



# 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.]*

more ►

## Analyze

### What makes federal courts unique?

- Turn off all previous layers, and turn on the Bankruptcies By Districts layer.
- ? How many total bankruptcies were filed in the 11<sup>th</sup> district? [114,277]
- ? Do other courts hear bankruptcy cases? [No]
- ? Turn off the layer, Bankruptcies by Districts.

## 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

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

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