

Welcome to ACNJ's

Lunch &
Learn



CIVICS 101
WHY VOTING MATTERS

Facilitated by:
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ACNJ: Who Are We

Children can't vote. They have no political influence. They can't tell our state leaders what they need. That's why we're here.

Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) works with local, state and federal leaders to identify and implement changes that will benefit New Jersey's children.

Our work results in better laws and policies, more effective funding and stronger services for children and families. This means more children are given the chance to grow up safe, healthy and educated.

A cornerstone of ACNJ's success is its independence. We are strictly non-partisan and accept no government funding for advocacy, freeing us to focus on our sole mission - helping children.

Why Voting Matters

- Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy.
- Elections Matter!
 - Elections determine who has decision making power.
 - Elected officials make important decisions about healthcare, education, housing, and employment.



How Elections Impact Us

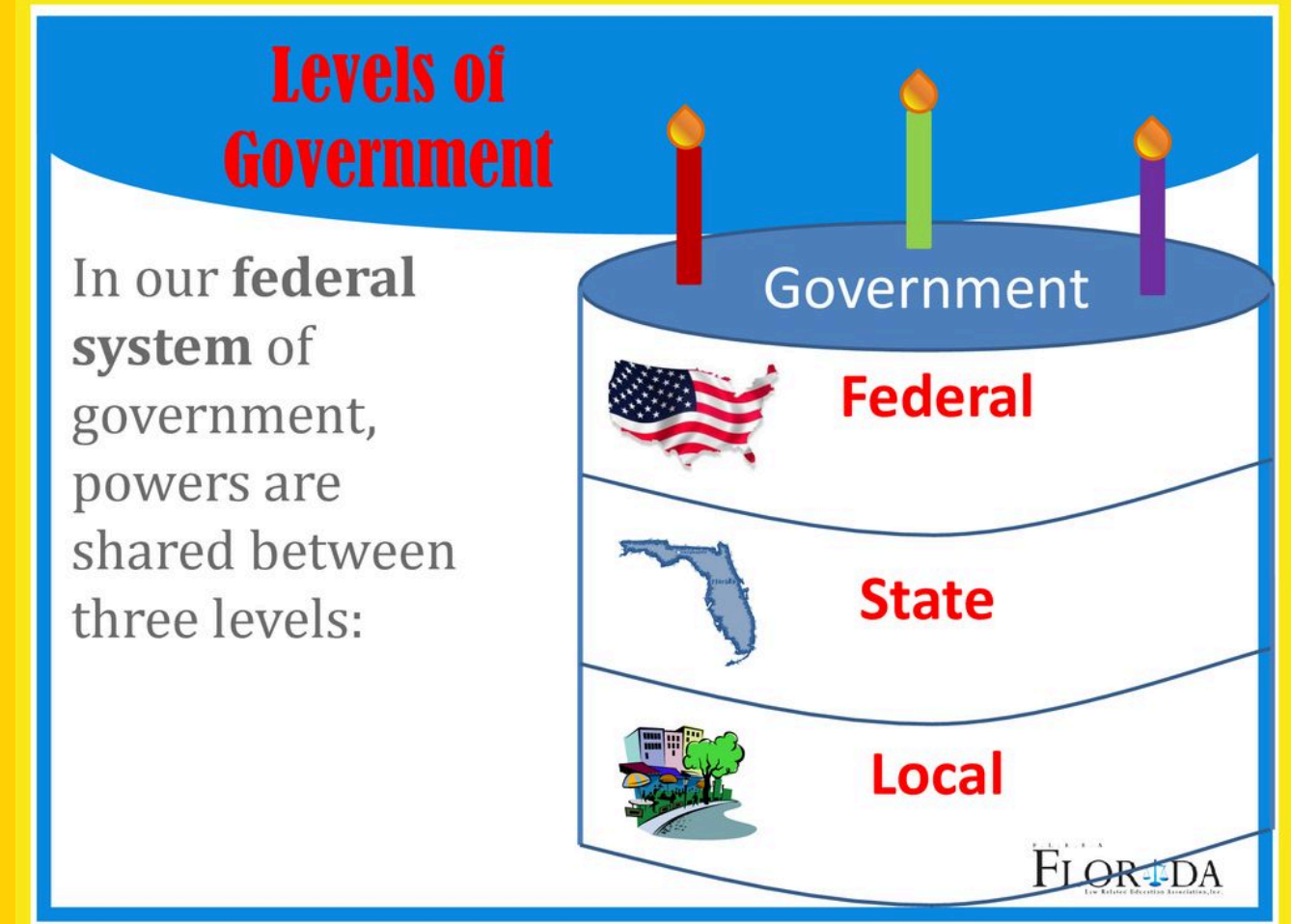
- **Voting helps shape public policies**
 - **Election results determine the representatives who create and execute policies that affect our daily lives**
- **Examples of policy areas:**
 - **Education**
 - **Child care**
 - **Food and nutrition**
 - **Taxes**



How the U.S. Government Works

Three levels of government:

- Federal
- State
- Local



Decision-making happens at every level!!!!!!!!!!

How the U.S. Government Works

At every level, the U.S. government operates through a three-branch system:

- **Executive:** Enforces and implements laws
- **Legislative:** Makes laws and controls government funding
- **Judicial:** Interprets laws and ensures they comply with the Constitution



How the US Government Works

WHO REPRESENTS YOU -- NEW JERSEY

Federal:

Executive = President (VP)

Legislative (Congress) = 2 Federal Senators, 1 Member of House of Representatives

State:

Executive = Governor (Lt. Gov.)

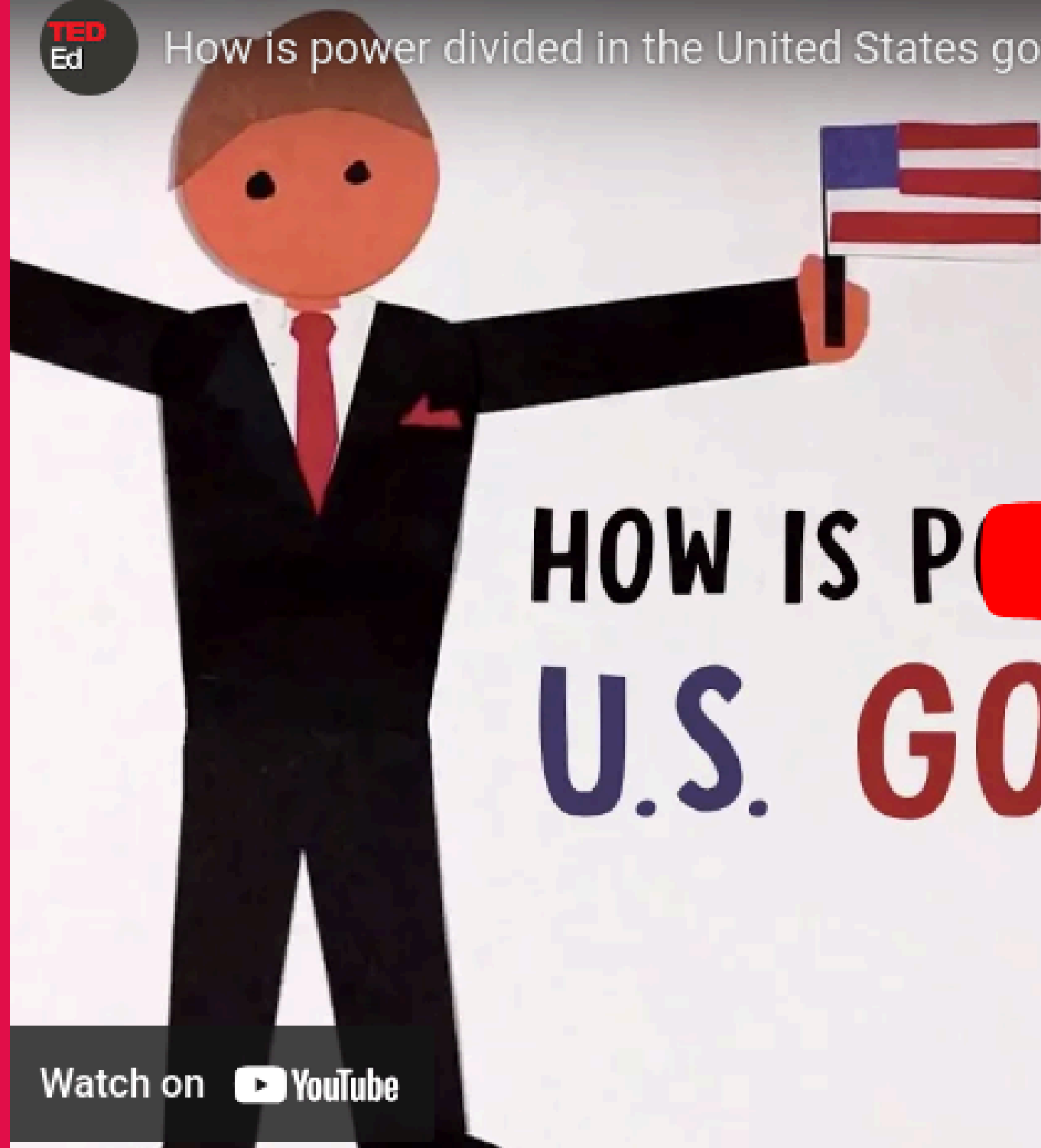
Legislative = 1 Senator, 2 Assembly Members

Local: County Executive, 1 County Commissioner

Mayor, City or Municipal Council Members



How is power divided in the United States government? - Belinda Stutzman



HOW IS POWER DIVIDED IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT?

Watch on YouTube

Understanding Federal, State, and Local Responsibilities

Federal Government Decisions:

Federal Budget
Education
Social Safety Net Programs

State Government Decisions:

State Budget
Education
Social Safety Net Programs

Local Government Decisions:

Local (County and Municipal) Budgets
Education
Social Safety Net Programs



Making Informed Decisions

Know what's on the ballot and know what to look for as a voter:

- **President - Vice President**
- **34 US Senate Seats**
- **435 Seats in House of Representatives**
- **Local elections (including county commissioners, city/municipal council, school board)**



Making Informed Decisions

Understand what policies and major decisions satisfy your individual interests:

- **Research candidates**
- **Identify what issues matter to you**
- **Understand where candidates stand on key issues and how their policies might affect you and your community**
- **Check Nonpartisan Sources**
- **Learn About Ballot Measures**
- **Check Your Voter Registration and Polling Information**
- **Talk to Others**



QUESTIONS..??



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