

# THE TREE OF LIBERTY

The U.S. Constitution was written so that no part of the American government could become too powerful and overwhelm the other parts. During the Revolutionary War, patriots in Boston staged a protest by a big elm tree, so the tree became a symbol of fighting for a new, better country. We can describe the way the U.S. government is organized as a tree — a tree of liberty!

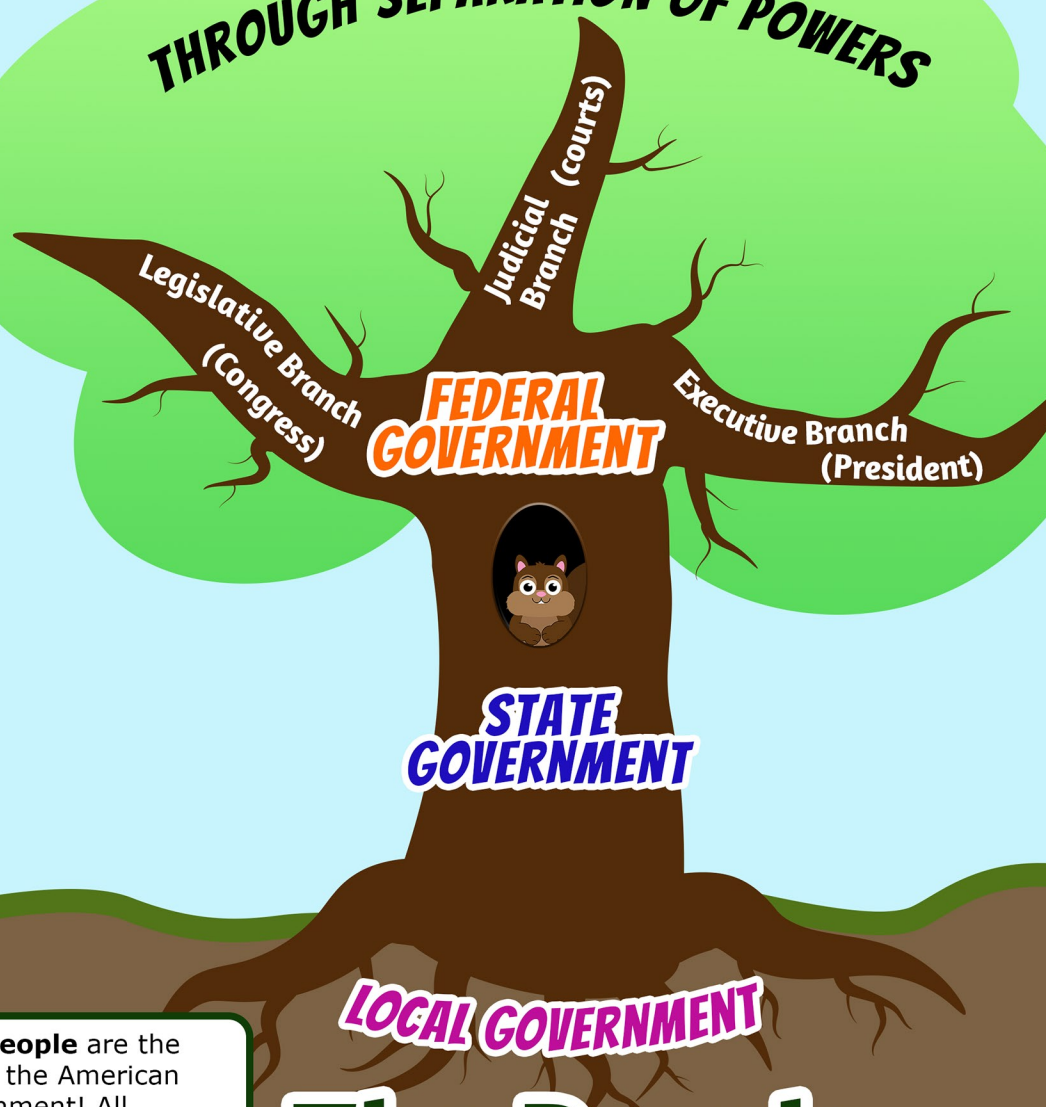
LIMITED GOVERNMENT  
THROUGH SEPARATION OF POWERS

LIMITED GOVERNMENT THROUGH SEPARATION OF FEDERAL, LOCAL, AND STATE GOVERNMENTS

The **federal** government's most important job is to protect the rights that the Constitution promises to all people. The federal government also helps solve arguments between states, negotiates with other countries, and makes laws about things that cross state borders.

The **state** government makes most of the ordinary laws that affect people who live in that state. States can choose to protect MORE rights than the federal government. Some things controlled by states include education, driver's licenses, benefits like unemployment, and property laws.

**Local** governments have the biggest impact on the daily lives of Americans. They run schools, police and fire departments, maintain roads, and give permission to build or change buildings in town. In New Hampshire, local governments have even more responsibility than in other U.S. states.



The people are the soil of the American government! All the branches of the government are rooted in the will of the people.

# The People



1. Why is a tree a good way to describe the organization of the U.S. government?
2. What are some of the positives of limited government? What are some of the problems that could happen?
3. Why is the soil that the tree is planted in a good metaphor for the American people?
4. Think of an issue important to you. How could the decisions of the local government affect that issue? How about the state government? The federal government?