

The Three Branches of State Government

In order to impact the political process and successfully advance a children's agenda, first you need to understand the basics of state government and how the process works!

Just like the federal government established by our nation's founding fathers, the Kansas & Missouri state governments are composed of three branches: the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches. Power in state government is distributed amongst the three branches as a system of checks and balances to ensure that the citizens are being represented and served fairly. Ultimately, the citizens of the state have sovereign (supreme) power because they are responsible for electing representatives to the Legislative and Executive branches. If the citizens believe that they are not being represented well in government, then it their responsibility to exercise their sovereign power and vote officials out of office!

The different roles of the three branches of state government, to put it simply, are to make the laws (Legislative Branch), to implement and administer the laws (Executive Branch), and to interpret laws and ensure they are consistent with the state's constitution (Judicial Branch).

The following is an outline of the three branches of state government in Kansas & Missouri and some of the individuals or entities that work within each branch.

3 Branches of State Government

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Executive Branch

- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- Secretary of State
- Attorney General
- State Treasurer
- State Auditor
- State Departments, Boards, and Commissions



**Missouri Governor
Jay Nixon**

**Kansas Governor
Kathleen Sebelius**



Links

MO Governor: <http://governor.mo.gov/>

KS Governor: <http://www.governor.ks.gov/>



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Topeka, KS
State Capitol Building

Links

KS State Legislature:
www.kslegislature.org

MO House:
www.house.mo.gov

MO Senate:
www.senate.mo.gov



Jefferson City, MO
State Capitol Building

**Legislative Branch
(General Assembly/ State Legislature)**

**House of
Representatives**

- Speaker of the House
- Speaker Pro-Tem
- Majority Leader
- Minority Leader
- House Committees
- House Legislative Staff

Senate

- President (in MO, the Lieutenant Governor)
- President Pro-Tem (MO), Vice-President (KS)
- Majority Leader
- Minority Leader
- Senate Committees
- Senate Legislative Staff

Judicial

- State Supreme Court
- Court of Appeals
- District/Circuit Courts

#3



Facts About the Legislative Branch in KS & MO

Many advocates and agencies in the Greater Kansas City area are impacted by or just interested in the political process on both sides of state line. While most advocacy strategies can and should be used to advance children's issues in both Kansas and Missouri, there are some differences in the government structures and political processes of the two states that are important for advocates to understand.

	MISSOURI	KANSAS
Name of Legislative Branch	MO General Assembly	KS State Legislature
Regular Legislative Session	Annually, January-2nd week of May	Annually, January-early April.
Veto Session	Annually - The first Wednesday following the 2nd Monday in September. General Assembly may override Governor's veto of bills.	Annually, End of April— ? Final action on appropriations bills usually occurs during the regular veto session.
Special Session	May be called by the Governor or by a petition approved by 3/4 of the members in each chamber of the General Assembly. Subject matter may be specifically limited by the Governor.	May be called by the Governor or by a petition approved by two-thirds of the members in each chamber of the State Legislature anytime after the end of the regular legislative session.
State House of Representatives		
<i>Length of Term:</i>	2 years	2 years
<i>Maximum # of terms:</i>	4 terms for a total of 8 years	No term limits
<i># of House Districts:</i>	163 House Districts	125 House Districts
<i>Election Cycle:</i>	All house seats are up for election every two years.	All house seats are up for election every two years.
State Senate		
<i>Length of Term:</i>	4 years	4 years
<i>Maximum # of Terms:</i>	2 terms for a total of 8 years	No term limits
<i># of Senate Districts:</i>	34 Senate Districts	40 Senate Districts
<i>Election Cycle:</i>	Half (17) of the 34 Senate seats are up for election every two years, alternating between odd & even-numbered districts. In 2008, all of the odd-numbered districts are up for election.	All of the 40 Senate Districts are up for election at the same time every four years. All districts are up for election in 2008.