



# Welcome to the Texas House of Representatives

## Where Texas Kids Meet Texas State Government

### What does the Texas House do?

- ★ Passes new laws
- ★ Considers amendments
- ★ Passes resolutions



### Representatives

- ✓ Serve 2-year terms
- ✓ 150 Representatives in Texas House
- ✓ Each represent about 140,000

### The Speaker Leader of the Texas House



Speaker Tom Craddick is a member of the House. He is chosen by his fellow House members on the first day the Legislature meets to lead them through the session.

Speaker Craddick is responsible for maintaining order, recognizing members who want to speak on the House floor, appointing committee members, and interpreting the rules of the House.

Have you ever wondered who decides if schools should sell soda, how old you have to be to drive a car without an adult, or why you have to take certain classes in school?

The Texas Legislature passes laws that determine those types of issues, as well as countless other important matters. With so many people living in Texas, it is important to have some rules that everyone must follow.



Texas House Chamber

These rules are called laws, and they are designed to help everyone live together. A law starts off as an idea. Your ideas could one day become a law!

The State of Texas is a great place to live. State government helps make sure that everything runs smoothly. But how does it all work together?

This pamphlet will tell you how an idea becomes law as well as explain the three branches and leaders of state government. While you read this, also enjoy some fun facts about Texas and learn a little about Texas history.

Don't forget to visit [www.kids.house.state.tx.us](http://www.kids.house.state.tx.us) to learn more about Texas government and the Texas House of Representatives if you have more questions!



## Three Branches of Texas State Government

### Executive

Governor Rick Perry is the head of the Executive branch of government and the leader of the State. The Governor works with State Senators and Representatives to pass laws that will help the citizens of Texas.



Governor Rick Perry

Before any bill can become a law, it must pass through the Governor's office, where it will be signed into law or vetoed.

The Governor is the only person who has the power to call a special session.

A Texas Governor must be at least 30 years old and a resident of Texas for 5 years before being elected.

### Legislative

The Texas Legislature is the lawmaking branch of the government. It is bicameral, meaning it is divided into two halves: the Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate. Both chambers have to make and approve the "rules" or laws that govern Texas.



Speaker Tom Craddick

The leader of the Texas House of Representatives is Speaker Tom Craddick, and the leader of the Senate is Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst.

There is a diverse group of 150 members in the Texas House of Representatives and 31 members of the Texas Senate. These men and women are citizens from around the state who live and work right next to you.



Lt. Governor David Dewhurst

The House and Senate meet every other year on the second Tuesday in January at noon to make laws. The Legislative session continues for no more than 140 days.

### Judicial

The Judicial branch is made up of different courts, the highest being the Texas Supreme Court, and the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals.

The Texas Supreme Court has nine elected judges, including the Chief Justice. Similarly, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals also has nine elected Judges, including the Presiding Judge.



The Supreme Court

Judges, the court leaders, decide the meaning of laws, how they are applied, and whether they break the rules of the Constitution. If a person or group is found guilty of breaking a law, the Judicial system decides how they should be punished.

## Write Your Legislator!

Do you want to let your legislators know what you think?

When writing your legislators about important issues, address your letters as follows:

The Honorable John Doe  
Texas House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, Texas 78768-2910

Senators should be addressed as follows:

The Honorable John Doe  
Texas Senate  
P.O. Box 12068  
Capitol Station  
Austin, Texas 78711

You can find out who represents you online at [www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us) and even send your legislators an e-mail!

Sign your name clearly and give your correct address so the legislator can respond your letter.



## Pop Quiz!

IN WHICH CHAMBER WOULD THIS BILL START?

A new law to pay for school buses from a new state gasoline tax.

- HOUSE CHAMBER
- SENATE CHAMBER
- HOUSE OR SENATE

answer: House Chamber

# How an Idea Becomes Law

## 1 introduction



Bills are introduced on the House floor by the member who wrote the bill. A brief description of the bill is read out loud in the chamber. The bill is then assigned to a committee.

## 2 committee action



In committee, members listen to testimony from the public, discuss issues relating to the bill, and then decide whether to move it on to the House floor for debate.

## 3 floor action



Bills are debated on the House floor. Changes can be made to the bill if a majority of members agree. Members vote; if a majority are in favor, the bill goes to the Senate chamber for approval.

## 4 sign bill into law



If both the Senate and the House vote in favor of a bill, it goes to the Governor's office for his signature, officially making the bill a Texas law.

# The State Seal

According to the Texas Constitution, the seal of the State of Texas is a star with five points surrounded by olive and live oak branches with the words "the State of Texas." This symbolic seal was originally adopted by the Republic of Texas and kept when Texas joined the Union in 1845. In 1961, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas proposed a design for the reverse of the state seal which was adopted by the 57th Legislature.



State seals are used on documents of high importance or high ceremony.



# Six Flags Over Texas

"Six Flags of Texas" is more than just an amusement park. It refers to the six different flags that have flown over Texas, starting in 1519.



**Texas Under Spain (1519-1685, 1690-1821)**  
 In 1519, Spain established the first European claim to what is now Texas. After much exploration, the first Spanish settlement, the Ysleta Mission near present-day El Paso, was established in 1681.

**Texas Under France (1685-1690)**  
 In 1685, France claimed parts of eastern Texas near the Gulf Coast to expand west of Louisiana and a colony called Fort St. Louis was founded. By 1690 the French abandoned their claim because of shipwrecks, disease, famine, hostile Indians and fighting.



**Texas Under Mexico (1821-1836)**  
 In 1821, Mexico won their independence from Spain. Hispanic settlers from the south and Anglos settlers from the north came to settle this frontier region. When Mexican General Santa Anna declared himself dictator, Texans revolted and won independence April 21, 1836 at the Battle of San Jacinto near Houston.

**Texas as a Republic (1836-1845)**  
 Before entering the Union, Texas remained an independent nation for nearly ten years. Things were hard for this new nation, but leaders like Sam Houston, the Texas Rangers and the ways of the cowboy will forever be remembered in history. On December 29, 1845, Texas joined the United States.



**Texas in the Confederacy (1861-1865)**  
 In 1861, Texas joined the Confederacy in their effort to separate from the Union. The "Stars and Bars" was the first Confederate flag flown in Texas. When the war was over, Texas returned as a member of the Union and attempted to rebuild the war-ravaged state.

**Texas in the USA (1845-1861, 1865-Present)**  
 In 1845, Texas became the 28th star on the U.S. flag when it re-joined the Union. The "Star Spangled Banner" remains the national flag of Texas today. The Lone Star emblem from the days of the Republic of Texas remains the state flag.



## The Texas Capitol

The Texas State Capitol in Austin, is one of the largest State Capitols in the country. Named a historic landmark in 1986, the building, modeled after the nation's Capitol in Washington DC, was built with local Texas materials including: Texas red granite, Texas limestone and Texas marble aggregate. It took almost 7 years to complete and cost nearly \$3 million.



In 1879, the Texas Legislature sold 3 million acres in the Texas panhandle. A group of Chicago businessmen paid over \$3 million in exchange for the land. The XIT Ranch, as the land came to be known, has a rich and interesting history. The land-for-money deal makes Texas the only state that used land to pay for its Capitol.

do you know?

Is it Capit**O**l or Capit**A**l? **BOTH!**

When referring to the **building** where the legislature meets, you spell it with an "o"  
 When you are referring to the **city** (ex: Austin), you spell it with an "a"

**Texas Pledge of Allegiance**  
 Honor the Texas flag;  
 I pledge allegiance to thee Texas,  
 one state under God,  
 one and indivisible.

**U.S. Pledge of Allegiance**  
 I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands: one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

**Texas Trivia**

The official dish of Texas is chili.

Texas's official dance is the square dance.

Texas is the only state to enter the United States by treaty instead of territorial annexation.

Caddo Lake is the only natural lake in the state.

Dr Pepper was invented in Waco in 1885.

The Heisman Trophy is named for John William Heisman the first full-time coach and athletic director at Rice University in Houston.

# Texas Founding Fathers



## Sam Houston

Born in Virginia and reared in Tennessee, Sam Houston spent much of his life in Texas.

He led Texans to victory as a commanding general of the army against Mexican General Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto. After declaring independence, he became the first President of the Republic of Texas.

Texas was annexed by the United States. Sam Houston became a U.S. Senator who supported unionism and friendship with the Native Americans. He returned to Texas and became governor in 1859, but later resigned from office when Texas seceded.

## Stephen F. Austin

Although Stephen F. Austin was not a native Texan, he is considered by many to be the founding father of modern day Texas.

Stephen F. Austin brought the first American families to settle into what was then Mexican Tejas. In addition to bringing new families to Texas, he helped the new colonists and the Mexican Government communicate with one another.

They established a new legal system, infrastructure and immigration policies for the colony. He played such a big role in shaping Texas that the Capital City was named Austin.



## Fun Texas Facts



STATE BIRD  
Mockingbird



STATE LARGE MAMMAL  
Longhorn



STATE FLOWER  
Bluebonnet



STATE INSECT  
Monarch Butterfly



STATE SMALL MAMMAL  
Armadillo

- ★ STATE CAPITAL  
Austin
- ★ STATEHOOD  
December 29, 1845
- ★ NICKNAME  
The Lone Star State
- ★ STATE MOTTO  
Friendship
- ★ STATE TREE  
Pecan Tree
- ★ STATE SONG  
"Texas, Our Texas"

Texas House of Representatives

# Kids House



Where Texas  
Kids Meet  
Texas State  
Government



[www.kids.house.state.tx.us](http://www.kids.house.state.tx.us)

*Check It Out! All New!*  
*Capitol Dome Tour • Kid-Friendly Laws*  
*Texas State Pledge*

