

JUDICIAL BRANCH



Orestes Before the Areopagites
(play written and performed in 458 BC)
This panel portrays a scene from Aeschylus' Eumenides which documents an event which created the institution of the jury and abolished the requirement of blood revenge in ancient Greece.



The Establishment of the Tribune of the People
(c. 442 BC)
An attempt by patrician judge, Appius Claudius, to use his tribunal power for personal gain caused the plebeians to revolt and ultimately win the right to a place on the tribunal.

These two relief carvings on the outside of the Nebraska State Capitol represent the foundation of our judicial system in events that occurred in past civilizations. Modern governments and citizens can learn from the way people lived and governed themselves in the past.

1. How do the activities in these two drawings remind you of a scene from a modern courtroom?

It appears there is an attorney pleading for a client in front of a jury.

2. Why is it better for a government to hold trials to determine guilt or innocence, and then determine punishment, rather than for citizens to respond to crimes themselves?

A victim's family may want to take revenge before all the facts of the case are known. Trials decide guilt beyond a reasonable doubt and follow special rules of order for witnesses, evidence and sentencing.

3. Why is it important for members of a jury to be fair and unbiased before they begin a trial?

The accused needs to have a trial which is decided on evidence and not personal opinion or preconceived ideas about an accused person.

4. Who can be members of a jury? How are they selected?

Citizens are chosen from voter registration and motor vehicle registration records to form a jury pool. The attorneys from each side interview prospective jurors and chose 12 plus alternates to be on the jury.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH



Solon Giving a New Constitution to Athens
(c. 570 BC)

Solon was of all men not implicated in the troubles of Athens. He was empowered to be an arbitrator and lawgiver; the rich consenting because he was wealthy, the poor because he was honest.



The Magna Carta (1210)

The Magna Carta is cited as the basis for Anglo-Saxon Law limiting the powers of the king and granting liberties to free men.

These two relief carvings on the outside of the Nebraska State Capitol represent the foundations of the executive branch in events that occurred in past civilizations. Modern governments and citizens can learn from the way people lived and governed themselves in the past.

1. In these two drawings what are the people doing?
The leaders and the citizens are discussing and trying to make a binding legal document through which a government can function.
2. In a democracy, who determines who will be president or governor?
Citizens who vote.
Why is it important for all people in a democracy to vote in an election?
Governments make laws for all people, therefore all views, ideas and all needs need to be represented, not just those of a particular group.
3. In a democracy, do citizens have a right to require their leaders act according to their wishes? How can citizens be sure they do?
Citizens have a right to communicate their thoughts and wishes to leaders and then to pay attention to the representative's votes. If the citizen doesn't like how the elected leader votes and represents them they can run for office or help elect someone else.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH



The publishing of the Twelve Tablets in Rome (c. 450 BC)
In the third century of Rome, the polity had changed, and when it appeared the Laws had been sufficiently amended, in light of opinions expressed, the Laws were adopted, and formed the basis of all public and private law.



The Signing of the Pilgrim Compact on the Mayflower (1620)
Before setting foot in a new land, the Pilgrims agree to establish a civic body politic to better order and preserve the good of the colony.

These two relief carvings on the outside of the Nebraska State Capitol represent to foundations of the legislative branch in event that occurred in past civilizations. Modern governments and citizens can learn from the way people lived and governed themselves in the past.

1. What is happening in these two drawings?
Laws are being discussed and created, then they are made available for the citizens to use as they govern themselves and live together.
2. Why is it important to have laws to govern how people live together?
Laws organize interactions in the public and private arena so that everyone is treated fairly and safely. Laws protect citizens from the illegal or bad actions of some members of society.
3. How do citizens participate in lawmaking?
They bring ideas for laws to the elected leaders, read and learn about laws, testify at public hearings and meetings, discuss laws with others and encourage them to become involved with their government.
4. How does a person become a lawmaker?
File and run for office.

CONSTITUTIONS



The Codification of Roman Law Under Justinian (c.560)
Justinian's codification of all Roman Law is significant in its preservation of the idea that a law is regarded as an obligation assumed voluntarily by the people.



The Codification of Anglo-Saxon Law under Ethelbert (c.600)
Following the example of Justinian, King Ethelbert organized existing customs and practices into the first code of law written in English.

MEN SHOULD NOT THINK IT SLAVERY TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE
RULE OF THE CONSTITUTION FOR IT IS THEIR SALVATION

Aristotle

LAWS AND CONSTITUTIONS SPRING FROM THE MORAL
DISPOSITIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE STATE

Plato

THE BASIS OF OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM IS THE RIGHT OF THE
PEOPLE TO MAKE AND ALTER THEIR CONSTITUTIONS OF
GOVERNMENT : BUT THE CONSTITUTION WHICH AT ANY TIME
EXISTS, TILL CHANGED BY AN EXPLICIT AND AUTHENTIC ACT OF
THE WHOLE PEOPLE, IS SACREDLY OBLIGATORY UPON ALL: THE
VERY IDEA OF THE POWER AND THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO
ESTABLISH GOVERNMENT PRESUPPOSES THE DUTY OF EVERY
INDIVIDUAL TO OBEY THE ESTABLISHED GOVERNMENT

From Washington's Farewell Address

1. What is the purpose of a constitution?

Constitutions indicate what citizens want their government to do for them, and establish the rights of the citizens. Constitutions govern how the citizens and their leaders interact.

2. Is it possible for citizens to make changes in the constitution? How can Nebraska citizens change their constitution?

Yes, Nebraskans can circulate an initiative petition, and place an amendment on the ballot. Citizens vote yes or no to adopt the amendment to Nebraska's Constitution. The Legislature may propose an amendment with an affirmative vote of 3/5ths of the body.

Match the branch of government with the historic event on the exterior of the Capitol. Draw a line from the branch to the event.



The Nebraska-Kansas Bill (1854)

The Nebraska-Kansas Act of 1854 established the territories of Nebraska and Kansas and opened this part of the Louisiana Purchase to settlement; ten years later, the Transcontinental Railroad was begun.



Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863)

Lincoln proclaims all persons held as slaves in the rebelling states shall be free.



The Judgement of Solomon (c. 970)

Solomon resolved to settle the dispute by cutting the baby in half, knowing the true mother would give up the baby to save it, and Israel saw the wisdom of God was in him to do judgement.

LEGISLATIVE

JUDICIAL

EXECUTIVE

CITIZEN'S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES



These two paintings in the Nebraska State Capitol's Governor's Reception Room represent the rights and responsibilities of the citizens in a democracy. Representative democracy relies on the involvement of citizens in government. Study the actions of the people in the paintings closely.

1. What freedoms guaranteed by the first amendment to the United States Constitution are the citizens in the image on the left exercising?
Freedom of speech and assembly.
2. What civic responsibility are the citizens on the right exercising?
Rights of suffrage, the responsibility to cast a secret ballot and vote in a free and open election.
3. How can citizens use the activities pictured above to involve themselves in the promotion of laws?
Citizens can vote for elected leaders who represent their ideas and will work for the good of all citizens, they can speak out about proposed laws, they can assemble and speak to their elected leaders.