



Lesson 18.4 “New Hampshire State Legislature”

Unit 18: Civics and Government Today

Lesson Objectives

- Students will define the two parts of the New Hampshire state legislature and “meet” their legislators.
- Students will identify core parts of New Hampshire’s legislative process through a simulation game.
- Students will reflect in writing about existing laws and how they, as citizens, could change them and will contact the appropriate legislator with a proposal.

Lesson Competencies

- I can analyze primary and secondary sources and draw appropriate conclusions. (Moose SS)
- I can identify, explain, and analyze the core civic practices and foundational principles that guide governments and communities. (Moose SS)
- I can describe how citizens can participate in the government. (Moose SS)

Essential Questions

How have New Hampshire’s people shaped its government?

Focus Questions

What are the responsibilities of federal, state, and local government?
How do people act as good citizens in a democracy?

Estimated Time

Two 40-minute class sessions

Materials & Equipment

“Real or Not? New Hampshire State Laws” for educator use
“New Hampshire General Court Fast Facts” for printing or projection
Class set of “Our Legislators;” additional copies of House Representatives if needed for large district
“Follow that Bill” for printing or projection; six-sided game die
Scissors for cutting out pieces
Access to Unit 18, Learn It! [“State and Local Government”](#)



Educator Introduction & Rationale

In New Hampshire, the legislative branch is called the General Court. The N.H. General Court is known as a citizen legislature because the people who serve are not professional politicians. The General Court is divided into two parts: the N.H. House of Representatives and the N.H. Senate. The N.H. House of Representatives has 400 people in it. Each town is allotted a certain number of representatives based on the size of its population. With 400 representatives, the N.H. House is the second largest representative body in the United States; only the U.S. House of Representatives is larger. Representatives are elected every two years. The N.H. Senate has just 24 senators, making it one of the smallest state senates in America. The state is divided into 24 senate districts, and one senator serves for each district. Senators are elected every two years, just like representatives.

This is the fourth lesson in Unit 18: Civics and Government Today. It is recommended that students complete the learning objectives in "Lesson 18.3: Federal and State Governments" in order to have the necessary background information about the three branches of government.

In this lesson, students focus on who makes up New Hampshire's citizen legislature and how they do their main job: transforming ideas into bills and bills into laws. An activation about unusual state laws opens the learning activity. After learning more about the N.H. House of Representatives and Senate, students investigate the N.H. General Court website to find their state representatives and senators. A board game simulating the process of creating and passing legislation helps small groups of students engage with the complicated twists and turns of the legislators' work. The lesson closes by asking students to reflect on how they might change one of the laws from the activation and which of their legislators they would contact to initiate that process.

Two reinforcement activities are suggested for students who need more time with the objectives of the lesson. Two extension activities are recommended for students who are ready to contact their state legislators and learn more about their work. Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of the document. You may wish to preview these with your students.

Learning Activity

Activation

Is this a real law? Read each of the statements from “Real or Not? New Hampshire Laws” and ask students which they think are from real laws and which they think are not from real laws. Discuss what makes them think that. Then, reveal which are the three real laws and which is the fake law.

Student Reading

Citizen legislature. Before beginning Direct Instruction, project the chart “[Branches of Government](#).” This can be accessed on page 1, Unit 18, Learn It! “[State and Local Government](#).” Remind students that, like the federal government, state governments are divided into three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. Then have students read page 2.

Direct Instruction

Who makes the laws for New Hampshire?

Explain that the **legislative** branch is the one that is responsible for creating laws. The people that do this work are called legislators.

Legislator comes from two Latin root words: legis (law) and lator (proposer). This word is another reminder that our system of government—democracy—is based on an ancient system. The **legislature** is the whole group of legislators that make up the Senate and the House of Representatives. These are the same words used at the federal level. But in New Hampshire, the legislature is referred to as the General Court.

If students need more time with information about the state legislature, display “New Hampshire General Court Fast Facts” and review them together.

Conduct a whole group search of the N.H. General Court using the nonprofit, nonpartisan website Citizens Count, found at www.citizenscount.org/elected-officials, to find the representatives and senator who serve the area where students live. Once you choose your location, be sure to scroll down and find the “NH Senate” and “NH House” information. Using chart paper, a white board, or the provided “Our Legislators” handout find and record:

- The legislators’ names
- If they serve in the House or the Senate
- When they were elected and how many years they have served
- Background information such as occupation, education, or other interesting facts shared on the site.

Teaching tip: If your district has more than 4–6 legislators, be sure to make enough copies of the worksheet to meet the needs of a larger district. Additionally, consider dividing up legislators so groups of students investigate different ones then present to the class. Alternatively, select a few legislators for the class to focus on.

Teaching tip: This is a good place to pause if dividing the lesson across two sessions.



Guided Practice **Legislation game.** The journey an idea takes to become a law is complicated. Most ideas never become laws. Play “Follow That Bill!” as a whole group or in small groups to develop an understanding of the legislative process. Be sure to read the rules together ahead of time and prepare the game pieces.

Teaching tip: Project the game board on a white board. Attach the game pieces to magnets to move them around the board for a whole group experience.

**Independent
Practice &
Reflection**

What would you change? A lot of the work legislators do involves making changes to existing laws. Ask students to look at the three real laws from the Activation and choose one that they would change. What would they change about it? Or would they want to eliminate it completely? Why? Ask students to write a paragraph answering:

- Which law will they change?
- Why they would change it?
- Which legislators will they contact. Would they contact a house representative or a senator? Why?

Propose a change. Put the students’ reflection into action. Help the class decide on one or two outdated existing laws that should be changed to better serve New Hampshire and its citizens. Work together to draft a proposal based on the questions above to send to a state representative or senator. Alternatively, legislators have suggested that recommending a day to honor a NH person who has made contributions to the state or nation is a helpful proposal to make.

Reinforcement

1. **Legislature fact sort.** Print and cut “New Hampshire General Court Fast Facts” into a sort activity. Set out the N.H. House of Representatives and N.H. Senate as category labels. Mix the facts together and challenge students to put them in the correct category.
2. **Build the legislative “train.”** Cut “Legislative Train” into twelve even squares and shuffle the pieces. Ask students to put the puzzle back together.

Extension

1. **Who are your legislators?** What else do students want to know about their state legislators and the work they do? Create a list of interview questions and then work together to write a friendly letter asking the legislator to answer the questions and return the responses to the class. Mail or email it to state representatives and state senator. Publish the answers in a school or classroom newsletter. Additionally, you might invite them to your classroom or meet them if you go to the state house on a field trip.
2. **Build the perfect pizza.** Develop student understanding of the debate, negotiation, and compromise involved in the legislative process with this activity developed by the Washington State Legislature Civic Education Program:
<https://leg.wa.gov/media/ihwou0xz/the-perfect-pizza.pdf>.

Supporting Materials

- Laws and Rules at-a-Glance. www.nh.gov/glance/laws-rules.htm
- Lorenca Consuelo Rosal, *The Liberty Key: The Story of the New Hampshire Constitution* (1986). Inspiration for "Follow That Law!"



Standards

“Moose on the Loose” Content:

- ✓ Students will understand that New Hampshire today is a modern, diverse state with a rich culture and thriving economy. (3-5.T8.1)

“Moose on the Loose” Skills:

- ✓ Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence (3-5.S1.2)
- ✓ Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions (3-5.S2.1)
- ✓ Understanding and Participating in Government (3-5.S6.1, 3-5.S6.2)

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ Civics and Governments: Structure and Function of United States and New Hampshire Government (SS:CV:4:2.1, SS:CV:4:2.2)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Civic and Political Institutions (D2.Civ.1.3-5, D2.Civ.4.3-5)
- ✓ Processes, Rules, and Laws (D2.Civ.13.3-5)
- ✓ Taking Informed Action (D4.8.3-5)

Common Core ELA:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.4.3)
- ✓ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas in Informational Text (RI.4.7)
- ✓ Text Types and Purposes in Writing (W.4.1, W.4.1a, W.4.1b, W.4.1c, W.4.1d)

Lesson Vocabulary

amend	(verb) To revise or change
amendment	(noun) An addition to an existing document; in the U.S. Constitution, the amendments come after the original document
bicameral	(noun) A legislature that has two parts; the U.S. Congress is bicameral because it has the House of Representatives and the Senate
bill	(noun) In government, a draft version of legislation that is under debate and not yet law
branch of government	(noun) A section of government with its own purpose; the U.S. government has three sections of the government with different responsibilities that support each other to create, examine, and enforce laws
citizen legislature	(noun) A group of people chosen or elected to make the laws for a colony or state; different from a common legislature because individuals are paid very little and usually have other jobs
committee	(noun) A group of people who make decisions and plans about a specific topic or issue
deliberative session	(noun) A time to explain, discuss, and debate proposals in government
democracy	(noun) A government ruled by majority vote of the people
General Court	(noun) The official name for the New Hampshire state legislature
government	(noun) A group of people that have the power to make and carry out laws for a community
governor	(noun) The leader of the executive branch of a state government
House of Representatives	(noun) One of two legislative chambers; usually larger than the Senate
law	(noun) A rule that regulates the actions of members of a community
legislative	(adjective) Describing the people or branch of government that makes laws
legislative branch	(noun) The section of government that makes laws
legislator	(noun) A person elected to serve in either the House of Representatives or Senate

legislature	(noun) A group of people chosen or elected to make the laws for a colony or state
Senate	(noun) One of two legislative chambers; usually smaller than the House of Representatives
sponsor	(noun) In government, a member of the House or Senate who officially presents a bill to the legislature
veto	(verb) To reject something; in government, to reject the final version of a bill passed by the legislature