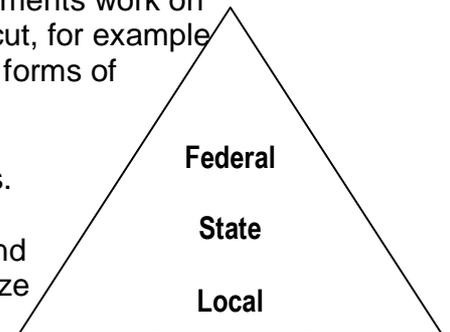


# QUICK FACTS

The United States has three main levels of government - Federal, State and Local. Their roles are spelled out in the U.S. and state constitutions. The Federal Government oversees legislation that affects the entire country, such as the Social Security Program or federal income taxes. State governments work on legislation that affects people in that particular state. Connecticut, for example has legislation regarding gambling restrictions. Local laws and forms of government are determined by a town or county, and affect that particular geographical area. Federal or state law can override local laws.

The pyramid on the right is a basic model to help you understand the levels of government. It is very important, however, to realize that you can influence all three levels through advocacy.



Connecticut's state government has three main branches:

- The Executive Branch consists of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Comptroller and Treasurer, and is considered the leadership branch of the government. These are elected positions.
- The Judicial Branch deals with the court system and interpreting/executing the law.
- The Legislative Branch is where legislation is passed into law. There are 187 elected legislators in the Connecticut General Assembly (36 Senators and 151 Representatives).

Each registered voter is represented by one Senator and one Representative based on where the voter lives (their legislative district). Senators and Representatives are elected for two-year terms. Most legislators have regular jobs outside of being a Senator or Representative.

**For the 2009-2010 Legislative Session, the following annual salary schedule will be in effect:**

Non-Leader	\$28,000
Standing Committee Ranking Members	\$30,403
Standing Committee Chairperson	\$32,241
House and Senate Assistant Majority and Minority Leaders and Majority and Minority Whips	\$32,241
Deputy House Speaker and Senate and House Deputy Majority and Deputy Minority Leaders	\$34,446
House and Senate Majority and Minority Leaders	\$36,835
House Speaker and Senate President Pro Tempore	\$38,689

**Unvouchered Expense Allowance:**

Members of the Senate will receive an annual unvouchered expense allowance of \$5,500. Members of the House of Representatives will receive an annual unvouchered expense allowance of \$4,500.

**The last election for state Senate and House (House of Representatives) was November 4, 2008.**

**The Legislative Session**

In Connecticut, we have what's called a part time legislature. They meet from January to June in odd numbered years and February to May in even numbered years.

The state's budget covers two "fiscal" years. The current fiscal budget runs from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2010.

Bills are introduced by individual legislators or committees and then funneled through the committees. Depending on who introduced a bill (senator or representative), it will then be passed on to the House or Senate.

Bills are numbered based on where they are introduced and by the order in which they are introduced. Senate bills are numbered from 1- 4999, and House bills are numbered from 5000 – on. So, for example, a bill introduced in the House might be numbered HB 6871. A bill introduced in the Senate at the very beginning of the session might be numbered SB 18.

Bills must go through appropriate committees then be reviewed and passed by both the House and the Senate. Then the Governor must sign the bill into law. The Governor can veto a bill even if it passes both houses. The House and Senate can vote to override the veto, but it takes a 2/3 majority in both houses for this to occur, so an override is unusual.