About Rules and Laws

Living in a Community

A community is a group of people who share a location, race, ethnic background, religion, interest, or other commonality. A person can be born into a community, such as a family or a nationality, or can choose a community, such as a group of friends or an institution of higher education. Communities overlap, from school groups to neighborhoods to sports teams to voting districts, and they come in all sizes. Nearly every person is part of more than one community, beginning with their family, then their neighborhood, city, state, region, and country.

People have lived in communities for hundreds of thousands of years. While it may be physically possible for humans to live on their own, isolated from the rest of humanity, the reality isn't always practical. Solo survival is difficult. In a community, people share skills and supplies to feed, clothe, and house everyone. Humans are also naturally social creatures. Most people thrive when in the company of others. The earliest communities ensured that humans were both physically and emotionally nourished. Humans continue to care for one another today, sharing their material goods and physical labor with those in need and speaking up for those who are being treated unfairly.

Rules and Laws

Communities could not function without rules. Many people believe that chaos would reign if everyone did what they wanted whenever they wanted. Since the founding of the United States, there have been great strides in laws that aim for the equal treatment of all Americans.

There are three kinds of rules: those made by legislative bodies, those made by nonlegislative bodies, and less formal rules that are often shaped by cultural norms. Children encounter many legislative rules (laws) in their daily lives. These may include crossing streets at crosswalks and watching family members stop at stop signs and red lights when they are driving. Louisiana has laws specifically designed to keep children safe. For example, children ages twelve and under are required to wear a helmet while riding a bicycle. Children riding in cars are required to use a child safety seat or booster seat depending on their age and size.

Classroom rules and home rules fall into the second and third categories. They are generally made by one or two people, such as a teacher or parents. These rules often include respecting others, taking turns, and being a good sport. Children are explicitly taught these rules when they are young; they become more "unspoken" as people get older.

About Making Rules

Following Rules and Laws

Following rules and laws is an important part of being a member of a community and is integral for the community's success. Rules and laws promote order and safety. Various adults within the community establish and enforce rules. Many of these figures are easily identifiable to students, including their teacher and school principal.

It is important to note that different community leaders have different rulemaking and rule-enforcing authorities. Students answer to teachers, who establish rules for their classroom. Students and teachers answer to the principal and state and local school boards, who make rules for the entire school. Other adults within a school community help students learn and be safe, including custodial workers.

In the larger community, firefighters and rescue workers and law enforcement help with problem-solving, respond in emergency situations, and enforce the law, including issuing citations and fines. Individuals within a community can also work together to solve a variety of issues and invest in the community independent of government leadership and law enforcement.

About Local Government

How Laws Are Made

Laws are made by legislative bodies such as Congress and state legislatures. The United States is a democracy, which means that the government exists at the will of the people. U.S. citizens have the right to vote and elect their lawmakers and other government leaders, like the president. If they are unhappy with the performance of these leaders, they can vote for other people in the next election, thereby "firing" those whose performances are not up to standard. The federal government's legislative bodies (Congress) are the House of Representatives and the Senate. Representatives are elected every two years; each senator faces an election every six years. A state's number of representatives is determined by the size of the state's population. Every state has two senators. This ensures a somewhat even division of power between large states and small states.

Purposes of Local Government

Local governments exist to meet community needs. Besides establishing various rules and laws, local governments are also responsible for

- operating police and fire departments;
- providing emergency and health services;
- overseeing public works, transportation, and parks and recreation; and
- implementing federal and state programs.

Structure of Local Governments

The U.S. Constitution divides power between the federal government and state governments. It does not grant any powers specifically to local governments. Thus, throughout the United States, local governments are created by state governments and have only those powers delegated to them by their respective states.

Louisiana law creates two types of local government. Parishes are the equivalent of counties in other states. Louisiana is divided into sixty-four parishes, the borders of which reflect some of the original boundaries of Catholic parishes from the colonial period.

Within parishes are municipalities. Municipalities include villages, towns, cities, boroughs, and townships. Municipalities vary in size both by area and by population. Louisiana's largest municipality by population is the city of New Orleans, with more than three hundred thousand people. Its smallest municipality is the village of Mound, in Madison Parish, which, according to the 2020 Census, had fewer than twenty residents.

Parish Government Structure

Thirty-eight parishes in Louisiana are governed by the police jury system, which dates to 1807, predating statehood. A police jury government has between five and fifteen elected members who function as a county board of commissioners. Police juries perform both the legislative and the executive functions of parish government. Their powers include passing and enforcing local ordinances; maintaining infrastructure, prisons, and hospitals; and levying taxes.

The Louisiana constitution permits parishes, by majority vote, to replace police jury rule via the adoption of a home rule charter, a type of local constitution that defines the structure of government for the parish. Today, twenty-six parishes operate under a home rule charter. This charter gives a parish greater autonomy from the state than it has under a police jury; the Louisiana constitution states that a charter government may exercise any power not denied by general law. Most parishes with a home rule charter—twenty-one of twenty-six—use the president-council structure, in which the parish president, an elected executive, carries out legislation passed by the elected council. One parish, Caddo, has a commission-administration government. The Caddo Parish Commission is an elected body with twelve commissioners. The commission makes laws for the parish and is also responsible for appointing a chief executive officer called the parish administrator. Four other parishes—including New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Lafayette—have a consolidated city-parish government. This form of government merges parish government with municipal government.

Parishes make laws using procedures similar to the lawmaking procedures of the U.S. Congress. In the president-council system, the council enacts ordinances by majority vote, and the president approves or vetoes them. Police juries also enact ordinances by majority vote, but because there is no separate executive, there is no veto process.

Municipal Government Structure

Many municipalities in Louisiana operate under the mayor-board of aldermen structure. The mayor is the elected executive leader of a municipality. The board of three to nine elected aldermen functions as a town or city council. Depending on the municipality, some aldermen may be elected at-large, meaning they are elected by—and represent—the entire population of the municipality. Other aldermen may be elected to represent specific districts within the municipality. Municipalities elect the chiefs of police, while other positions like the parish clerk and the tax collector are appointed by the mayor and aldermen. Locally elected officials typically serve four-year terms.

About Symbols of the United States

The National Anthem

"The Star-Spangled Banner" has been the national anthem, or national song, of the United States since 1931. Its lyrics are from a poem written by Francis Scott Key explaining what he witnessed during and after a nighttime battle between the United States and Great Britain at Fort McHenry in Maryland during the War of 1812. Fort McHenry is a coastal fort designed to defend against attacks from the sea. The events referenced in the poem took place in September 1814. Key went to a British warship on the night of September 13 hoping to secure the release of some American prisoners. That same night, the British Royal Navy began bombarding the fort. Key recalled seeing in the morning that the enormous U.S. flag over the fort was still flying—the bombardment had not worked, and the American defenders were still holding the fort. Key wrote set his poem to the tune of a song called "To Anacreon in Heaven."

The song became very popular, but more than a century passed before it became the national anthem. The song was used as the U.S. Navy's anthem from 1889 and as the anthem of the U.S. armed forces from 1916, by order of President Woodrow Wilson. In 1931, Congress voted to make the song the national anthem.

The Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance first appeared in a magazine for children called *The Youth's Companion* in September 1892. The original words were "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands; one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." The pledge was developed by people who wished to find ways to promote patriotic sentiments among the nation's youth.

The pledge has been revised several times. The phrase "my Flag" was replaced by "the flag of the United States of America" in 1924. In 1942, with World War II underway, the pledge was officially recognized by the United States government. The phrase "under God" was added in 1954.

Symbols

A symbol is something that represents something else. The United States is known around the world by several key symbols, the most recognizable of which is probably the American flag, which was approved by the Continental Congress on June 14, 1777. Today, the flag remains a symbol of freedom, national pride, and individuals coming together as one nation.

Although it has gone through many iterations over the years, by law the flag must have thirteen alternating red and white horizontal stripes and a navy blue rectangle in the upper-left corner that provides a backdrop for a field of stars. The number of stripes represents the number of American colonies—and first states—in 1776. The stars represent the number of states in the Union.

The bald eagle has been a symbol of the United States since 1782, when it appeared on the official seal of the United States. Eagles have been viewed as symbols of strength since ancient times; in ancient Rome, the eagle was a symbol of governmental power. Adult bald eagles are strong and independent—similar to how the United States viewed itself. On the seal, a bald eagle holds arrows and an olive branch in its talons, which represent the federal government's powers of war and peace.

Seats of Government

The White House

Buildings can also be symbols. The White House is the home of the president and their family. They generally reside in the upper levels of the six-story building. The president and presidential staff work in the lower levels, which include the Oval Office. Every president since John Adams, second president of the United States, has resided in the White House, which was completed in the first years of the 1800s. The White House is one of the oldest federal buildings in Washington, D.C., and one of the most recognizable homes in the world. Sometimes called "the People's House," it is also a symbol of democracy.

The U.S. Capitol

The U.S. Capitol building is another easily recognizable symbol of the United States and its federal government. Located in the geometric center of and on one of the highest elevations in the city, the Capitol can be seen from nearly everywhere in Washington, D.C. It is the home of Congress, the legislative branch of the federal government. The House of Representatives occupies the north wing—on the left when viewed from the National Mall—and the Senate occupies the south wing. Visitors can watch House and Senate debates from galleries at the top of each chamber. In addition to legislative chambers, offices, press rooms, and workspaces, the Capitol building has several art and history exhibits that are open for public viewing. The building and the legislators within it have withstood the nation's most difficult times, from a British assault during the War of 1812 to the attack of January 6, 2021. The Capitol stands as a reminder of the voice of the people and the power it holds.

Holidays

People who live in the United States are also united by the celebration or observance of common national holidays.

- Martin Luther King Jr. Day, also known as MLK Day, is observed on the third Monday of January. It honors the life and work of civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- Presidents' Day is observed on the third Monday of February. It originated with celebrations of George Washington's birthday (February 22) but was later expanded to honor Abraham Lincoln and eventually all former presidents.

- Memorial Day is the last Monday in May. It honors U.S. military veterans who died during war.
- Juneteenth, which takes place on June 19, celebrates the end of slavery in the United States.
- Independence Day occurs on July 4 every year. It commemorates the Continental Congress's acceptance of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, and the American colonies' official separation from Great Britain.
- Labor Day is observed on the first Monday in September. It became a federal holiday in the late nineteenth century as a way to honor the sacrifices and contributions of American workers.
- Veterans Day honors all veterans who have served in any U.S. wars. It is observed on November 11, which is the day of the armistice that ended World War I.
- Thanksgiving is observed on the fourth Thursday of November. It became a national holiday in 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed that Thursday, November 26, 1863, would be a day of thanks for the entire country.
- Christmas, the Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus, was declared a federal holiday in 1870. However, it is important to note that many Americans, and therefore many Louisianans, are not Christian and do not celebrate Christmas.

About Symbols of Louisiana

The Pelican State

Pelicans have been a popular and beloved symbol of Louisiana from as early as 1812, when the bird first appeared on the newly established state's seal. The pelican became a part of the state flag in 1912 to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Louisiana statehood. The 1912 flag featured a mother pelican feeding her young by tearing at her breast against a blue background. This self-sacrificing act—not characteristic of actual pelicans, who feed regurgitated fish to their young—is a symbol in Catholicism that was introduced to Louisiana by French colonists. The state's motto, "Union Justice Confidence," appeared beneath the nesting pelican. The state flag was updated in 2010 to standardize the inclusion of three drops of blood, the exact wording of the motto, and a more detailed depiction of the pelican.

While this current state flag features a white pelican, it is meant to represent the brown pelican. This is why the flag pelican has a yellow tuft on its head. The brown pelican has been the official bird of Louisiana since 1966. Pelicans are community-centric, family-based animals. Mating pairs share parenting duties to raise their young. It is these behaviors that helped make the bird a symbol of Louisiana's values. During the 1960s, the use of DDT and other chemical pesticides caused brown pelicans to disappear from Louisiana, and they were considered an endangered species from 1970 to 2009, when brown pelicans began to be reintroduced to Louisiana from Florida.

Louisiana Culture

Louisiana has a rich and diverse history that has contributed to its culture. As a result, many of Louisiana's distinctive traditions, celebrations, artistic forms, and foods have become symbols of the state.

Defining Louisiana's Culture

Culture comprises the various tangible and intangible characteristics that unify a group, community, or nation from one generation to the next. Tangible characteristics include styles of dress, cooking, and housing. They also include artistic expression. Intangible characteristics include belief systems, language, customs, traditions, behaviors, and social norms. Louisiana's distinct culture is a blend of Native American, European, and African cultures.

St. Louis Cathedral

The St. Louis Cathedral, shown on the opening page of the chapter, is a historic landmark in New Orleans's French Quarter. The original church, dedicated to Louis IX of France, was completed in 1727. It stood until 1788, when a fire burned the church and some of the surrounding buildings to the

ground. Construction of the second Church of St. Louis started in 1789 and was completed in 1794. Unlike the first church, the second was the gift of a wealthy Spanish colonist. The cathedral was expanded through the 1800s, making it the impressive structure it is today.

Mardi Gras

In the Catholic religion, Mardi Gras occurs on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday and the start of the Lenten season. In French, *Mardi Gras* means "Fat Tuesday." The day is viewed as an opportunity to eat decadently before entering a period of austerity and fasting. The Carnival season is celebrated around the world, most notably in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In the United States, particularly in New Orleans, the Mardi Gras season begins on January 6, but depending on location, the Carnival season may last for days, weeks, or months.

Mardi Gras was first introduced to colonial Louisiana in 1699 by the French explorer Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville. Over time, New Orleans became synonymous with Mardi Gras, especially as the city and its French Catholic population grew. The first Mardi Gras parade was held in 1857. That year also marked the development of the first krewes, or groups dedicated to organizing parades, balls, and other Mardi Gras events.

Today, dozens of krewes partake in Mardi Gras festivities. Celebrants attend parades and wear elaborate costumes and masks. Traditional Mardi Gras colors are green, purple, and gold, symbolizing faith, justice, and power. Throws, the tossing of beaded necklaces and trinkets from parade floats, is a popular Mardi Gras tradition.

King Cake

King cake is a popular Mardi Gras tradition that was introduced by French and Spanish Catholics during Louisiana's colonial period. King cakes were originally associated with the Catholic holiday of Epiphany on January 6, a celebration of the three magi (or kings) who bestowed gifts upon the infant Jesus. Today, king cakes can be purchased from January through Ash Wednesday.

Louisiana-style king cakes are ring-shaped cakes or sweet breads that are iced and decorated with purple, green, and gold. King cakes vary in preparation and filling, with some featuring fruit or cream. In the past, a bean was baked into each cake. This tradition was supplanted in the 1950s by the inclusion of a toy shaped like a baby. Whoever finds the toy becomes "king" for the day and is expected to host the following year's Mardi Gras celebration.

Music of Louisiana

Cajun Music

In 1755, Acadians, people of French descent, were exiled from what is now Canada. Many Acadians settled in Louisiana and brought their unique cultural traditions and music with them. Descendants of the Acadians are known as Cajuns. Cajun music is distinguished by its French lyrics and use of button accordion and fiddle. This style is intended for dancing, and most songs are written for two-steps (faster dances) and waltzes (slower dances). Cajun music also incorporates influences from other

cultures, including Native American, African American, Irish, and German. The use of guitars, drums, and bass are common in contemporary performances. Artists also perform traditional Cajun songs as well as new ones.

Zydeco Music

Zydeco is a Louisiana musical tradition that blends musical styles from French, Afro-Caribbean, and African American cultures. The word *zydeco* comes from the French saying, "Les haricots ne sont pas salés," figuratively meaning "the times are hard." Zydeco music is characterized by its lively beat and its use of the accordion, fiddle, and washboard, called a *frottoir*. Guitars are also common in zydeco music. Although zydeco music has long been a mainstay of Louisiana culture, it gained mainstream popularity during the 1980s.

Jazz Music

Jazz is an improvisational music style that first developed in African American communities in New Orleans during the late 1800s and early 1900s. It grew from other popular musical forms of the time, like ragtime and blues. It was also influenced by European, Indigenous, and other musical traditions. Jazz music was originally intended for dancing. Over time, it evolved into other forms, including those primarily intended for listening. The first jazz recording was made in 1917 and contributed to the genre's popularity, spread, and development. Early influential jazz musicians include New Orleans natives Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong. Jazz music incorporates a variety of instruments including trumpets, trombones, pianos, saxophones, and bass.

Louisiana Cuisine

Gumbo and Jambalaya

Gumbo is the official state cuisine of Louisiana. The dish has West African origins and was introduced to Louisiana by enslaved people. The word *gumbo* comes from the West African word for okra, *ki ngombo*. Okra is a natural thickener that was used in traditional West African stews. Over time, the dish blended West African, Native American, and European culinary traditions. Some gumbos use the Native American ingredient filé, ground sassafras leaves. Filé, like okra, has thickening properties and is also used for its distinct flavor. The use of a roux, a mixture of flour and fat cooked to a deep golden color, was introduced from French cooking. Creole gumbo is typically made with seafood and tomatoes, while Cajun gumbo includes meats and no tomatoes. Gumbo is served with rice.

Jambalaya, like gumbo, combines different culinary traditions, including influences from African, French, and Spanish cultures. One possible origin for the dish is Spanish paella. The base of jambalaya is a mix of aromatic vegetables—bell peppers, celery, and onions—known as the "holy trinity." Meat and/or seafood, vegetables, spices, and rice are cooked together in a flavorful broth. Many jambalaya recipes feature andouille, a smoked French sausage. Like gumbo, there are Creole and Cajun versions of jambalaya. Creole jambalaya uses tomatoes, while Cajun jambalaya does not.

Crawfish and Étouffée

Crawfish—also called crayfish, crawdads, and mudbugs—are freshwater crustaceans found around the world. A staple of Native American diets and, later, Cajun cuisine, the crawfish became the state crustacean of Louisiana in 1983.

Étouffée (/eh*too*fay/)—French for "smothered"—is a dish featuring seafood (often crawfish or shrimp) or meat smothered in a rich sauce thickened by a roux and served over rice. Like jambalaya and gumbo, étouffée is influenced by Cajun and Creole culinary traditions and includes the "holy trinity" of bell peppers, celery, and onions. The origins of étouffée are unclear; however, stories point to the city of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana—the "Crawfish Capital of the World"—as early as the 1920s.

Tamales

Tamales are a traditional Mesoamerican dish dating back thousands of years. Masa, a fine corn flour, is used to make tamale dough. Traditionally, the dough is wrapped in corn husks or banana leaves and then steamed. Some modern recipes use parchment paper. Tamales may be stuffed with a variety of savory or sweet fillings, including fish, meats, cheeses, dried fruit, spices, and vegetables.

Tamales were likely introduced to Louisiana by migrant workers from Mexico in the early 1900s. Since then, they have become a popular food across Louisiana and often reflect the culinary and cultural influences of the local community, including the New Orleans-style hot tamale—a unique variation of the traditional dish that includes wrapping tamales in paper before simmering them in tomato sauce.