

**THE GOVERNMENT OF
THE PEOPLE OF THE
STATE OF CONNECTICUT**

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The Government of the People of the State of Connecticut by Charles Henry Douglas

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CHARLES HENRY DOUGLAS

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BY
CHARLES HENRY DOUGLAS, A. M.



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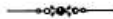
THE history of more than two hundred and fifty years of self-government in this Commonwealth affords much to stimulate patriotic devotion to both State and nation. The study of the details of administration of the local government is an important part of the preparation for citizenship.

It is desirable that the teacher should have access to Hollister's *History of Connecticut*, the latest *State Register and Manual*, Johnston's *Connecticut*, and Bancroft's *History of the United States*. A more extensive list of reference books can readily be compiled from the excellent bibliography given by Johnston.



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INTRODUCTION.

As applied to an American Commonwealth the word State signifies a political community of free citizens, occupying a territory of defined boundaries, organized under a government sanctioned and limited by a written Constitution, and established by the consent of the people. Each State or Commonwealth maintains a republican form of government, which is guaranteed by the United States.

A State or Commonwealth is a public corporation, and has many rights also possessed by a free person. It can buy and sell property and hold it in possession. It can make contracts or agreements and compel those who form the contract to perform their part. Yet because it is the State and possesses many powers which a human being cannot possess or exercise, the State cannot be sued as easily as an individual or a private corporation. The State as a public corporation is next in rank to the United States. Public corporations of lesser rank are counties, cities, and towns. There are cases in which the United States, a State, a county, a city, or a town may be sued.

The State differs from the government of the State. The body of men to whom the business of the State is committed by the electors are public servants. They possess no authority not delegated to them by the State Constitution and the laws made in accordance with it. The laws of the State are made by its legislature and are of general application in the State unless otherwise specified.

Local government consists chiefly in the administration of these laws. Cities and boroughs, through the agency of councils, and towns in their town meetings, may enact ordinances in force only within their respective areas. All such ordinances must be consistent with the Constitution and the laws of the State.

The State Constitution is therefore the supreme law of the State,—supreme unless it conflicts with the supreme law of the United States, which is the national Constitution and the treaties and laws made by its authority.

A citizen of Connecticut is therefore governed by several sets of laws. Whether he resides in a town, a borough or a city, he is governed by local laws or ordinances, also by the laws of the State, the Constitution of the State, the laws of Congress, the treaties made by Congress, and by the Constitution of the United States.

He is only indirectly affected by the laws, the treaties, and the Constitution of the United States. By far the greater part of his interests are directly affected by local laws or ordinances and by State laws.¹

Connecticut is independent of every other Commonwealth, but it is an integral part of the United States. It is one of the original thirteen States, and bears as a State a relation to all the other States which may be compared

¹ "An American may, through a long life, never be reminded of the Federal Government, except when he votes at presidential or congressional elections, lodges a complaint against the post-office, and opens his trunk for a custom-house officer on the pier at New York when he returns from a tour in Europe. His direct taxes are paid to officials acting under State laws. The State, or a local authority constituted by the State statutes, registers his birth, appoints his guardian, pays for his schooling, gives him a share in the estate of his father deceased, marries him, divorces him, entertains civil action against him, declares him a bankrupt, hangs him for murder. The police that guard his house, the local boards which look after the poor, control highways, impose water rates, manage schools—all these derive their legal powers from the State alone."—BRYCE'S *American Commonwealth*.

to the relation which one organ of the human body bears to all the other organs. The inhabitant of Connecticut may be a citizen or an alien. If a citizen, he may be an elector if he complies with the requirements of the State Constitution. If a citizen of Connecticut, he is also a citizen of the United States.

Because his interests are identified with those of Connecticut, he is directly concerned in the government of the State. If an elector, he exercises a power in determining what kind of a government shall exist in the State and who shall administer it. He votes directly for State, town, city, or borough officers. If any officers are appointed, he votes for the officer who appoints them. If there is inefficient or bad government in the State or in any of its civil divisions, the citizens may correct abuses by their votes. The people are chiefly responsible for the entire conduct of the public business because the public business is entrusted to their servants. If they neglect these civil interests, they endanger their own peace and prosperity.