

State Government

SOL CE.7a

Essential Question:

What is the structure of Virginia's state government?
What are some of the powers of the three branches of state government?

Essential Understanding:

The form of government of the Commonwealth of Virginia is established by the Virginia Constitution.

Legislative, executive, and judicial powers are separated at the state level of government.

Structure and powers of the state government

The Virginia Constitution distributes power among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the state government.

The legislative branch is the General Assembly, a bicameral legislature — the House of Delegates and the Virginia Senate — that meets annually for a fixed number of days.

The executive power is exercised by the governor, who is elected for a four-year term of office. The governor appoints members of the cabinet, who oversee specific functions of government.

The lieutenant governor and the attorney general are executive branch officers who are elected for a four-year term of office.

The judicial power is exercised by a court system that consists of four levels of courts:

Supreme Court

Court of appeals

Circuit courts

District courts (including small claims courts and juvenile and domestic relations courts).