

## WRITE TO YOUR LEGISLATOR

### A Government Lesson

#### Meets These 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies Content Standards:

##### History

###### Chronology

Construct time lines with evenly spaced intervals for years, decades, and centuries to show the order of significant events in Ohio history.

###### Growth

Explain how Ohio progressed from territory to statehood, including the terms of the Northwest Ordinance

##### Government

###### Role of Government

Explain major responsibilities of each of the three branches of government in Ohio.

a. The legislative branch, headed by the General Assembly, makes state laws.

b. The executive branch, headed by the governor, carries out and enforces laws made by the General Assembly.

c. The judicial branch, headed by the Ohio Supreme Court, interprets and applies the law.

Explain why elections are used to select leaders and decide issues.

Explain the purpose of a democratic constitution:

a. To provide a framework for a government;

b. To limit the power of government;

c. To define authority of elected officials.

Explain that the Ohio Constitution tells how the state government should be organized and guarantees the rights of individuals.

##### Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities

###### Participation

Describe the ways in which citizens can promote the common good and influence their government including:

a. Voting;

b. Communicating with officials;

c. Participating in civic and service organizations;

d. Performing voluntary service.

###### Rights and Responsibilities

Explain why personal responsibilities (e.g., taking advantage of the opportunity to be educated) and civic responsibilities (e.g., obeying the law and respecting the rights of others) are important.

Explain the importance of leadership and public service.

Explain why characteristics such as respect for the rights of others, fairness, reliability, honesty, wisdom, and courage are desirable quality in the people citizens select as their leaders.

##### Social Studies Skills and Methods

###### Obtaining Information

Obtain information about state issues from a variety of print and electronic sources, and determine the relevance of information to a research topic:

a. Atlases;

b. Encyclopedias;

- c. Dictionaries;
- d. Newspapers;
- e. Multimedia/Electronic sources.

Use a glossary and index to locate information.

Use primary and secondary sources to answer questions about Ohio History.

#### Thinking and Organizing

Identify main ideas and supporting details from factual information

Distinguish between fact and opinion.

Formulate a question to focus research.

#### Problem Solving

Use a problem-solving/decision-making process which includes:

- a. Identifying a problem;
- b. Gathering information;
- c. Listing and considering options;
- d. Considering advantages and disadvantages of options;
- e. Choosing and implementing a solution.
- f. Developing criteria for judging its effectiveness.

### GLOSSARY

**act** – A bill that has passed through both houses and is awaiting the decision of the governor to make it a law or not.

**amendment** – A change to a constitution.

**bicameral** – A term that defines a legislature as having two houses.

**bill** – A proposal for a law that must be approved by the House and Senate before it can become an act then a law.

**campaign** – A series of activities that move toward a result. To run for office.

**capital** – The name of the center of government for a state. In Ohio, capital cities were Chillicothe, Zanesville, then Columbus.

**capitol** – The building in which state government work is done. The statehouse.

**citizen.**— A person who by birth or choice is a member of a state or nation.

**Coat of Arms** – A symbol of a state; another name for a state seal.

**constitution** – A document of fundamental principles that govern the way a state of nation is to be run.

**cornerstone** – A ceremonial stone placed in the exterior wall of a building. It is inscribed with a date and sometimes contains objects in its hollow center.

**district** – A portion of a country, state, or city that is set aside for electing its own officials, maintaining laws, providing schools, etc.

**election** – Choosing by vote.

**General Assembly** – The legislature or legislative branch of state government that makes the laws.

**government** – A rule of authority over a city, district, state, nation.

**governor** – The executive head of a state of the United States.

**Great Seal of Ohio** – An authentic emblem that officially represents a government; a Coat of Arms. If embossed or stamped onto a paper, it makes the document official.

**House of Representatives** – The lower branch of the law-making body of a state or the national government.

**Imperium in Imperio** – A state motto that once appeared on the state seal 1866-1868; it means “An Empire within an Empire.”

**Justice** – A judge on the Ohio Supreme Court

**law** – A bill that has passed through the legislature and has become a rule [law] through action or inaction of the governor.

**legislature** – A group of persons who have the duty and power to make laws; the General Assembly.

**majority party** – The political party that has the most members.

**minority party** – The political party that has the fewest members.

**oral history** – The telling of a historical time by a person who experienced the events.

**political party** – An organized group of citizens who agree on certain issues. President; today the most common political parties are the democrat, independent, and republican parties.

**Senate** – The upper branch of the law-making body of a state or nation.

**statehouse** – The building that is the center of government for the state; the capitol.

**Supreme Court** – The judicial branch of government. It interprets the laws.

**time capsule** – A hollow case or area in which objects of a date in time are placed for the future. A cornerstone is sometimes a time capsule.

**vote** – A formal means of choosing when combined with other votes, selects an outcome.

## **TIPS ON HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE LETTER TO YOUR LEGISLATORS**

Legislators (Senators and Representatives) represent you, the citizen, in the government process. In order for legislators to represent citizens, they must know how their constituents (you) feel about the issues that they are dealing with.

One of the most effective ways of communicating with your legislator is by writing a letter to him/her. Legislators welcome letters from their constituents. Letters provide constituents the opportunity to communicate their position on issues that are being debated in the legislature.

The following are tips for writing an effective letter to your legislator:

- Letters should be as brief and as specific as possible.
- If you are writing about specific legislation, use the bill number when possible.
- Clearly state your position.
- Explain how this legislation directly affects you or your community.

Legislators receive a lot of mail daily. Most legislators try to respond to their constituents in a timely manner. Be patient after sending your letter, it may take a few weeks for the legislator to research your question or concern and respond to your inquiry.

Legislator addresses (in Columbus) are:

Senator (his/her name)  
Ohio Senate  
Senate Building  
Columbus, OH 43266-604

The Honorable (his/her name)  
Ohio House of Representatives  
77 South High Street  
Columbus, OH 43266-0603