

CONSTITUTION  
OF THE  
STATE OF TEXAS,  
ADOPTED BY THE  
CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION,  
BEGUN AND HELD  
AT THE CITY OF AUSTIN,  
ON THE  
Sixth day of September, 1875.

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OFFICIAL.

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GALVESTON:  
PRINTED AT THE "NEWS" STEAM BOOK AND JOB ESTABLISHMENT.

# Current Constitution of Texas

Ratified 1876

# The Texas Constitution

## Constitutions of Texas

CONSTITUTION	KEY DETAILS	CONSTITUTION	KEY DETAILS
Mexican Constitution of 1824	Divides government into executive, judicial, and legislative branch	Constitution of 1861	Effective during secession from the Union, protected slavery but outlawed the slave trade
Constitution of Coahuila y Tejas (1827)	Declared state of Coahuila y Tejas independent of other states and prohibited slavery	Constitution of 1866	Established equal rights for all freemen but required members of legislature to be white men
Constitution of the Republic of Texas (1836)	Contained a declaration of rights	Constitution of 1869	Forbade slavery and gave African Americans the right to vote
Constitution of 1845	Established Texas as the 28th state and put limits on the power of the legislature	Constitution of 1876	Effective today, provided homestead and public land grants and established the Permanent School Fund

SOURCE: Texas State Historical Association

A constitution is a basic plan of government. It describes the parts of government, as well as their duties and powers.

We are on #8 written 1875 ratified 1876

Tried and failed to write new Constitution in 1970's.

# Constitutional Change and Continuity

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Although Texans have made changes to their constitution over the years, they still rely on a government established by the 1876 Constitution. Like the United States Constitution, this document follows the principles of federalism. It gives certain jobs to the state government, but leaves others to the national or local governments.

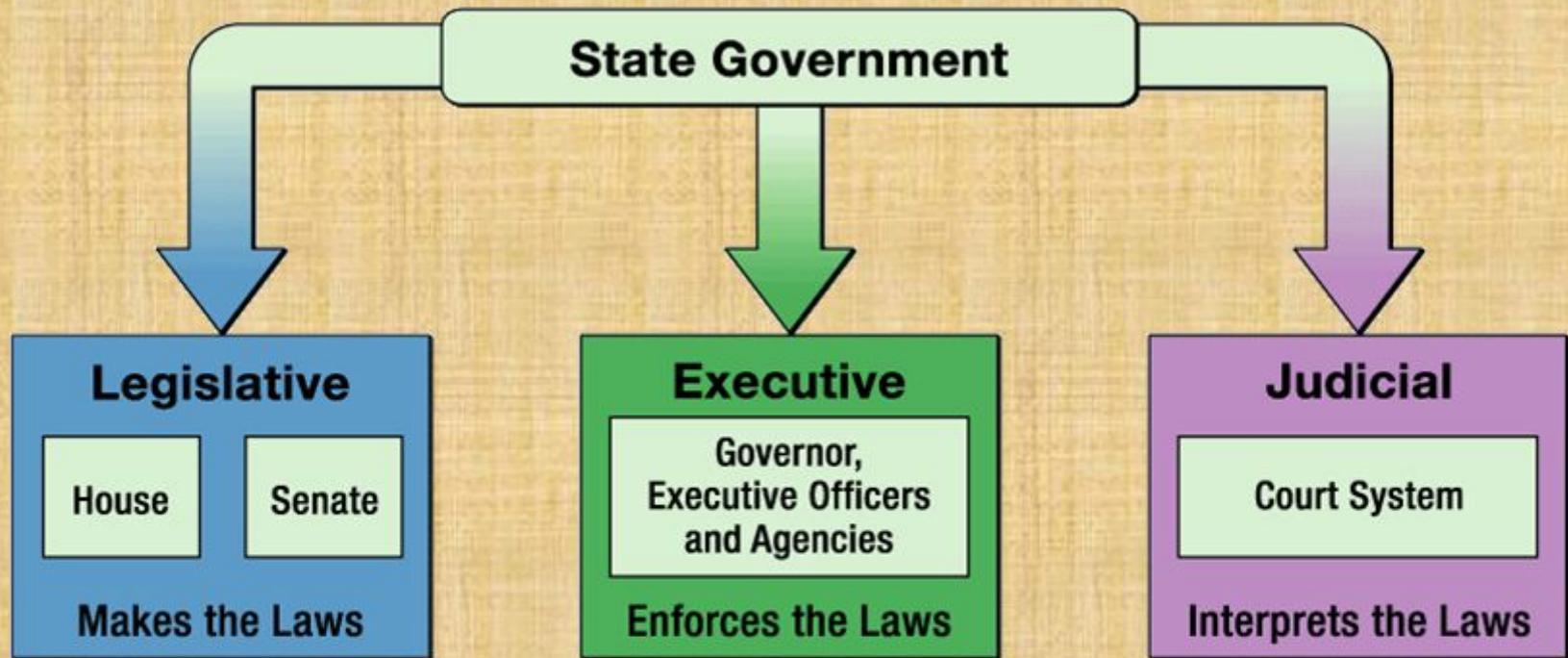
The Texas constitution has 17 articles. Each covers one broad topic. Each article is divided into sections. Sections deal with specific parts of the article. For example, Article 7 covers education. Section 1 of that article provides for the state's public school system.

# Constitutional Change and Continuity

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- Since 1876, the legislature has proposed 673 constitutional amendments, and 670 have gone before Texas voters.
- Of the amendments submitted to the voters so far, 491 have been approved by the electorate and 179 have been defeated. (US Constitution is older and amended only 27 times)
- Three amendments never made it to the ballot for reasons that are historically obscure.

# Three Branches of Texas Government



- Legislative: makes the laws
- Executive: enforces the laws
- Judicial: interprets the laws and runs the courts

# The Legislative Branch

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Like the U.S. Congress, the Texas legislature is bicameral. A bicameral congress has two chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The House of Representatives is the larger chamber, with 150 members.

The Senate is much smaller, with just 31 members.

# The Legislative Branch

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## Texas vs. U.S. Legislatures

	TEXAS LEGISLATURE		U.S. CONGRESS	
	SENATE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	SENATE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TERM	4 years	2 years	6 years	2 years
AGE	26+	21+	30+	25+
RESIDENCY	5+ years in Texas	2+ years in Texas	9+ years as U.S. citizen; must live in state at time of election	7+ years as U.S. citizen; must live in state at time of election
SESSIONS	Once every 2 years for 140 days	Once every 2 years for 140 days	At least once each year; no time limit	At least once each year; no time limit

SOURCES: University of Texas at Austin; WhiteHouse.gov

# Legislators at Work

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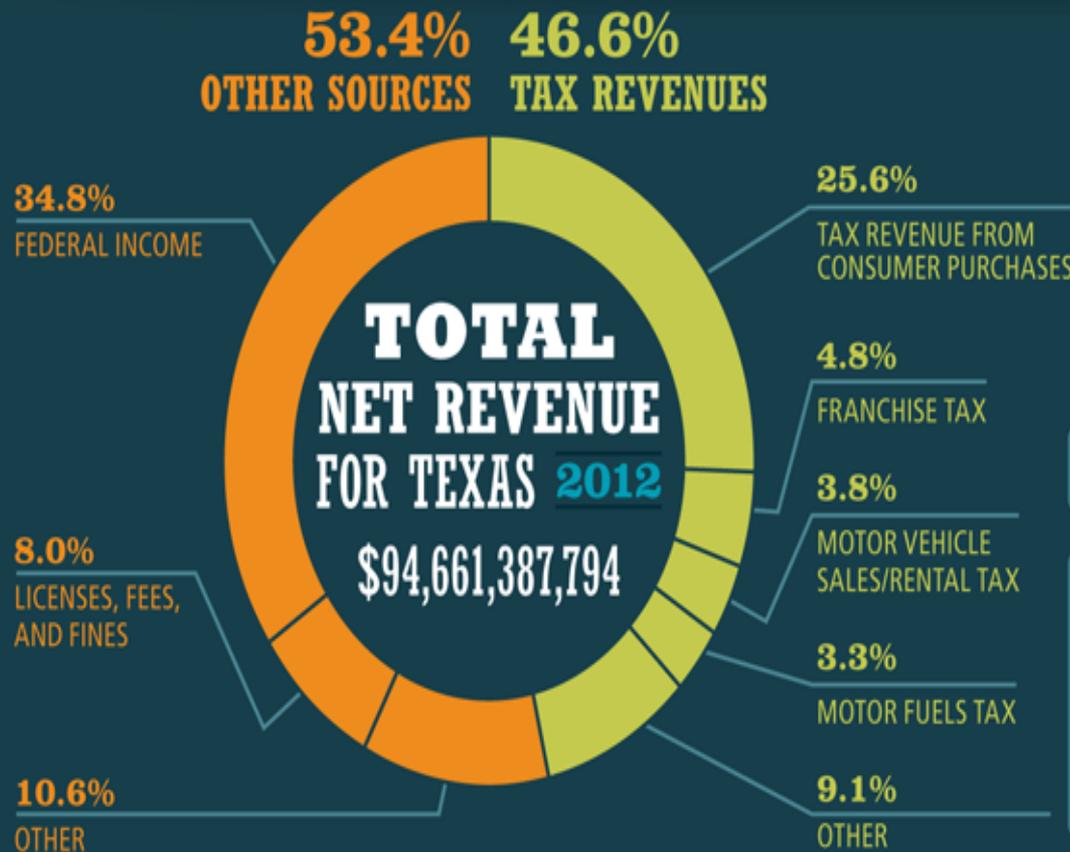
The legislature's main task is to make the laws that run the state. To do this, it considers many bills. The legislature that met in 2013, for example, considered nearly 6,000 bills. It passed about 1,500 of these into law.

Lawmakers must bring a bill into the legislature to make a new law or to change an existing one. There are five steps in the process that makes a bill into a law in Texas.

- Step One—Introducing a Bill
- Step Two—Committee Action
- Step Three—Floor Action
- Step Four—Conference Committee
- Final Step—The Governor's Signature

# Legislators at Work

## BUILDING THE STATE BUDGET



THE LARGEST TAX REVENUE SOURCE  
**TO BUY A CELL PHONE**



— IN AUSTIN, TEXAS... —

COST OF PHONE **\$200**

**6.25%** The state sales tax rate

+ 6.25% STATE SALES TAX  
**\$12.50** ( $200 \times 0.0625$ )

**2%** The maximum sales tax rate that can be added by cities, counties, special purposes districts, and transit authorities

+ 1% TRAVIS COUNTY TAX  
**\$2** ( $200 \times 0.01$ )  
+ 1% AUSTIN METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY TAX  
**\$2** ( $200 \times 0.01$ )

= TOTAL COST **\$216.50**

Source: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

# The Executive Branch

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The executive branch carries out the laws of the state. The governor is the chief executive, or head of the executive branch. He or she represents all the people of the state.

Texas Governor is actually weak While he can appoint some positions most of the Executive branch is elected by the people

- Secretary of State
- Statewide Boards and Commissions

# The Judicial Branch

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The judicial branch is composed of a system of courts. The role of the courts is to interpret the law and resolve legal disputes. The courts handle two categories of disputes: civil law and criminal law.

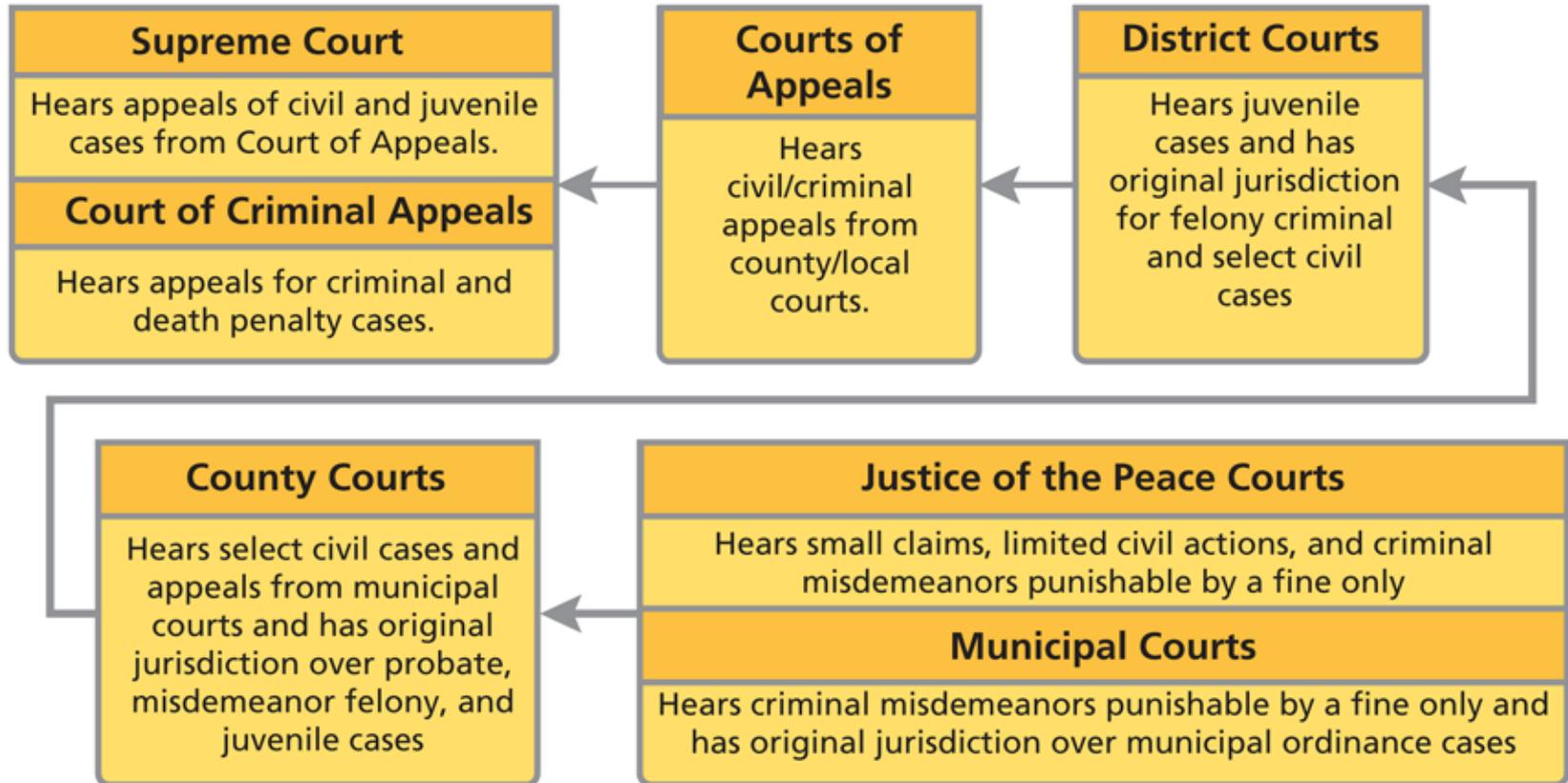
In Texas Judges and Justices are Elected by the people not appointed and confirmed

They Deal with the following:

- Civil Law
- Criminal Law

# The Judicial Branch

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SOURCE: Texas Courts Online

Texas has TWO Supreme Courts 1 for Criminal and one for Civil cases  
Lots of Original Jurisdiction Courts,