

# Indiana General Assembly

A Young Citizen's Guide

Provided by:  
Indiana Senate Democrats  
[www.senatedemocrats.IN.gov](http://www.senatedemocrats.IN.gov)



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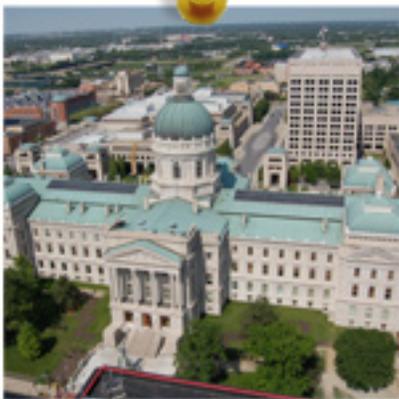
# Levels of Government



Lake County  
Courthouse

## Local Government

Indiana cities, towns and counties represent the local level. Mayors, city and town council members and township and county officials are responsible for laws, ordinances, rules and regulations established and enforced at the local level.



Indiana  
Statehouse

## State Government

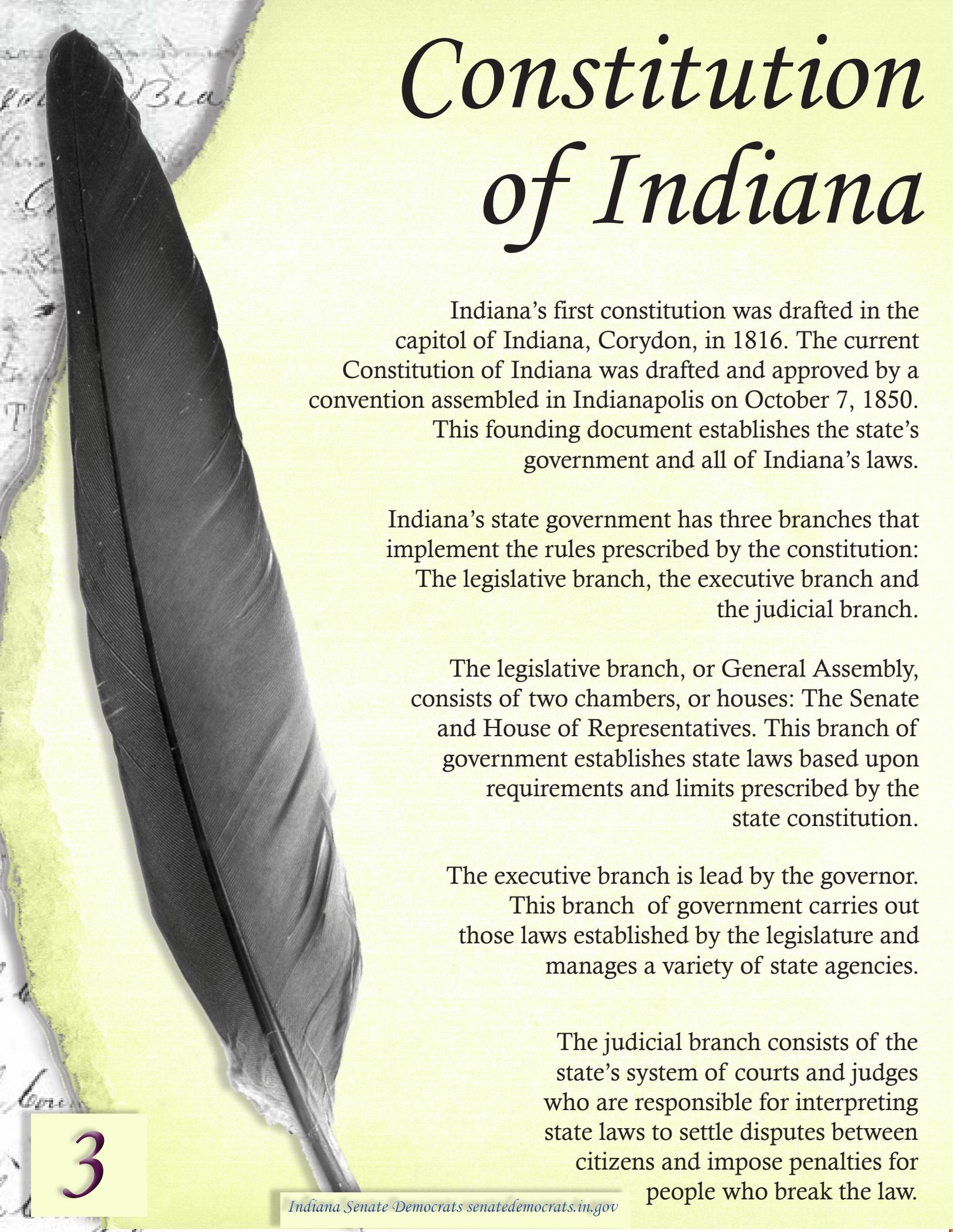
All Indiana residents are affected by laws enacted on the state level. The Indiana General Assembly is divided into two bodies called "houses." The two houses are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Indiana has 50 Senators and 100 Representatives who are elected by the voters in their legislative districts. This body meets each year in Indianapolis for what is commonly referred to as the legislative session.



U.S. Capitol

## Federal Government

Federal laws are much broader in scope and affect all citizens of the United States. Each state's congressional representation is different based on population. Indiana currently has nine congressional seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. Each state has two U.S. Senators who represent the entire state.



# Constitution of Indiana

Indiana's first constitution was drafted in the capitol of Indiana, Corydon, in 1816. The current Constitution of Indiana was drafted and approved by a convention assembled in Indianapolis on October 7, 1850. This founding document establishes the state's government and all of Indiana's laws.

Indiana's state government has three branches that implement the rules prescribed by the constitution: The legislative branch, the executive branch and the judicial branch.

The legislative branch, or General Assembly, consists of two chambers, or houses: The Senate and House of Representatives. This branch of government establishes state laws based upon requirements and limits prescribed by the state constitution.

The executive branch is lead by the governor. This branch of government carries out those laws established by the legislature and manages a variety of state agencies.

The judicial branch consists of the state's system of courts and judges who are responsible for interpreting state laws to settle disputes between citizens and impose penalties for people who break the law.

# Opportunities to Participate

So you don't happen to be an Indiana State Senator? Not a problem! There are a variety of ways young Indiana citizens can participate in the legislative process:

## Pages

Students age 12 - 18 may apply to serve as pages during the legislative session. Pages spend a day at the Statehouse assisting senators and staff with legislative tasks and attend session in the Senate chamber.



Indiana Statehouse



Senator Broden

## Internships

College juniors, seniors, recent graduates and graduate students may apply for a legislative internship. Interns spend the semester at the Statehouse, gaining an in-depth understanding of the legislative process and how laws are made in a hands-on environment.



Senate Interns



Senate Pages

## Take a Tour

Indiana residents and visitors may take a tour of the Indiana Statehouse. Tours are offered daily during the week and can be scheduled by calling 317.233.5293 or emailing [captours@idoa.IN.gov](mailto:captours@idoa.IN.gov).



## Write/Email/Call

Indiana citizens are the most important part of the legislative process and legislators are eager to hear from them. To contact Senator Arnold with your concerns or inquiries about current Indiana legislation, check pg. 11!

# Indiana General Assembly

The legislative branch of state government is also known as the General Assembly, which consists of 150 elected officials. There, men and women represent the views and concerns of the people from their area of the state and use this information to establish new laws and change existing ones.



*Sen. Broden and Sen. Arnold discussing Indiana legislation*



*Sen. Rogers in session at the Indiana Statehouse*



*Sen. Randolph in session at the Indiana Statehouse*

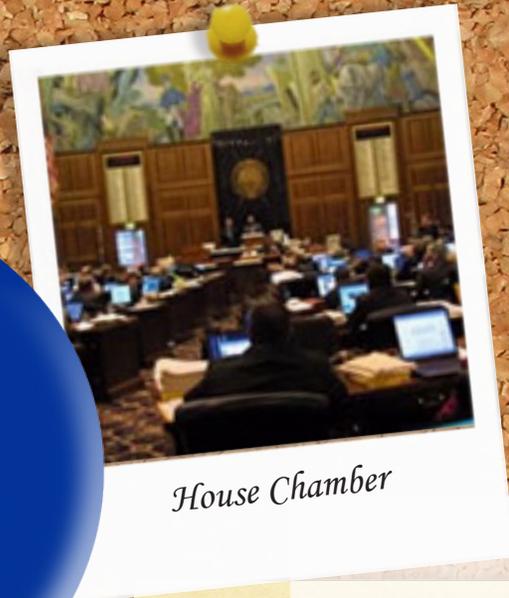


*Sen. Simpson speaking with an Indiana citizen*

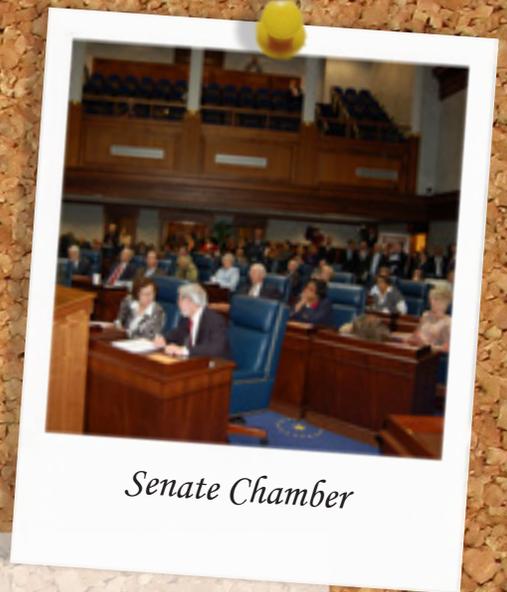


*Sen. Mrvan in session at the Indiana Statehouse*





*House Chamber*



*Senate Chamber*



### **Bicameral Legislature**

Indiana's legislature is bicameral, which means it has two legislative houses. Indiana's houses are the State Senate and State House of Representatives.

### **Political Parties**

In each house of a bicameral government, members are also divided amongst political parties. Currently represented in the Indiana General Assembly are the Democrat and Republican parties. The group with the largest number of members is referred to as the "majority party," and the smaller group is the "minority party."

The state constitution prescribes rules for electing members of the Senate and House of Representatives. While the Senate shall not exceed 50 members, the House of Representatives shall not exceed 100. Senators serve a term of four years, while Representatives serve a two-year term. One-half of the Senators are elected every two years.



# Citizen Legislature

Many states, including Indiana, have what is known as a part-time citizen legislature. This means that, unlike congressional officeholders who serve year-round, people elected to serve in the State Senate or House of Representatives spend only part of their time in Indianapolis each year.

State lawmakers spend most of the year at home in their legislative districts. Legislators often return home to work as professionals in a variety of jobs, such as teachers, farmers, bankers, attorneys, police officers, firefighters and nurses. They take every opportunity to meet with constituents in their continuing efforts to accomplish what is best for their district and state.

Members of the Senate Democratic Caucus practice a wide variety of professions. For example, Senator Karen Tallian of Portage is an attorney, Senator Tim Skinner of Terre Haute is a high school teacher and Senator Jim Arnold of LaPorte is a retired county sheriff.



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Q. When does the General Assembly meet?

A. Indiana has a part-time legislature, which means that the General Assembly is only in session for a portion of the year. During even numbered years, the legislative session begins in early January and must end by March 14th. In odd-numbered years when a state budget is crafted, the legislative session does not end until April 29th.



*Senate Committee Hearing*

## Q. Who can be a state legislator?

A. A State Senator must be at least 25 years old and must have lived in Indiana for at least two years. A State Representative must be at least 21 years old and must have lived in the state for at least two years. Both must have resided in their legislative districts for a minimum of one year.

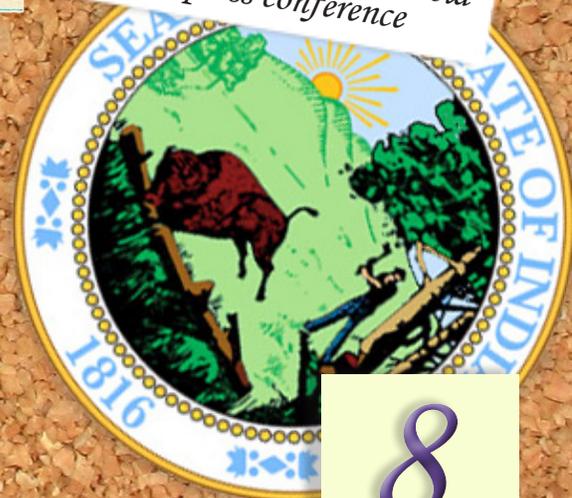


*Senators Skinner, Tallian, Simpson, Lanane and Arnold at a press conference*

## Q. What are legislative districts?

A. A legislative district is a designated region of the state in which citizens are represented by an elected official. Indiana has 50 State Senate districts, each comprised of approximately 130,000 residents, and 100 House districts comprised of approximately 65,000 residents.

New district boundaries are drawn every ten years based on the population changes depicted by the U.S. Census. Indiana's legislative districts will be re-drawn in 2011 based on the 2010 U. S. Census to ensure that all citizens are fairly and equally represented.



# How a Bill Becomes a Law

## 1. Drafting

Various individuals and community groups work together with legislators to enact all types of laws. Usually responding to a community need, legislators will have bills drafted by legal specialists and work to move their initiatives through the legislative process. A bill becomes official public record once it is "filed" in the respective legislative chamber and receives a bill number.

State Flower: Peony



*The Indiana Code*

Want to learn more about your state and its laws? Check out this page to view the Indiana Code!

[www.in.gov/legislative/ic/code/](http://www.in.gov/legislative/ic/code/)

## 2. First Reading

Once a bill has been assigned a bill number and is introduced, it is appointed to a standing committee in its house of origin. Standing committees cover specific areas of the law such as education, health and finance.

## 3. Committee Hearings

Committee members debate the merits of each bill during public hearings. Citizens are encouraged to attend these hearings and offer their opinions on pending legislation. Bills may be changed or amended during this part of the process. After testimony has been received and discussion has taken place, members cast votes on each bill. Approved bills are eligible to move on to second reading.

*Watch it LIVE!*

This portion of the website allows you to view legislation...as it happens! Watch live as your legislators debate in committee, or watch bills go through the process in the Senate and the House of Representatives!

[www.in.gov/legislative/2441.htm](http://www.in.gov/legislative/2441.htm)

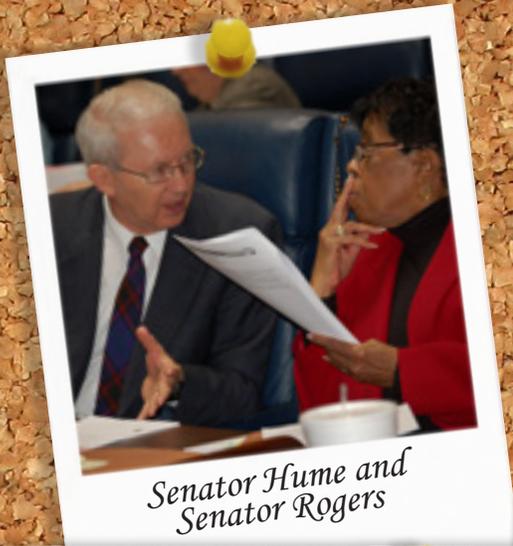
## 4. Second Reading

At this stage, bills are considered by the full Senate or House, and any member may offer changes while the bill is up for discussion. Amendments that are approved are incorporated into the bill.



Senator Breaux

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Senator Hume and Senator Rogers

### 5. Third Reading

The full Senate or House membership has an opportunity to speak on the merits of a bill before casting a vote to pass or defeat the final draft. A majority vote sends the legislation to the opposite chamber where the process (steps 2-5) is repeated.

### 6. Opposite Chamber

Bills that are approved without amendment by the second chamber proceed to the governor for his review. Bills which have been amended by the opposite chamber must be approved by the house of origin. When a disagreement occurs, bills are sent to conference committee.

#### *The Indiana Legislature*

This website will give you more information about the Indiana Statehouse and the Indiana General Assembly. It will also let you watch live video from the Indiana Statehouse during committees and session.

[www.in.gov/legislative](http://www.in.gov/legislative)

### 7. Conference Committee

Comprised of two members of each chamber and each political party, these committees work out the differences in a bill. The resulting compromise is recorded in a conference committee report, which must be approved by both chambers before a bill may proceed to the governor.



### 8. Governor

Once the governor receives a bill which has been approved by both chambers, he has seven days to sign the bill into law, let it become law without his signature or veto the bill. A vetoed bill may still become law if 51 Representatives and 26 Senators vote to override a governor's veto.



# How to Contact Senate Democrats



Check out our Blog:  
**The Briefing Room**  
[www.InSenDems.wordpress.com](http://www.InSenDems.wordpress.com)

follow us on  
**twitter**

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**By phone:** 1.800.382.9467

**Or check out the caucus website at:**  
[www.SenateDemocrats.IN.gov](http://www.SenateDemocrats.IN.gov)

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