

A low-angle photograph of the Georgia State Capitol dome, showing the golden cupola and the Statue of Liberty on top. The sky is blue with some white clouds.

Georgia Studies

Unit 4 –Government

Lessons 2, 3, and 4: Three Branches of Government

Study Presentation

Legislative Branch

- GA's **Legislative Branch** is known as the General Assembly.
- The **General Assembly** is bicameral (two houses) – The **House of Representatives** (with 180 representatives) and the **Senate** (56 Senators).
- **Senators** must be at least 25 years old and citizens of the US. **Representatives** must be at least 21 years old. Representatives and Senators must be a legal resident of the district they represent and have lived in GA for two years.
- Most important **duties** are making GA's laws and passing GA's budget.

Legislative Branch

- General Assembly **Leadership:**
 - The Lieutenant Governor presides over (leads) Georgia's Senate
 - Members of the House of Representatives elect a representative to lead them, known as the Speaker of the House.
- Examples of powers of the presiding officer:
 - Determine the order of business
 - Control debates
 - Rule out proposed amendments to bills
 - Enforce rules of procedure for the General Assembly
 - Control meeting times and recesses
 - Order a roll call vote on any issue

Legislative Process

- 5 Steps for a Bill to become a Law:
 - **Drafting** – Legislators write the text of the bill (proposed law).
 - **Introduction** – The bill is introduced to either the Senate or House of Representatives for discussion.
 - **Committee Consideration** – The bill is assigned to a committee that studies the bill. The bill may be changed at this time.
 - **Floor Consideration** – A vote is called during a regular session. If the bill is passed in one house, it goes to the other house for consideration.
 - **Governor Consideration** – Once both houses pass the bill it is sent to the governor. The governor can then sign the bill into law or veto the bill (send it back to the General Assembly to be changed or rewritten).

Executive Branch

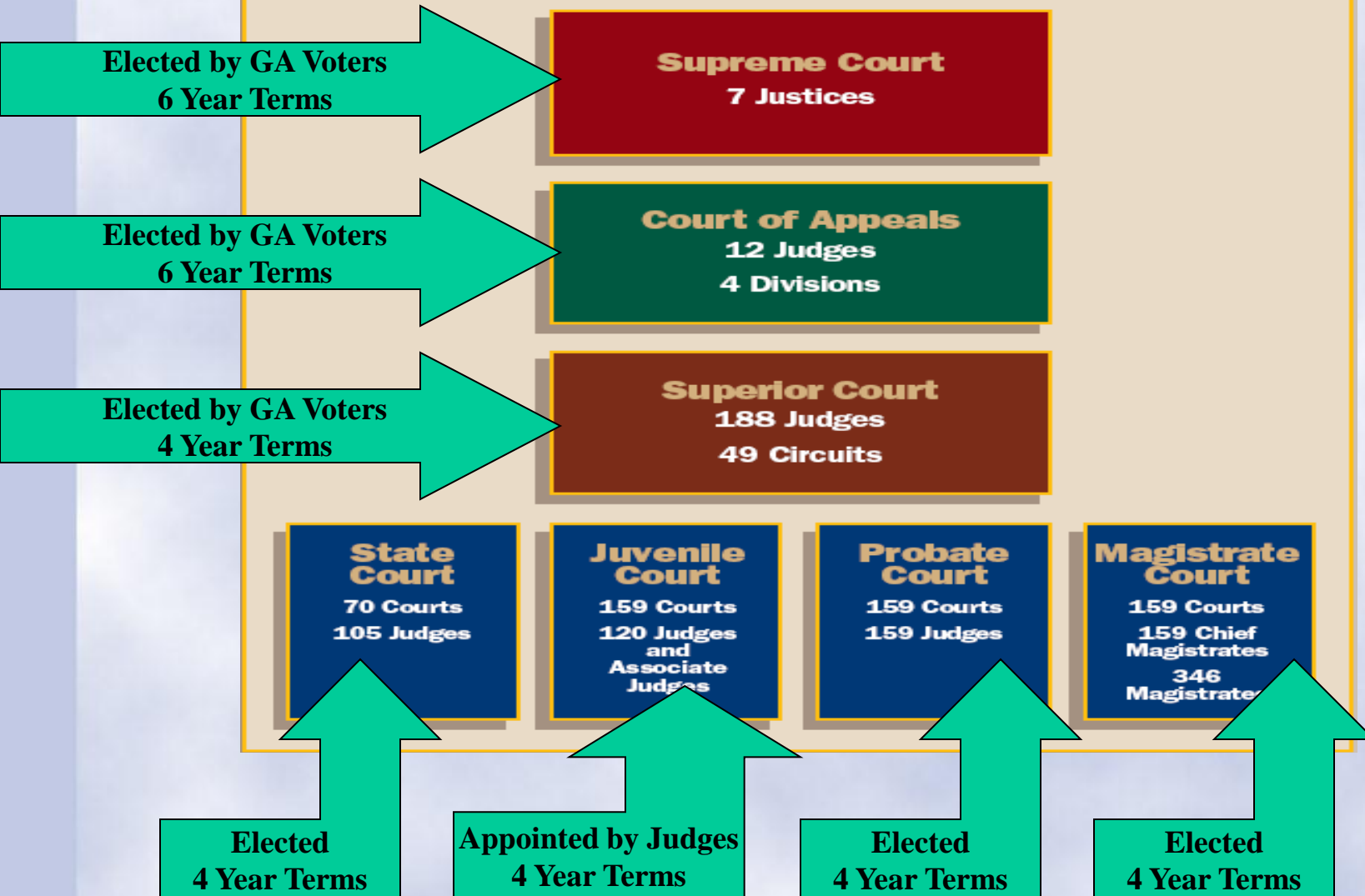
- GA's **Executive Branch** is made up of many different offices and departments. The Executive Branch is the largest of the three branches in Georgia. The **governor** is the leader of the Executive Branch. The governor and lieutenant governor both have to be at least 30 years old, US citizens for at least 15 years, and a GA resident for at least 6 years. The Governor may run for and serve a second term. There is no limit on number of terms a lieutenant governor may serve.
- Most important duties of the **governor** are to serve as the leader of the state's executive branch, veto legislation put forward by the General Assembly, and appoint people to lead executive offices.
- Most important duties of the **lieutenant governor** are to serve as governor if the governor dies or gets too sick to work and also serves as the President of the Senate.

Executive Branch

- In addition to the governor and lieutenant governor, there are a large number of other agencies and leadership officials. Some of these leaders are elected while others are appointed by the Governor or other agency leaders.
- Examples of Georgia's Elected Officials:
 - State Attorney General, Commissioner of Agriculture, Commissioner of Labor, Commissioner of Insurance, Public Service Commissioners, Secretary of State, and State School Superintendent.
- Examples of Appointed Officials, Boards, and Commissions:
 - Chief Drug Inspector, State Boards of Pardons and Paroles, the Board of Natural Resources, the State Personnel Board, the Board of Human Resources, and the Board of Public Safety.

Georgia Court System

Figure 69 Georgia Court System



Judicial Branch

- GA's **Judicial Branch** is made up of two main types of courts – Trial Courts and Appellate Courts.
- **Trial Courts** – People's actions are judged to see whether or not they have committed a crime.
- These judgments are made either by a jury (group of citizens) or simply by a judge.
- Trial courts oversee two types of cases. In a **civil case** occurs when a person claims that another person did something wrong to them (example – The People's Court). A **criminal case** occurs when a person claims that a crime has been committed against them.
- Trial Courts are split into 5 Classes – 3 with Jury Trials (Superior, State, and Probate Courts) and 2 with Judge Trials only (Magistrate and Juvenile Courts).

Appellate Procedures

- **Appellate Courts** – Look over judgments made by trial courts.
- If someone believes that a mistake was made during their trial they may make an appeal. The appeal goes to an appellate court which decides if the trial court has made a mistake or not.
- No juries in appellate courts.
- Makes sure that trials are fair and do not go against Georgia's Constitution.
- Georgia has two appellate courts – The **Supreme Court** (Georgia's highest court) and the Court of Appeals.

Adult Justice System – Civil Cases

- Each court has jurisdiction.
- **Jurisdiction** – Geographic and legal range over which a court has control and can pass judgment.
- Civil Law is used in **Civil Cases**.
- A Plaintiff (a person who complains about another person having done something wrong to them) tries to convince a judge that their case has real basis against the Defendant (the person accused of wrong doing).
- If the Plaintiff wins the Defendant may have to pay money to the Plaintiff.

Adult Justice System – Criminal Cases

- Criminal Law is used in **Criminal Cases**.
- In a Criminal Case the government claims that a person or group has committed a crime (breaking the law).
- The Government is called the Prosecutor and the person accused of breaking the law is called the Defendant.
- The Prosecutor tries to convince the judge or jury that the Defendant committed a crime. If successful the Defendant can be found guilty and can be punished.
- Crimes for which the punishment is less than one year in jail are called misdemeanors.
- Crimes for which the punishment is one year or more are called felonies.
- The punishment for very serious felonies (such as murder) may be death.

Conflict Resolution

- Many civil cases are settled out of court.
- The two sides in a conflict often resolve their issues without lawyers or judges. They may negotiate themselves or use a mediator.
- **Mediator** – A third person who has no interest in the problem. Helps the two sides in a conflict come to an agreement or resolution.