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Counties by the Numbers

How many counties are in your state?

Create a graph showing the population of each county in your state.

Create a graph showing the area of each county in your state.

One method of finding this information is to go to <http://explorer.naco.org/>. Click on State Search and then choose your state from the list on the right. A dialogue box with a state map will appear. In the upper left corner of the box, you will see a bullet point icon. Click the icon to display a list of the counties in the state along with key data about each county.

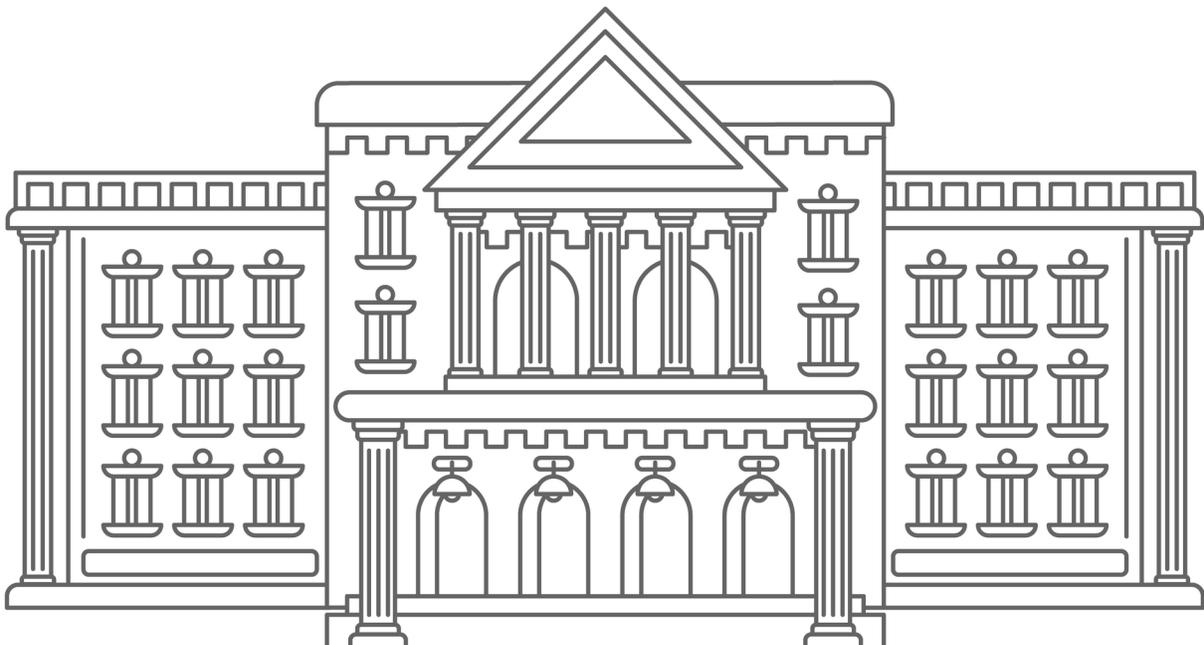
Compare the population of your county to the population of the most heavily populated county in your state and the least populated county in your state. What percent larger or smaller is your county to each of these?

Elections by the Numbers

What was the voter turnout in each election in your county for the last six years?

Has it increased or decreased?

What is the average voter turnout for the last six years?



Federal Government

How It Works

The federal government of the United States is made up of three branches, the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, and the Judicial Branch. According to USA.gov, it is the job of the Legislative Branch to make laws, the job of the Executive Branch to carry out laws, and the job of the Judicial Branch to evaluate laws.

Each branch is comprised of key parts. The Legislative Branch is the U.S. Congress. The Executive Branch is the President, Vice President, and Cabinet members. The Judicial Branch is the Supreme Court and other Federal courts.

The U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives together form the U.S. Congress which has the authority to enact legislation, declare war, confirm or reject certain Presidential appointments, establish an annual federal budget, levy taxes and tariffs, borrow money, regulate interstate commerce, and carry out many other duties and functions.

So let's break it down. What exactly is it that our elected officials do? What are their primary responsibilities? It's impossible to create a complete list, but here are some of the key functions some of our federal office holders execute.

President of the United States

- ◆ Serves as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces
- ◆ Negotiates international deals and treaties
- ◆ Appoints federal judges and justices of the Supreme Court
- ◆ Appoints ambassadors, Cabinet members, and other officials
- ◆ Acts as head of state
- ◆ Drafts legislation
- ◆ Develops foreign policy

U.S. Representatives

- ◆ Initiate revenue bills
- ◆ Impeach federal officials
- ◆ Create, debate, and vote on legislation
- ◆ Elect the President in the event of a tie in the electoral college

U.S. Senators

- ◆ Confirm certain Presidential appointments
- ◆ Ratify treaties
- ◆ Create, debate, and vote on legislation

On the Record

The best way to understand the jobs the President and legislators do is to take a closer look at what they have done. Look at the record of a U.S. President, a member of the U.S. Senate, and a member of the U.S. House of Representatives (choose either current office holders or a recent office holder). Write a 750-1,000 word report on each one, describing some of the decisions they have made, actions they have taken, and effects they have had on our nation.

Congress

Now let's turn our attention to the U.S. Congress. What types of bills and decisions have the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Congress been considering and debating lately? How do these have the potential to impact your everyday life? Choose a topic that interests you and find out what is or isn't being done to address it by the Congress. You can find some helpful information at www.house.gov/ and www.senate.gov/index.htm.

Big, Bigger, and Biggest

Do some research and find out:

- ◆ The area of the White House itself
- ◆ The area of the White House grounds
- ◆ The area of the U.S. Capitol

How do these compare to other famous landmarks in Washington D.C.? Choose at least three other structures such as the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the World War II Memorial, etc. to compare them to. Which is the largest? How many times larger is it than the others on your list?



Supreme Court of the United States

How It Works

The existence of the Supreme Court is guaranteed in the Constitution of the United States. It is the highest court in the land and hears cases that have been appealed at lower federal courts. It also hears cases appealed from state courts if the issue being appealed is a federal one. It is the trial court for special cases such as actions that the United States or one of its ambassadors is named in as a party.

Landmark Decisions

From zoning questions and personal lawsuits to ruling on the definition of marriage, judges at all levels of the judiciary make decisions every day that have the potential to affect every one of us. Below is a list of just a few of the landmark decisions the Supreme Court has made. Write one or two sentences for each decision explaining what made it significant.

- ◆ Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857)
- ◆ Brown v. Board of Education (1954)
- ◆ Mapp v. Ohio (1961)
- ◆ Engel v. Vitale (1962)
- ◆ Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)
- ◆ New York Times Co. v. Sullivan (1964)
- ◆ Miranda v. Arizona (1966)
- ◆ Roe v. Wade (1973)
- ◆ Texas v. Johnson (1989)
- ◆ Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe (2000)
- ◆ Zelma v. Simmons-Harris (2002)
- ◆ Grutter v. Bollinger (2003)
- ◆ Obergefell v. Hodges (2015)

Choose three of these decisions and write a paper examining what brought them about and what the effects of the decisions have been.

Under whose presidency were each of our current justices appointed? In considering a ruling such as Obergefell v. Hodges, what Presidents ultimately had influence over the men and women who made this ruling?