



# Power to the people

from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for Government

Target audience – Government learners

Time required – 15 minutes

## Activity

Examine how citizens can hold their state and local governments accountable.

## Social Studies Standards

**C3:D2.Civ.2.9-12.** Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.  
**C3:D2.Civ.12.9-12.** Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.  
**C3:D2.Civ.8.9-12.** Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.

## Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to explain the purpose and use of the recall to hold state and local officials accountable for their actions.
- Students will be able to identify how and where the referendum is used to initiate or approve legislation.

Map URL: <http://esriurl.com/govGeoInquiry4>

## ? Ask

### Which states grant recall powers to their citizens?

- Click the link above to launch the map.
- In a democracy, power is held by the people. A recall empowers voters to remove public officials before the end of their term.
- ? Where are the states with recall of local officials concentrated? [*In the West with some in the East and South.*]
- With the Details button underlined, click the button, Show Contents of Map.
- Check the box for the layer, Recall State Officials.
- ? Do more or fewer states permit the recall of state officials? [*Fewer permit recalls.*]
- ? Why might that be? [*Local officials more directly affect their citizens.*]

## ↓ Acquire

### Who has been recalled and why?

- Check the box for the layer, Recalled.
- ? Which states seem to have the most officials recalled? [*Michigan, Wisconsin, and California*]
- Check the box for the layer, Reason For Recall.
- On the map, click a few star symbols and examine the pop-ups.
- ? What are some reasons given for recall? [*Raising taxes, firing officials, and laying off workers*]
- ? Are all recall attempts successful? [*No.*]
- ? Do you think judges should be subject to recall? [*Answers will vary.*]

## 🔍 Explore

### How else do states limit the power of office holders?

- Check the box for layer, Term Limits. Turn off all other layers.
- ? Do most states have term limits? [*No, only 14 states do.*]
- ? Why do you think these states adopted term limits? [*To get new ideas and people into offices.*]
- Turn on and off the layers, Term Limits and Recall State Officials.
- ? What do you observe? [*Most states with term limits do not have recall of state officials.*]
- ? How could you explain the relationship that you observed? [*Term limits in effect remove legislators from office.*]

more ►

## Analyze

### How does voter power differ from state to state?

- With the initiative process, citizens can propose new laws or amendments for inclusion on the ballot.
- Turn on only the layer, Initiative.
- With Details underlined, click the button, Show Map Legend. (See the ToolTip below.)
- ? How does the initiative vary from state to state? [*Some states are limited to only statutes or amendments.*]
- Turn on the layers, Recall Local Officials and Term Limit.
- ? Where are most of the blank states located? [*In the Northeast*]
- ? What could account for this pattern? [*Legacy of colonial constitutions*]

## Act

### How democratic is the recall?

- Some states do not require specific reasons for a recall.
- ? What do you think was the intent of the recall? [*To prevent corruption.*]
- ? When do you think the recall is justified? [*Answers will vary.*]
- ? Should all states adopt recall, term limits, and initiative? Why or why not? [*Answers will vary.*]

## LEGENDS, LAYERS, AND SYMBOLS

- To the left of the map, click Details and then click the Show Contents Of Map button. The Contents pane allows you to turn on and off layer visibility.
- Press the Legend button. The Legend pane allows you to identify symbols.
- On the map, click symbols for more information that will appear in a pop-up.

## VIEW A TABLE

- Tables are only available for certain map layers.
- In the Contents pane, point to a layer and click the Show Table button that appears under the layer name.
- Click the field name and choose Sort Ascending or Sort Descending.

## Next Steps

DID YOU KNOW? ArcGIS Online is a mapping platform freely available to public, private, and home schools. A school subscription provides additional security, privacy, and content features. Learn more about ArcGIS Online and how to get a school subscription at <http://www.esri.com/schools>.

THEN TRY THIS...

- Create a presentation in ArcGIS Online comparing powers granted to the citizens in your state and when and how they were assumed.
- Use analysis tools to calculate the density layer for recalled officials.

## TEXT REFERENCES

This GIS map has been cross-referenced to material in sections of chapters from these high school texts.

- *Magruder's Government, State and Local Government* by Pearson — Chapter 13
- *Civics and Economics, State Government* by Holt — Chapter 8
- *Government Alive! Politics, Power, and You* by Teachers' Curriculum Institute — Chapter 11