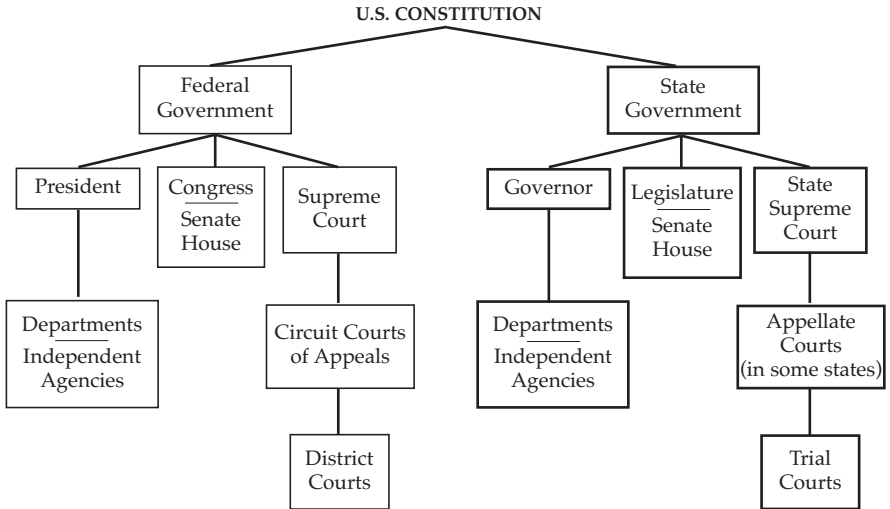


# ILLINOIS GOVERNMENT

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The U.S. Constitution established a federal system of government in which certain powers are given to the Federal Government and all other powers to the states. Federal and State Governments have Executive, Legislative and Judicial Branches to check and balance each other's powers.

**Branches:** In Illinois, the Governor, one of six elected constitutional officers, heads the Executive Branch. The General Assembly, made up of the 59-member Senate and 118-member House of Representatives, heads the Legislative Branch. The seven-member Supreme Court heads the Judicial Branch.

**Constitution:** Illinois Government operates under the 1970 State Constitution, which is the fourth Constitution in the state's history. The 1970 State Constitution modernized the previous 1870 Constitution by extending anti-discrimination rights, proclaiming healthy environment rights, granting "home-rule" rights to larger cities and counties to tax and rule without state authorization, and giving the line-item veto to the Governor. (See pages 100-133 for more information about the Constitution.)

**Local Government:** Three levels of local government exist in Illinois: County (102 in the state), Township (85 counties have them), and Municipal (1,291). There are 6,903 units of local government, including park, fire and other special districts.

**Political Parties:** They are responsible for the conduct of public affairs in the nation and Illinois. The two major parties, Republican and Democratic, were not established by the U.S. Constitution, but evolved over time and have been given rights in elections through federal and state laws.

**Judicial Branch:** The third branch of State Government is made up of the Supreme Court, five districts of the Appellate Court with 53 judges, and 22 judicial circuits that have 852 circuit and associate judges. The Supreme Court interprets the Illinois Constitution and laws, and hears final arguments in certain civil and criminal cases.