



# The Three Branches of Government

<p><b>LEGISLATIVE</b> Makes the law</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assembly: 80 legislators</li> <li>• Senate: 40 legislators</li> </ul>
<p><b>EXECUTIVE</b> Executes and enforces the law</p>	<p>Governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, treasurer, controller, insurance commissioner, superintendent of public instruction</p>
<p><b>JUDICIAL</b> Interprets the law</p>	<p>State courts and judges (the seven Supreme Court justices head the judicial branch). California is one of six states in which its Supreme Court does not sit in the capital. Instead, it sits in San Francisco.</p>



# California: State History Discovery Journal

## What is the Law?

- A rule tells us what we should or should not do.
- A state law is a rule that all people in California must follow.
- Ideas for laws can come from anyone, of any age, but a bill can only be officially proposed by a legislator.
- A bill is an idea for a law that has been written in legal language.
- There are two groups, or houses, of legislation in California: senators and assembly members.
- A committee is a group of legislators that studies the bill.
- Debate is a discussion about the bill.
- Veto means “to forbid.” It gives a government official the right to reject or prohibit a proposed act or bill.

## How an Idea Becomes a Law

- 1 Someone thinks of an idea for a new law and presents their idea to a legislator.
- 2 A legislator agrees to take it through the official steps.
- 3 Legislative lawyers write the idea in legal language. It is now called a bill.
- 4 The bill is taken to the Assembly or the Senate, where the bill is given a number.
- 5 The bill goes to a committee, which holds public meetings to discuss the bill. People write in, email, or call in responses to the proposed law.
- 6 If the committee recommends the bill to be passed, it goes back to the full Assembly or Senate for debate and vote.
- 7 If a bill gets enough votes to pass in the house where it started, it goes to the other house and repeats steps 5 and 6.
- 8 If a bill does not get the number of votes it needs from each house, it dies.
- 9 Bills that have passed in both houses go to the governor. The governor can sign the bill, veto it, or not sign the bill (after 12 days, an unsigned bill becomes a law).
- 10 The bill becomes a law for the State of California. Most laws take effect on the first day of the following year.



## Let's Make a Law

Use the information in the chart on page 10 to answer the following questions.



1. *What is a state law?*

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2. *What is a bill?*

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3. *Ideas for laws can come from...*

- A. only people born in California     B. anyone, whether a citizen or not     C. only citizens of the US

4. *Name the two houses (groups) of the legislature.*

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5. *After a bill passes both houses, it...*

- A. becomes a law                       B. returns to committee                       C. goes to the governor

6. *The governor may choose to sign the bill, not sign the bill, or \_\_\_\_\_ it.*

7. *If the governor does not sign the bill within 12 days, the bill...*

- A. returns to committee                       B. becomes a law anyway                       C. will not become a law

8. *How old must you be to present an idea for a law to the state legislature?*

- A. 18 years or older                       B. any age



