

LESSON 2



We the People

PREVIEW

Focus on the Main Idea

Citizens of the United States elect representatives who make and enforce laws.

PLACES

Washington, D.C.

VOCABULARY

government
republic
represent
democracy
citizen
Constitution
federal
legislative branch
Capitol
executive branch
White House
judicial branch
Supreme Court
amendment
Bill of Rights



People from all over town have gathered at your school tonight. They are here to talk about problems in the local park. They want to know why the mayor doesn't work harder to keep the local park clean and safe for everyone. You know that your mom has been thinking about this problem. You wait for her to speak up.

Once your mother starts talking, you notice that many people here seem to like her ideas. Later, a group of people stop to talk to your mom. She's as surprised as you are when you hear their request. They've just asked your mom to run for mayor.



Summarize As you read, look for details to summarize how the government of the United States is structured.

A Government for the People

The **government** is made up of the rules, or laws, that we follow and the people who run our country. The government often does important jobs for us. For example, in many places the government makes sure that we have clean water to drink. The government builds and maintains our roads. It delivers our mail. It sets aside land for parks and playgrounds. The government tries to make sure that people

- 1 have safe, pleasant
- 2 places to live.


The United States is a republic. In a **republic**, the leaders are elected.

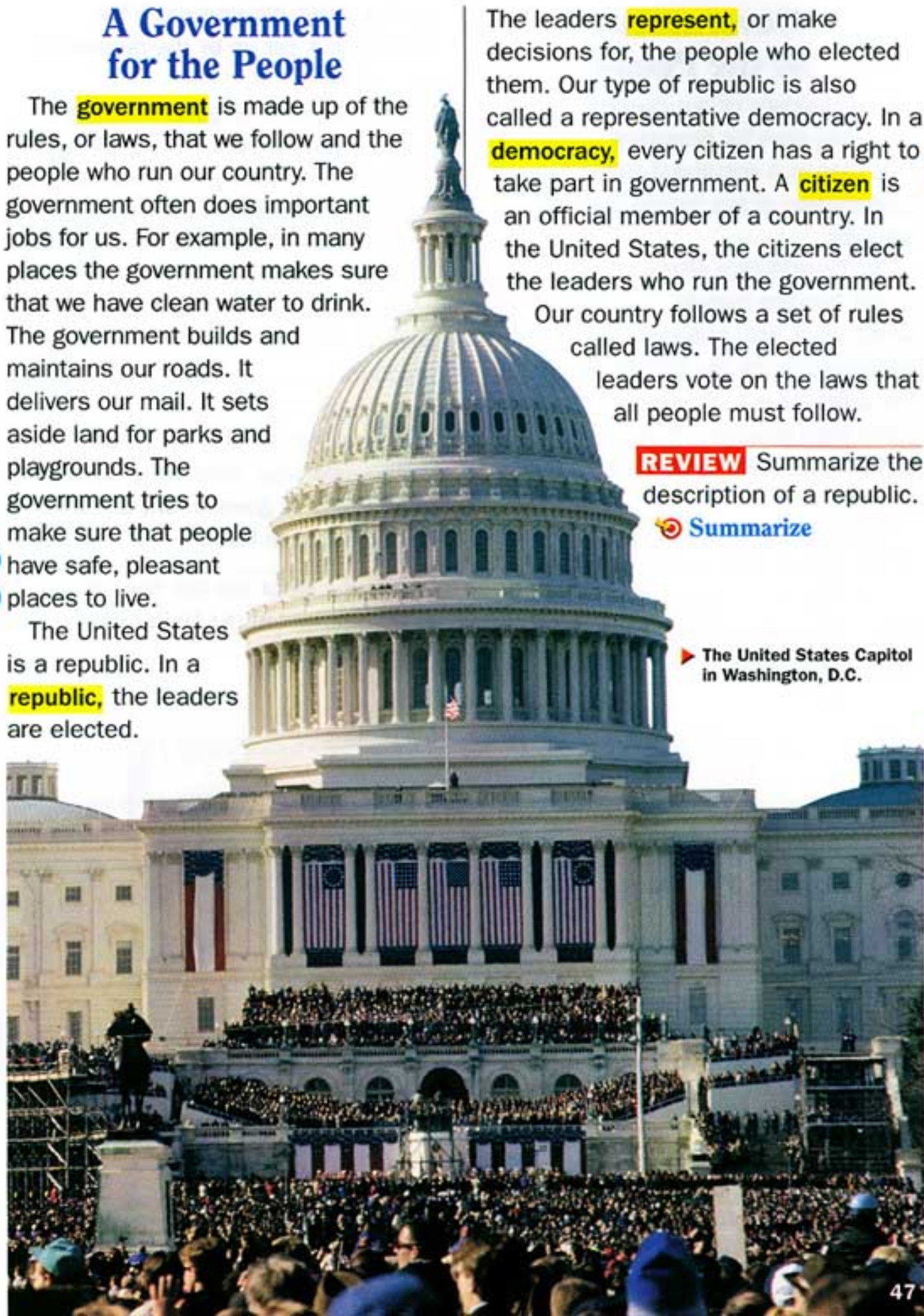
The leaders **represent**, or make decisions for, the people who elected them. Our type of republic is also called a representative democracy. In a **democracy**, every citizen has a right to take part in government. A **citizen** is an official member of a country. In the United States, the citizens elect the leaders who run the government.

Our country follows a set of rules called laws. The elected leaders vote on the laws that all people must follow.

REVIEW Summarize the description of a republic.

 Summarize

 The United States Capitol in Washington, D.C.



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Government by the People

The founders of our country set up a very wise plan for governing our nation. This plan is a document called the **Constitution** of the United States of America.

The Constitution starts off with the words “We the People . . .” These three words show how important the idea of democracy is for the United States. The power of our government does not come from government leaders. It comes from citizens who elect those leaders.

There are three levels of government in the United States. The first level is the local government. The local government includes village, town, city, and county governments. The second

level is state government—the government set up by the people of each state.

The third level of government is the national government—the government of our entire country. The national government meets in the capital city of the United States, **Washington, D.C.**

The Constitution explains how the national and state governments share power. A system of government in which the national and state governments share power is called a **federal** government. The Fact File on the next page tells more about the three levels of government and the leaders at each level.

REVIEW What are the three levels of government in the United States?

 Summarize

The Three Levels of Government



Local

Village, town, city, and county governments



State

Government set up by the people of each state



National

The government of our entire country

FACT FILE



Three Levels of Government

National

- ★ The President of the United States is the head of the national government.
- ★ The President gets authority to run the country from the United States Constitution.
- ★ Presidential duties include suggesting laws, making budgets, and choosing people to manage the services that the country needs.
- ★ The President is also the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.
- ★ Most of a President's decisions must be approved by Congress.

State

- ★ State governments are run by governors.
- ★ Governors get authority to run their state governments from state laws and the state constitutions.
- ★ Most of the laws that affect our daily lives, like driving laws, come from state governments.

Local

- ★ A city, town, or village is run by a top official. This official is often called a mayor, but may have a different title, such as village manager. **8**
- ★ Mayors get their authority from the people and the state constitutions.
- ★ Some mayors have the responsibility to appoint people to manage city services. **9**
- ★ City services may include providing police and fire protection, running the schools, and making sure that the water supply is clean and safe. **10**



The Three Branches of Government

The Constitution describes the organization of the national government. The United States government has three branches. These branches are the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judicial branch.

The **legislative branch** is the part of the government that makes our nation's laws. Congress is the legislative branch of the United States government. Congress has two parts. One part of Congress is the House of Representatives, which is also called the House. The Senate is the other part of the United States Congress.

The Congress meets in the building known as the United States **Capitol**.

The citizens of each state elect members to both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Each state has two senators. The senators are elected for six-year terms. The number of representatives for each state depends on the state's population. The larger the population, the more representatives a state has in the House of Representatives. For example, California has a large population, so it has fifty-two members in the House. Alaska has a small population. It has only one member in the House. Representatives are elected for two-year terms.

11

12

The Three Branches of Government



Executive
White House



Judicial
Supreme Court



Legislative
United States Capitol



Supreme Court Historical Society/Richard W. Strauss, Smithsonian Institute

► The United States Supreme Court is made up of nine judges, appointed for life.

The **executive branch** is in charge of enforcing our nation's laws. The President is the head of the executive branch. United States citizens vote to elect the President. The President serves a four-year term. A President can be reelected only once. The President lives and works in the **White House**.

The President has other duties besides enforcing the nation's laws. The President is in charge of our nation's armed forces. The President also suggests laws for Congress to pass.

The executive branch also includes the Vice-President. The Vice-President presides over, or heads, the Senate.

The **judicial branch** is in charge of

interpreting our nation's laws. Judges in the federal courts decide whether the laws follow the Constitution. Our nation's highest court is called the **Supreme Court**. The nine judges who serve on the Supreme Court are called justices. Supreme Court justices and other federal court judges are appointed by the President and approved by the Senate. Once approved, all of these judges can keep their jobs for the rest of their lives. The United States Supreme Court meets in the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C.

REVIEW Why do you think the President can be reelected only once?

Draw Conclusions

15 16

The Flexibility of the Government

The United States government is flexible. That means that changes can occur. The government can be changed by laws and amendments. An **amendment** is a change to the Constitution. Amendments are passed by Congress and must then be approved by a majority of the states.

A number of amendments have been added to the Constitution since it was first written. The first ten amendments to the Constitution are known as the

► Congress in session

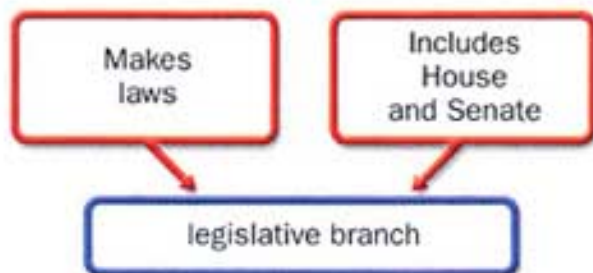


LESSON 2

REVIEW

Check Facts and Main Ideas

1. **Summarize** On a separate sheet of paper, make a chart like the one below. Use it to summarize the government's other two branches.



2. What is the United States Constitution, and why is it important?

Bill of Rights. These amendments guarantee such freedoms as freedom of press, freedom of religion, and freedom of speech. Over time, our government has become a stronger, more representative democracy because of our amended Constitution.

REVIEW Why was it necessary to have an amendment that guaranteed freedom of speech? **Draw Conclusions**

Summarize the Lesson

- The United States government has three levels: local, state, and national.
- The United States government has three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial.
- The United States government is structured according to the Constitution. It lists duties of the branches and describes how power should be shared between the national and state governments.

3. Describe each of the three levels of government.
4. How can the Constitution be changed?
5. **Critical Thinking: Draw Conclusions** The United States Constitution was written in 1787. Since then, there have been fewer than thirty amendments to the Constitution. What does this say about the original Constitution as a plan for government?

Link to



Art

Make a Poster Make a poster inviting people in your community to a meeting of your local government. Include details about the meeting, including where and when the meeting will be held.

DANIEL INOUYE 1924-



In 1959 Hawaii became a state. Daniel Inouye (ih NOH way) was Hawaii's first representative in Congress. He was also the first Japanese American to be elected to either the House or the Senate.

Inouye's father had moved from Japan to Hawaii. Inouye's mother grew up in Hawaii. As an adult, she encouraged her family to meet and vote on family matters. **1**

Daniel valued this experience. He also valued the different races and cultures of Hawaii and often spoke out against disrespect of cultural differences.

As a soldier in World War II, Inouye led troops in a battle to rescue his fellow American soldiers. During the battle, Inouye lost his right arm.

As both a representative and later as a senator from Hawaii, Inouye has continued to strengthen democracy by working for respect among all Americans.

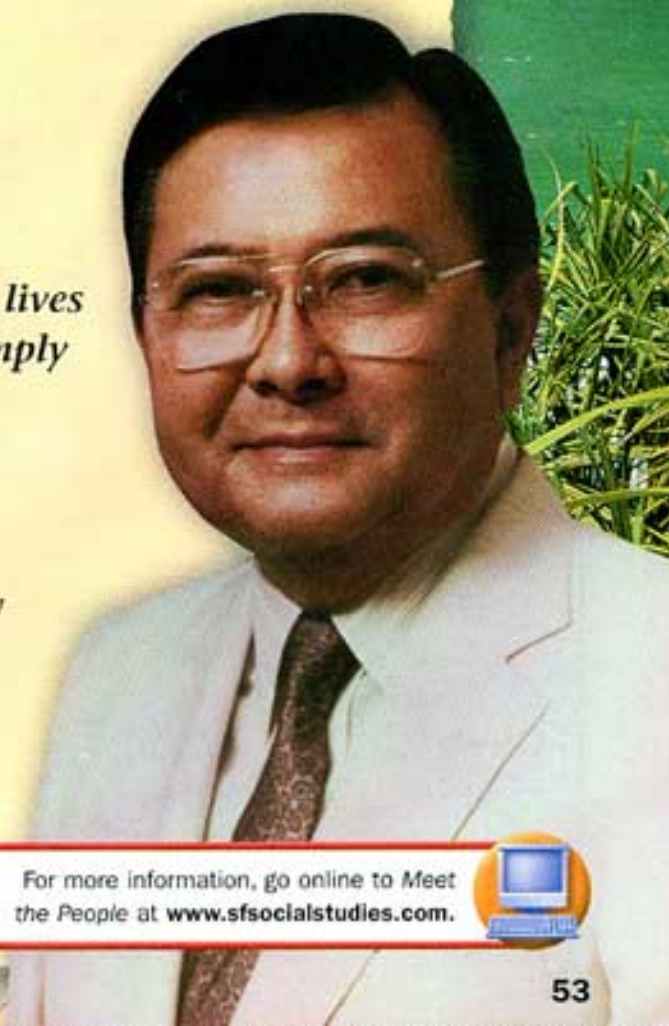
"You can make a difference in your lives and in the lives of others if you simply care enough to try...." **2**

Learn from Biographies

An experienced politician once told Inouye that it was important to follow the Golden Rule: Treat others the way you want to be treated. Why is this good advice?

BIOFACT

Because of his bravery in war, Inouye won the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest award given by the United States government.



For more information, go online to Meet the People at www.sfsocialstudies.com.





Map and Globe Skills

Read a Time-Zone Map

What? Building railroads changed the way people used time. Before railroads crossed the country, each town and city set its own time. People would note when the sun was at its highest point in the sky. At that time, people would set their clocks to noon. However, the sun appears to travel across the sky from east to west. So noon would be a different time in a neighboring area.

Having slightly different times in different towns caused trouble for people making train schedules. The railroads came up with a new idea. They would establish time zones. In each time zone, clocks would all be set to the same time. The United States adopted this plan in the 1880s. It is the basic plan we use for setting our clocks today.

Time Zones of the United States





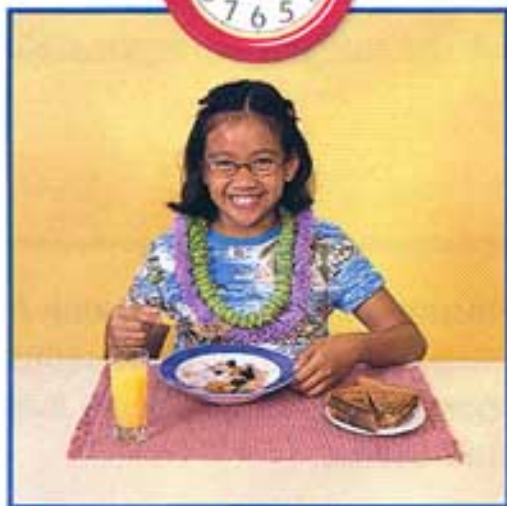
Why? You can best understand time zones by looking at a time-zone map. A time-zone map shows the boundaries of the time zones across a continent or for the entire Earth. Earth is divided into 24 time zones. Each time zone is an hour behind its neighbor to the east and an hour ahead of its neighbor to the west.

How? Look at the time-zone map. Note that the boundaries of each time zone are drawn with purple lines. Each time zone is shaded with a different color. Find the clocks on the map. There is one clock for each time zone. Notice that the clocks show that the time in each zone is different by one hour from the time in the zone next to it. The names of the time zones are

also given with each clock. What is the name of the time zone where you live?

Think and Apply

- 1 What time does this map show for the Pacific time zone? the Central time zone? The Eastern time zone?
- 2 When it is 10:00 A.M. in New York, what time is it in Portland?
- 3 If you lived in New York and you needed to call your friend in Portland at 8:00 P.M. Pacific time, what time would it be in New York when you called?



Hawaii



Texas