

ELECTED OFFICES EXPLAINED

Some people only vote for President because they are not sure about the other offices. Here's some basic information to help you.

Our system of government has 3 branches and each branch has its own responsibilities. This is called a system of checks and balances to make sure that no person has total power. These branches are – **Executive, Legislative** and **Judicial**. There are National, State, and local government levels.



On the **National** level, we elect the **President (Executive)** and members of **Congress (Legislative)** who are either **Representatives** or **Senators**.

The President chooses the **Vice President** as a running mate, the **Cabinet heads** (Executive) and the **Federal judges** (Judiciary). These choices matter because the Vice President and the Cabinet help run the government and create policy. The Vice President casts the deciding vote if there is a tie in the Senate. Federal judges decide whether laws are fair. The President sets the agenda for government, leads the country and the military, and works with other world leaders. The President signs bills passed by Congress to make them laws, or vetoes (says no to) a bill.



Congress passes Federal bills for the President to sign into laws dealing with the economy, the national defense, the environment, and constitutional issues for the good of the nation. If Congress has enough votes, it can override the President's veto.



On the **State** level, we elect the **Governor, the Lieutenant Governor** and the **Council of State (Executive)**, the **General Assembly** which has **Representatives** and **Senators (Legislative)**, and **Justices and Judges (Judicial)**.

The Council of State, although elected, is like the Cabinet. They are **Secretary of State, Attorney General, Commissioner of Agriculture, Commissioner of Insurance, Commissioner of Labor, Superintendent of Public Education, State Treasurer and State Auditor**. They run their departments for the benefit of the citizens.



Like the President, the **Governor** chooses other Department Heads (the Cabinet) and runs the State. The Governor also signs bills and has veto power.

The **General Assembly** passes bills for the State as a whole and sometimes for local areas.



The **Judiciary** has **District Court Judges** who serve local communities in traffic, criminal, family law and juvenile law cases; **Superior Court Judges** who hear serious criminal cases, personal injury cases and business cases; **Court of Appeals Judges** who determine if lower court rulings were correct; and **Supreme Court Justices** who review the Court of Appeals' decisions.



On the **Local government level**, we elect **City Council** and **Mayor, County Commissioners, School Board members**, and **Register of Deeds**.

Not all of these positions will be on the ballot every year.

To make things even more complicated, some government officials are elected by everyone in the state or county; others are elected only by people who live in a district.

Go to the DDW Voting Info Page, durhamdemwomen.org/voting-info for:

- A sample ballot – this really helps you know who your choices are for each type of race.
- Finding out Voter ID rules
- Getting instructions for an absentee ballot. If you think you may have a problem with your ID, no ID is needed to vote absentee