

# A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE COURTS:



## Judges Compare State and Federal Judicial Systems

### VOCABULARY WORDS (*Grades 6-12*):

**Checks and Balances** – a system that allows each branch of a government to amend or veto acts of another branch so as to prevent any one branch from exerting too much power

**Civil** – a lawsuit based on a private wrong, as distinguished from a crime, or to enforce rights through remedies of a private or non-penal nature. All legal proceedings which are not criminal actions are civil actions.

**Class action lawsuit** – a lawsuit filed by a small group of plaintiffs on behalf of themselves and numerous other persons in a similar situation

**Criminal** – relating to crime or to the prosecution of suspects in a crime

**Executive Branch** – of or relating to the execution of the laws and the conduct of public and national affairs; belonging to the branch of government that is charged with such powers as diplomatic representation, superintendence of the execution of the laws, appointment of officials, and veto power over legislation

**Federalism** – the distribution of power in an organization (such as a government) between a central authority and the constituent; a system of government in which the same territory is controlled by two levels of government. Generally, an overarching national government is responsible for broader governance of larger territorial areas, while the smaller subdivisions, states, and cities govern the issues of local concern

**Felony** – a crime of a graver nature than a misdemeanor. Generally, an offense punishable by death or imprisonment in penitentiary in excess of one year

**Judicial Branch** – of or relating to a judgment, the function of judging, the administration of justice; belonging to the branch of government that is charged with trying all cases and with the administration of justice within its jurisdiction

**Jurisdiction** – 1. The authority to administer justice by hearing and deciding controversies. 2. The extent or range of judicial authority. 3. The territory over which judicial authority is exercised.

**Lawsuit** – a case before a court

**Legislative Branch** – having the power or performing the function of making or enacting laws; belonging to the branch of government that is charged with such powers as making laws, levying and collecting taxes, and making financial appropriations

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**Missouri Constitution** – the basic principles and laws of a state that determine the powers and duties of the government and guarantee certain rights to the people in it; the Missouri Constitution is the ultimate legal authority in the state, subject only to the supremacy of the U.S. Constitution

**Nonpartisan** – not supporting or controlled by a political party or special interest group.

**Nonpartisan Court Plan** – a procedure for the selection and appointment of some state judges, in which the governor appoints a judge from a panel of candidates selected by a non-political nominating commission. A judge appointed under the nonpartisan plan cannot engage in politics and stands for retention periodically without being opposed by another “candidate.”

**Prosecutor** – one who instigates a prosecution against another, by filing a complaint or making an accusation

**U.S. Constitution** – the basic principles and laws of a nation that determine the powers and duties of the government and guarantee certain rights to the people in it; the U.S. Constitution is the supreme law of the United States

### Sources for definitions:

<http://missourilawyershelp.org/public-resources/legal-glossary/>

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

<https://www.dictionary.com/>

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/>