Federal District Courts
from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for Government

Target audience – Government learners  Time required – 15 minutes

Activity
Understand the distribution and function of federal district courts.

Social Studies Standards
C3:D2.Civ.1.9-12. Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of local, state, tribal, national, and international civic and political institutions.
C3:D2.Civ.3.9-12. Analyze the effect of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of national and international order.
C3:D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens’ and institutions’ effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

Learning Outcomes
• Students will explore the distribution of federal court districts.
• Students will identify how the court system affects individuals.

Map URL: http://esriurl.com/govGeoinquiry12

Ask

Where are district courts?

→ Click the link above to launch the map.
? How many federal regional circuits are there? [12]
→ With the Details button underlined, click the button Show Contents Of Map.
→ Check the box to the left of the layer name, Constitutional Convention.
? What article of the U.S. Constitution outlined the Federal Court system? [Article III]
→ Zoom out on the map until you can see Alaska and the Gulf of Mexico.
? Which districts include the U.S. territories? [9, 3, and 1]

Acquire

What do district courts do?

→ Federal court jurisdiction is limited to the types of cases listed in the Constitution and specifically provided for by Congress.
→ Turn off the layer, Constitutional Convention.
→ Turn on the layer, Jurisdiction.
→ Explore the four simulated cases in this layer.
? Do you think that these court cases would be heard in a federal district court or in a state court? [All cases would be heard in a federal district court.]

Explore

How long does a chief judge serve?

→ Turn off the layer, Jurisdiction. Turn on the layer, Chief Judge.
? How many presidents have appointed current judges? [Four]
→ Press the button, Bookmark. Select Appointments.
→ Click several green or purple districts. Note which president appointed the current district judge.
→ Select the bookmark for Judge Real. Click the map note named Real.
? Who appointed Manuel Real? How long has he been a federal judge? [President Johnson; 1966]
? How many years can a chief judge serve? [They are appointed for life.]
Analyze

What makes federal courts unique?

- Turn on the Case #1 layer.
- Track the progression of the case through the system using the numbered map notes.
- How did each court rule in this case? [The district court sided with school officials, and the upper court overturned it to side with students.]
- Turn off the Case #1 layer and turn on the Case #2 layer.
- How did each court rule in this case? [Each court reversed the previous court's decision.]

Act

How do court systems work together?

- Turn on the Case #1 layer.
- Track the progression of the case through the system using the numbered map notes.
- How did each court rule in this case? [The district court sided with school officials, and the upper court overturned it to side with students.]
- Turn off the Case #1 layer and turn on the Case #2 layer.
- How did each court rule in this case? [Each court reversed the previous court's decision.]

CHANGE LAYER TRANSPARENCY

- From the Details pane, click the Show Contents Of Map button.
- Point to a layer, click the three blue dots below the layer name, and choose Transparency.
- Modify the layer transparency to see an active layer below the top layer.

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...

- Explore the America’s Civil Courts: Whom Do We Serve? story map (http://esriurl.com/Geo45C).
- Make a story map of a landmark Supreme Court case.

TEXT REFERENCES

- United States Government: Democracy in Action by Glencoe — Chapter 11
- Magruder’s American Government by Pearson — Chapter 4