Constitution. States must look after the health and safety of their people. Both nation and state can collect **taxes**. They can both set up courts and protect people's rights.

Citizens choose government leaders by voting in elections. A citizen must be eighteen years old to vote. The states hold the elections. A person who is elected will serve one term. A term is a set number of years. To serve more than one term, a person must be elected again. Elections and terms make sure that leaders do not get too strong. They must not forget to do what the people want them to do.

The Constitution also keeps governments from getting too much power. It works like this. The governments are set up in three branches. They are the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Each branch has different powers. The legislative branch makes laws. Congress is

the legislative branch of national government. The executive branch makes sure that laws are followed. The president is the leader of the executive branch. The judicial branch decides what the laws mean when people cannot agree about them. The Supreme Court and lower courts make up the judicial branch.

The branches have separate powers, but they are not **independent** of each other. The Constitution sets up checks and balances. These allow each branch to make sure that the others are doing a good job. For example, Congress can make a law, but the president can **veto** it if he does not think it is right. If enough members of Congress still want the law, they can vote to ignore the veto. Congress can also **impeach** a president. The judicial branch can say that the laws that Congress made are **unconstitutional**. The courts can also say that the president is doing things that are wrong. The president picks out the Supreme

Court **justices**. Congress votes on whether or not it agrees with the choices. These rules check the powers of each branch. They make sure that no branch of government gets too strong.

Vocabulary

citizens (n.), members of a state or nation

impeach (v.), to accuse or bring charges against

independent (adj.), free; not under the power of others

justices (n.), judges who settle arguments about laws and crimes

taxes (n.), money collected by a government to pay for services

unconstitutional (adj.), against the Constitution

veto (v.), to reject

Lesson 2

South Dakota Becomes a State

At first, there were only thirteen states. A new part of the country was called a territory. When enough people lived there, they could ask Congress to make it a state. There were good reasons for wanting statehood. People who lived in territories could not vote for their leaders. Their governors were not elected. They were appointed, or put in power, by the president of the United States. The people could not check the power of a governor by voting. Also, they could not elect members of Congress to vote for laws in Washington, D. C.

This was a problem in Dakota Territory when Nehemiah Ordway was governor. Ordway and his **political** friends moved the capital out of Yankton. The year was 1883. Yankton was in the southern half of the territory. Most of the people lived in this area. Bismarck became the new capital.

It was in the north and central part of the territory. The people could not vote the governor out of office to show that they were not happy. Leaders in the south thought it was time for a change. They asked Congress to make southern Dakota a state all by itself.

People had talked about splitting up the territory for a long time. One plan called for a split down the middle. This would make the states of Eastern Dakota and Western Dakota. Another plan made the southern half into a state named Dakota. The northern half would become Pembina Territory. Yet another plan carved out three states. They were North Dakota, South Dakota, and the Black Hills. All of these plans failed.

Now leaders in the southern half of Dakota Territory got down to work. **Delegates** from around the area met in Sioux Falls. They worked on a plan for one state called South Dakota. The men wrote a

state constitution. They asked Senator Benjamin Harrison from Indiana to put a bill into the United States Congress. The bill asked that South Dakota be made a state. The bill did not pass. The same thing happened two years later. The reason was simple. Most people in Congress were Democrats. They knew that most people in Dakota were Republicans. They did not want more Republicans in Congress.

Things changed when Benjamin Harrison became president. He was a Republican and a friend of Dakota. Soon the bill for statehood passed in Congress. It was called the Omnibus Statehood Bill. It said that the states of North Dakota and South Dakota could be created. The year was 1889.

Once again, delegates met in Sioux Falls. They wrote a final state constitution. Voters in southern Dakota gave it their okay that fall. They chose Pierre as the state capital. They elected Arthur Mellette as

governor. He was the last territorial governor, and he was a good one. The people wanted him to stay.

In November 1889, President Harrison signed the law that made both North and South Dakota into states. Before he did so, he shuffled the papers on his desk. He covered up the names on the papers. No one knows which state he signed into law first. The Dakotas are twins—born at the same time. They are listed in alphabetical order, though. North Dakota comes first. It is said to be the thirty-ninth state. South Dakota is said to be the fortieth, but nobody knows for sure. They are equals.

Pierre was to be the capital for just one year. During that time, voters could think about it. Where did they want to put the **permanent** seat of government? Some people thought Pierre was the perfect spot. It was in almost the exact center of the state. Other people pointed out that Pierre might be in the center of the state but it was not in

the center of population. Most people lived in the eastern one-third of South Dakota.

It would take two more elections to decide what town would be the permanent capital. Many towns wanted to be the capital. Government brought jobs to town. It gave a place **prestige**. The first election was held in 1890. Huron challenged Pierre for the honor. Pierre won again. In 1904, Mitchell tried to win the capital. Again, Pierre won.

People were getting tired of these challenges. They cost a great deal of money. They kept people on edge. The state legislature put a stop to them. It voted to build a permanent capitol. Up until this time, the state capitol had been a wooden building. Now it would be a stone building worthy of the seat of government. Today the South Dakota capitol is a treasure that all citizens can visit.

Vocabulary

delegates (n.), representatives; people who speak for the people who elected them

permanent (adj.), long-lasting or constant

political (adj.), having to do with government work

prestige (n.), honor or esteem

Lesson 3

State Government

State government is important in our everyday lives. It helps to keep schools, hospitals, roads, and prisons running. It sells fishing and hunting licenses. It tests drivers to see that they know the rules of the road. It makes sure that doctors have the right education. State government even decides how many days you will go to school each year.

South Dakota government is like the national government. It has three branches. One is called the legislative branch. The others are the executive branch and the judicial branch. Each branch has powers to check the others. State legislators make up the legislative branch. Together, they make state laws. They decide how to spend state money. They have the power to **override** a governor's veto. They can impeach a governor.

South Dakota voters elect the legislators. Voters pick people from their part of the state. Citizens have to let legislators know their wishes. Legislators are loyal to the people who elected them. They try to make laws that will be good for those people. Each legislator serves a term of two years.

The South Dakota Legislature is bicameral. That means that it has two groups with equal power. One group is called the senate. The other is the house of representatives. Most South Dakota laws start as bills in the house or senate. A member of the house or senate brings a **bill** to the legislature. The legislature votes to make it a law or reject it.

The citizens of South Dakota can make or reject laws, too. They do this by initiative and referendum. People who have an idea for a new law start by writing it down. Then they ask people to sign it. If enough people sign, voters must vote on the

law in an election. This is called an initiative. A referendum is used when people do not like a law passed by the legislature. If enough people question the law, it is brought to the voters. This is called a referendum. In this way, the people can check the power of the legislature.

The leader of the executive branch is the governor. The governor carries out state laws. He or she makes sure that the rules of the state constitution are followed. South Dakota voters elect governors for terms of four years. The same person may not serve more than two terms in a row. Governors have many powers. They can **pardon** a criminal. They talk to the national government and to other states. They can call the legislature together. The governor can also suggest laws and veto bills.

The governor runs the executive branch. Many people help him or her do the work of the state. Some of these people are elected. For example, the state treasurer is

elected. He or she watches over the state's money. The governor **appoints** other helpers. These people make up the **cabinet**. Cabinet members run the **departments** of government. One is the Department of Transportation. It builds state roads.

The judicial branch is the court system. The courts settle arguments about law. They set punishments for those who break the law. South Dakota's court system has two basic levels. One is the supreme court. The other is the circuit courts.

The Supreme Court of South Dakota is the highest court in the state. The governor appoints five justices. One is a chief justice, or head judge. Four are **associate** justices. The supreme court has the power to rule on acts of the legislature. It also has the power to say that actions of the governor are unconstitutional. Most cases in front of the supreme court are **appeals**. They come from the circuit, or district, courts.

Circuit courts are trial courts. They hear cases dealing with people's rights and with crimes. The state is divided into regions. These are called circuits. Voters in each region elect circuit judges. Judges serve a term of eight years. Each circuit also has other judges who handle small cases. These judges are called magistrates.

Vocabulary

appeals (n.), cases from a lower court asking a higher court to review

appoints (v.), names to a position; gives a job to

associate (adj.), having equal powers

bill (n.), a form or draft of a law

cabinet (n.), a group who gives advice

departments (n.), parts of the whole

override (v.), to ride or go over

pardon (v.), to free from punishment

Lesson 4

Tribal Government and Citizenship

Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota societies have three units. These are bands, tribes, and nations. Bands are called *tiyospayes*. They are small groups that are usually related to each other. A group of bands joined together is called a tribe, or *oyate*. A nation is all the *oyates* together. In the old days, each band had a leader and a holy man. It had a police force and special societies. These groups together made and kept the laws.

Things changed in the 1800s. First, the United States government created “Head Chiefs.” This meant that only one leader, or chief, could do business for each tribe or nation. Then the reservations were set up. The old bands and tribal units were not followed. Instead the Bureau of Indian Affairs made laws for the tribes.

Then things changed again. It was 1934. The federal government passed a new

law. It gave tribes the right to set up governments. These new governments would be like other governments in the United States. On the reservations, tribal members wrote constitutions and voted on them. They set up governing councils. They elected representatives. The **system** is still used today. In some ways, it is like the old days. Today there are again three units.

At the tribal level is the tribal council. On each reservation, tribal members elect officers. The officers are a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a secretary, and a treasurer. There are also representatives. They come from each **district** on the reservation. Council members are then put on **committees**. These groups make sure the work of government gets done. The tribal council can speak for all tribal members. It can speak for the tribe with state and federal governments.

Council representatives report to their **communities**. They do this in district councils. These are like the tribal council but smaller. They meet each month. They talk about things at the local level. Then their representatives take their ideas to the tribal council.

South Dakota tribes also have the National Sioux Council. It is made up of delegates from each tribe in South Dakota. They meet each year. They talk about matters of importance to all the tribes.

Tribal government also has a judicial branch. Each reservation has its own courts. They are similar to circuit courts. There is also an appeals court. Five tribal governments set it up. This was done in 1978. It is called an **intertribal** appeals court. The Cheyenne River, Sisseton, Lower Brule, Crow Creek, and Standing Rock reservations are part of this court.

Tribal governments and state government have to work side by side. This

relationship is not always easy. To help, South Dakota set up the Office of Tribal Government Relations. This office is in Pierre. The head of it is called a commissioner. He or she works with tribal leaders.

Citizenship

Government is about people. It is about making their lives safe and whole. Each person can take part. The best way is by using the right to vote. By voting, you can pick people to represent you in tribal, state, or national government. You can choose people you think will do a good job. To do that, you need to look at their goals for government. We vote for **candidates** whose ideas are like our own. Political parties help us know what things are important to candidates. The most popular parties are the Democratic and Republican parties.

How can you make a difference when you are not yet old enough to vote?

You can be a good citizen. What is a good citizen? Good citizens follow the rules of society without being forced. They find out about important issues. They let the government know when it is doing a good job and when it is not. Good citizens vote. They take pride in country, state, and tribe. They work to fix things that are not right. Good citizens give time and energy to make communities a better place.

Vocabulary

candidates (n.), people seeking to be elected

committees (n.), small groups of people with jobs to do

communities (n.), social groups sharing government and culture

district (n.), a part of a territory; a region

intertribal (adj.), between tribes

system (n.), combined parts of a whole