



Lesson 18.22 “Role of Citizens in the N.H. Legislature”

Unit 18: Civics and Government Today

Lesson Objectives

- Students will define the NH General Court as a “citizen legislature”
- Students will explain how a citizen’s participation influences the laws that pass through the legislature in New Hampshire
- Students will practice perspective taking as NH legislators and consider legislation to pass or deny

Lesson Competencies

- I can analyze primary and secondary sources and draw appropriate conclusions. (Moose SS)
- I can describe how citizens can participate in the government. (Moose SS)
- I can employ argumentative structures and persuasive techniques (rhetorical devices, elaboration, call to action) to convey claims and counterclaims related to a topic/text/issue. (ELA 6)

Essential Questions

How have New Hampshire’s people shaped its government?

Focus Questions

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

Estimated Time

One 45-minute class session

Materials & Equipment

Unit 18: Learn It! "[State and Local Government](#)," page 2
Class set of “What Role Do You Play?”
Group sets of “Citizen Legislature Character Cards”
“House Bill Scenarios” for projection



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 eleventh lesson for middle school students in Unit 18: Civics and Government Today. In this lesson, students focus on who makes up New Hampshire's citizen legislature and the personal perspectives they use when considering legislation presented to the House and Senate. An activation about the roles the students play in their family challenges students to consider both the multitude of roles they play in their lives and what might happen when these roles conflict with each other. A simulation game helps students practice this perspective taking when examining potential legislation as a representative with a particular community perspective. The extension activity is recommended for students who are ready to research who represents their community and what their perspective might be based on their background and community roles. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of the document. You may wish to preview these with your students. Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom.



Before the Learning Activity

Student reading and comprehension questions

What is a “citizen legislature”? Direct students to read Unit 18: Learn It! "[State and Local Government](#)," page 2, or review the information as a class.

After review, students should be able to identify:

1. The legislative branch is the part of the government that makes the laws, and New Hampshire's legislature is referred to as a "citizen legislature" because the people serving a legislative role have other community roles and jobs outside of the General Court.
2. This means their personal life, careers, and/or relationships can affect how they view legislation and how they choose to vote.

Learning Activity

Activation

What are your roles? Distribute the “Roles Mind Map” and give students a chance to fill it out with the roles they play in their family, school, and community. Some examples of these roles might be family placement (child, sibling, cousin, niece/nephew, grandchild), responsibilities they are expected to uphold (dishwasher emptier, pet walker, babysitter for younger siblings), school roles (seventh grade student, basketball team member, student council president), and/or community commitments (dance student, library volunteer, church member) as applicable.

Once students have filled out their mind map, have them turn and talk to discuss how these roles might conflict with each other in their lives. What happens if a grandparent’s birthday dinner falls during a sports match? Which roles take precedent over others? Why?

Direct Instruction

Review with students that:

- In New Hampshire, the **legislative branch** is called the **General Court**. There are 400 representatives and 24 senators who serve two-year terms.
- The N.H. General Court is known as a **citizen legislature** because the people who serve are not professional **politicians**.
- Members of the N.H. House and Senate are only paid \$100 per year, so everyone who holds one of these offices has to have another way to earn a living.
 - Roles that legislatures play in their families and communities affect the way they view legislation they consider in their political role.

Guided Practice

How will you vote? To practice this perspective-taking, students will select different roles and use their character’s perspectives to make decisions about bills that come before the legislature.

Use the “Citizen Legislature Character Cards” and divide them among the students.



Teaching tip: Consider the following options for this activity

- Students could be divided into groups to represent a particular “character” and vote as a team
- Students could elect representatives and the representative is then assigned the character perspective
- Students could take turns representing the various characters for different bills

OR

Students can make up their own character using the included sheets as examples based on real or imagined roles in their school and community.

Direct students to think about what issues their character might care most about. Then, project each of the bill summaries and review the content. Open the floor for students to voice their opinions on the bill, which way they might vote, and why. Remind students that even if they are not personally affected by a proposed law, they need to form an opinion and vote as part of their role in the legislature. Finally, hold a vote and decide whether the bill passes or not.

Note: *These are not real bills, but are based on real issues that have come before the New Hampshire State Legislature.*

Extension

Who are your legislators? In this simulation, students played members of the House of Representatives. Who represents them and their community?

Research 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 “Our Legislators” handout from Lesson 18.4, 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.



Supporting Materials

Other Resources

- “Who’s My New Hampshire State Senator?”
<https://gc.nh.gov/senate/members/wml.aspx>
- “New Hampshire House Members”
<https://gc.nh.gov/house/members/>
- Activation based on the sociological idea of status and roles. More information can be found here:
<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-introductiontosociology/chapter/roles-and-the-presentation-of-self/>

Standards

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ Civics and Governments: The Nature and Purpose of Government (SS:CV:8:1.2)
- ✓ Civics and Governments: Structure and Function of United States and New Hampshire Government (SS:CV:8:2.1, SS:CV:8:2.4)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- ✓ Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance
- ✓ Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Civic and Political Institutions (D2.Civ.1.6-8, D2.Civ.2.6-8, D2.Civ.4.6-8, D2.Civ.5.6-8)
- ✓ Participation and Deliberation (D2.Civ.10.6-8)
- ✓ Processes, Rules, and Laws (D2.Civ.11.6-8)

Common Core ELA:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details (RH.6-8.2)
- ✓ Craft and Structure (RH.6-8.4)
- ✓ Production and Distribution of Writing (WHST.6-8.4)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration (SL.8.1a, SL.8.1c, SL.8.1d)
- ✓ Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas (SL.8.4)

Lesson Vocabulary

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
General Court	(noun) The official name for the New Hampshire state legislature
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 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
politicians	(noun) People whose profession it is to be in government
Senate	(noun) One of two legislative chambers; usually smaller than the House of Representatives

