

Philadelphia City Council is the *legislative branch* of the *local government* of the City of Philadelphia.

Key Terminology

Government: A group of people who make laws and keep order in society.

Level of government: The area or territory that a government oversees. The higher the level, the more territory the government oversees. Higher levels of government have authority over the lower levels.

Federal government: The level of government that oversees the entire *country*.

State government: The level of government that oversees a *state*.


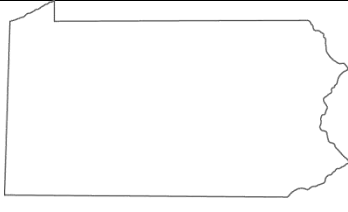

Local government: The level of government that oversees a *city* or *town*.

Branch of government: A part of a government that has a specific responsibility.

Legislative branch: The branch of the government that *writes* the laws.

Executive branch: The branch of the government that *executes*, or *carries out*, the laws.

Judicial branch: The branch of the government that *interprets* the laws to be sure they're followed.

			
Territory:	USA	Pennsylvania	Philadelphia
Level of government:	National	State	Local (or municipal)
Legislative branch leader of that level:	Congress	PA Legislature	City Council
Executive branch leader of that level:	President	Governor	Mayor
Judicial branch leader of that level:	US Supreme Court	PA Supreme Court	Court of Common Pleas

What Does City Council Do?

City Council's role is established in the **Home Rule Charter**, the document that sets up the rules for our local government. (The Home Rule Charter does the same job for the city that the U.S. Constitution does for the United States.) Most importantly, City Council writes the laws that govern the city. It can hold hearings to ask people questions in order to gather information or call attention to an issue. It also must approve the people that the mayor chooses to do certain jobs in the government.

There are usually 17 members of City Council, and each member gets one vote. Therefore, it usually requires at least nine votes for Council to agree to do something. (There are exceptions in which Council needs more than nine votes to do something.) The city is divided into ten districts; each district elects one member of council. The other seven members are **at-large**; they are elected to represent the entire city.

Suggested Activities

- Use the City Council website to learn which council district your home or school is in, and which council member represents that district.
- Use the City Council website to look up the web page of the council member who represents your home and school. Which issues does the council person promote on the website? Which committees does the council member serve on?
- What topics do you think your council member focuses on? Why are these important for the city of Philadelphia?
- If you could ask the council member one question, what would it be? Why?

Resources

To find the council member for a specific location: Scroll to the bottom of the homepage, click the link and enter their address.

Council members: <http://phlcouncil.com/council-members/>

Committees: <http://phlcouncil.com/standing-committees/>

Teacher Resources:

Twitter @PHLCouncil

Facebook: Facebook.com/PhillyCityCouncil

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/PhillyCityCouncil>