

Learning Guide to Accompany **Governing a State**

The Children's Hour radio show podcast

<https://www.childrenshour.org/governing/>



Meet Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham



Michelle Lujan Grisham is the 32nd governor of the state of New Mexico and the first Latina in the Democratic Party to be elected governor. As governor, Lujan Grisham has put into action a series of evidence-based policies aimed at transforming New Mexico's public education system, creating more high-quality employment opportunities, and preserving New Mexico's air, land, and water.

Before she served as Governor, she worked as a state cabinet Secretary at both the New Mexico Department of Aging and Long-term Services and the Department of Health. She was elected to the U.S. Congress in 2011 and served three terms (6 years) in Washington on behalf of New Mexico's 1st Congressional District.

She was born in Los Alamos and graduated from St. Michael's High School in Santa Fe before earning undergraduate and law degrees from the University of New Mexico. A 12th-generation New Mexican, she is the mother of two adult children and grandmother of three. She is the caretaker for her mother, Sonja.

Learn more about our guest here: <https://www.governor.state.nm.us/about-the-governor/>

What are the main points Governor Lujan Grisham makes in the interview?

How would you describe her point of view? What is important to her?

Based on what she said, would you vote for her? Why or why not?

This guide will help you learn some of the basics about the job of a governor. Also, it will link you to some wonderful resources where you can learn more.

About Us

The Children's Hour Inc is a New Mexico-based non-profit organization that produces an award-winning children's radio program that is educational, entertaining, and engaging, and includes kids who participate in its creation. The program is internationally syndicated broadcasting on more than 115 public radio stations worldwide. Program themes focus on civics, STEM, culture, and music education, featuring New Mexico children as co-hosts and lead interviewers. Katie Stone has been the executive producer of *The Children's Hour* for 20 years.

For more information, contact: Katie Stone | (505) 850-3751 | katie@childrenshour.org

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Tell us about you!

We at the Children's Hour would like to know:

1. How old are you?
2. Was this your first time listening to a radio show or podcast for kids?
3. Was this radio show less fun or more fun compared to other things you do for fun, like playing video games or watching TV?

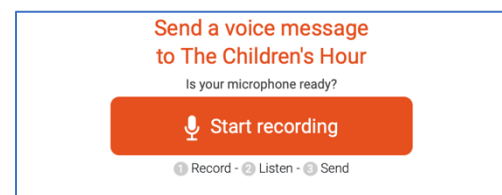
☐ Less fun

☐ More fun

4. Would you listen to a radio show again if you could?
5. Of everything you heard in the radio show, what will you remember most?

If you would like to draw a picture about anything you learned on the radio show, you can do so below, or on a blank page. Scan and email it to us, and we may display it on our online pages.

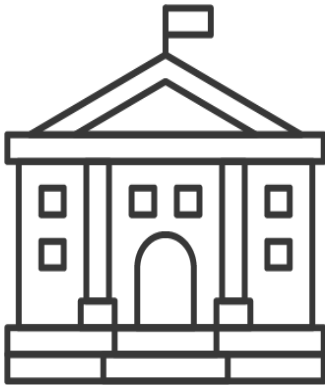
If you would like to tell the creators of this radio show something in your own voice, you can send a voice message to *The Children's Hour* here: <https://www.childrenshour.org>. Look for the orange button and click to record.



LEGISLATIVE



JUDICIAL



EXECUTIVE



What is the Executive Branch of Government?

State governments have three branches—executive, legislative, and judicial—just like the country does.

- The **legislative** branch crafts laws.
- The **judicial** branch interprets laws; settles legal disputes; and punishes violators of the law.
- The **executive** branch executes, or carries out, laws. Executive branches are made up of departments and agencies that do the day-to-day work of putting laws into action. The person who leads a state's executive branch is called a **governor**.

Go online and play a game that simulates how laws are created and reviewed among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches:

<https://www.icivics.org/node/74/resource>

What does a United States Governor do?

In the United States, a governor is the head of a state (or territory) government, elected by the people who live there. Like presidents, governors oversee the executive branch of government. The executive branch executes, or carries out, the law.

The exact duties of a state governor depend on the laws of the state. Nevertheless, all U.S. governors have similar executive powers. Governors approve and enforce the laws passed by the state legislatures. They appoint state officials. They oversee the budget for the state. They also manage emergencies, such as natural disasters.

Governors in Other Countries

There are governors in other countries, too. They oversee states, provinces, or other regions in numerous countries, including Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, Nigeria, and Russia. Some of these governors are appointed by the national government. Others are elected by the people. Their powers vary by country.

In the United Kingdom's Commonwealth countries, such as Australia and Canada, a governor-general represents the monarch. The monarch is also represented by a governor in each state of Australia and by a lieutenant governor in each province of Canada. All of them are appointed, not elected. Their powers are limited. Actual governmental power rests in the hands of the prime minister of the country, state, or province.

The Tools of a Governor

How does a governor use executive powers to maintain order and keep people safe?

Think of executive powers as a toolkit. Like a carpenter uses a tape measure, a saw, and a hammer to build a piece of furniture, the governor uses executive powers to implement the law state laws and to advance policies and programs for the people living in that state.



Several executive powers are in a governor's toolkit:

- The governor sets the state's agenda and can **introduce policies to the legislature** to be made into law.
- When the state legislature passes a bill, the governor has the power to **sign it** making it a law, or to **veto it** and send it back (like the President can with laws passed by Congress).
- Also, the governor makes speeches to explain to citizens and lawmakers why these issues are important.
- Governors **attend events and ceremonies** to launch new state programs or just to show support for what people are doing.
- In times of crisis, they will **make a public speech** to reassure citizens that the state government is doing everything possible to help.
- But one of the most important things in the governor's toolkit is the ability to make **executive orders**.

Executive Orders

Like a plumber has many kinds of wrenches, a governor has many kinds of executive orders at her disposal. An executive order is a set of instructions put forth by the governor, to address a specific situation. (The President can issue executive orders, too.) An executive order is one of the most important tools a governor has, but it is limited. A governor can issue executive orders about certain things. Here are some examples:

- **Proclaim a state of emergency.** During a natural disaster, disease outbreak, or other emergency that affects public health and safety, the governor can summon all kinds of resources for help. They can even call out the state's National Guard.
- **Make rules for state government employees or the state government itself.** Most state government is part of the executive branch, which the governor controls.
- **Form a task force** to study a problem and recommend solutions.
- **Create a new executive office or council** to carry out a necessary task.
- **Call the legislature into a special session.** If the legislature is on a break and a law needs to be passed, the governor can force lawmakers back into session to take care of business.
- **Reduce a prisoner's sentence or pardon a convicted person completely.**

Most states have a website that describes the responsibilities of the governor. Here's the one for New Mexico: <https://www.sos.state.nm.us/about-new-mexico/nm-government/governors-duties/>

To learn more about governor's powers, check out: <https://www.nga.org/governors/powers-and-authority/>

What's the difference between **executive orders** and **laws**?

Executive Orders	Laws
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Limited to Certain topics and situations ○ Does not need the state legislature ○ Valid when signed by the governor ○ Creates limited instructions for a special situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can be on any topic ○ Must be passed by the state legislature ○ Valid when signed by the governor ○ Creates a law (rule and/or regulation) that applies to everyone

You can see examples of Gov. Lujan Grisham's executive orders here:











<https://www.governor.state.nm.us/about-the-governor/executive-orders/>

Governor's Tool Kit

Here's a game in which you decide which of the governor's powers to use in specific situations:

1. Read *The Tools of a Governor* background information on page 4.
2. Cut out the Tool cards below, one set of cards for each "Governor" who is playing. Color the cards as you like.
3. Another player reads aloud a Situation, or writes it on the board, from the list of examples in Answer Key on page 6.
4. Each Governor decides which Tool to use, and places that card face down. When all the Governors have put cards down, turn them over to reveal their decisions. Who correctly matched the Tool to the Situation? Discuss!
5. Keep score of the correct matches. Best out of 10 wins!

Tool Cards

	Propose a new law to the state legislature		Executive order to make rules for state employees/ government
	Veto a bill and send it back or sign a bill so it becomes law		Executive order to create a task force to study a problem
	Attend a ceremony or event to show your support		Executive order to create an office or council to carry out a task
	Give a speech		Executive order to call the state legislature into special session
	Executive order to proclaim a state of emergency		Executive order to reduce or eliminate a prison sentence

Answer Key

Tool Card	Situation [Pick one and read it to the Governor player(s).]
Propose a new law to the state legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A task force you assembled recommends that child neglect should be a crime. ○ Polls show that people want a tax cut for those who plant new trees. ○ You think the state should use less fossil fuels and transition towards using more renewable energy sources.
Veto a bill and send it back or sign a bill so it becomes law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The legislature passed a bill raising the driving age to 21. ○ The legislature passed a bill to fund higher learning, so that any resident can attend an in-state trade school or college for free. ○ The legislature passed a bill raising taxes on candy.
Attend a ceremony or event to show your support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading Month kicks off today with a celebration at the library. ○ It's Veterans Day. There will be a big parade at the capitol. ○ The Vice President is visiting a local manufacturing plant to bring attention to creating new jobs.
Give a speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How is the state government doing? It's time for the yearly State of the State address. ○ Citizens don't understand why you want to spend state funds to improve Behavioral Health care. ○ There's been a tragedy, and you want to inspire citizens to stand together.
Executive order to proclaim a state of emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hundreds are homeless after a tornado hits overnight. ○ Thousands are affected by a flu outbreak. All health resources are needed. ○ A giant snowstorm is forecast to hit the state tomorrow.
Executive order to make rules for state employees/ government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To cut costs, you offer early retirement to state workers. ○ The anti-discrimination rules for state employees need to be updated. ○ To prevent a deadly respiratory disease from spreading in the workplace, you decide all state employees should be vaccinated and wear masks while on the job.
Executive order to create a task force to study a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Violent crime was up last year. No one is sure why. ○ You need to know if future growth will add pollution to state waters. ○ You want to know if a longer school day will improve student performance.
Executive order to create an office or council to carry out a task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The state's historical monuments must be restored and promoted to tourists. ○ To manage resources during a pandemic, the state's Health Department must cooperate with the doctors of the healthcare system and the scientists who know how to track infectious diseases. ○ To reduce homelessness, the state must create safe, clean, affordable housing options.
Executive order to call the state legislature into special session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The legislature went home without passing a budget, and a new year is about to start. ○ The legislature is out of session, but a new tax bill must pass in time for the election.
Executive order to reduce or eliminate a prison sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A well-behaved inmate has served 30 years of a life sentence for a crime he did at age 13. ○ The family of a well-behaved death row inmate begs you to spare his life.

Women Who Served as U.S. Governors



Nellie Tayloe Ross was the first woman elected to serve as governor of a U.S. state. She served as the 14th governor of Wyoming from 1925 to 1927. She was the widow of Governor William B. Ross. To this day she is the only woman to have served as governor of Wyoming.



In 1975 Connecticut's Ella T. Grasso became the first woman elected governor "in her own right" (meaning she wasn't married to and surviving a former governor). She was a Congressional representative from the state, and Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient.



Sila María Calderón Serra was the first woman elected as governor of Puerto Rico (2001 to 2005). Prior to her term as governor, held various positions in the government of Puerto Rico, including the Secretary of State of Puerto Rico and Chief of Staff to the Governor. She was also mayor of San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico, from

1997 to 2001.



Nimrata Nikki Haley (née Randhawa) served as the first woman Governor of South Carolina from 2011 to 2017, and as the 29th United States Ambassador to the United Nations. She was the youngest governor in the country and the second governor of Indian descent (after Bobby Jindal of Louisiana). Haley and Martinez were the first women of

color to serve as U.S. governors.



Susana Martinez served as first woman Governor of New Mexico from 2011 to 2019. Born in El Paso, Texas, she was first Hispanic female governor in the United States. Martinez and Haley were the first women of color to serve as U.S. governors.

- In U.S. history, there have been 45 female governors, 30 were first elected in their own right; 3 replaced their husbands; and 12 became governor by constitutional succession. Succession is how Kathleen Courtney Hochul recently became the 57th governor of New York, after Gov. Cuomo resigned.
- The list of female governors includes 27 Democrats and 18 Republicans.
- Women also have served as governors in the US territories of Guam and Puerto Rico. Currently, Democrat Lou Leon Guerrero is Governor of Guam.
- Arizona has had 4 female governors, the most of any state. They have been from both major parties, and three of them served consecutive terms.
- The record number of women serving simultaneously is 9, achieved in 2004, 2007, 2019, and now in 2021.
- Three women of color have served as governors: Republican Nikki Haley of South Carolina, Republican Susana Martinez of New Mexico, and Democrat Michelle Lujan Grisham of New Mexico.
- The U.S. has never had a Black or Native American woman serving as governor.
- Recently, Sen. Jennifer McClellan, a Virginia state senator, announced she is running to be the state's next governor. If she wins the election, she would be the nation's first African American woman to lead a state.

Map the Governors

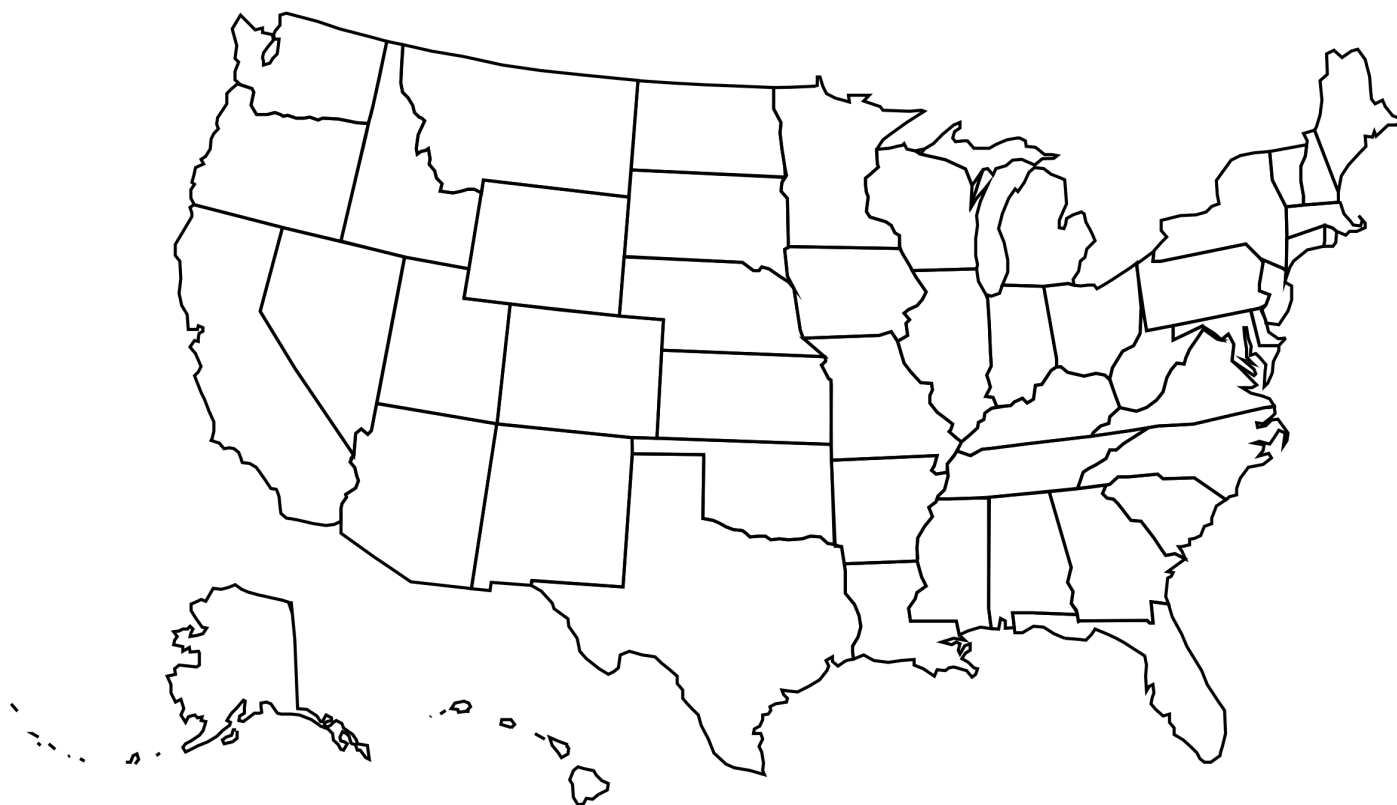
Use your knowledge of state geography and the current governors to illustrate the map below.

Historical data:

- In August 2021, nine of the U.S. governors are women: Kay Ivey (AL); Kim Reynolds (IA); Laura Kelly (KS); Janet Mills (ME); Gretchen Whitmer (MI); Michelle Lujan Grisham (NM); Kathy Hochul (NY); Kate Brown (OR); and Kristi Noem (SD).
- Forty-seven of the current U.S. governors are white. Michelle Lujan Grisham (NM) is Latina and David Ige (HI) is Asian. Kevin Stitt (OK) is a member of the Cherokee Nation.

Map Key:

- ☐ states where women serve as governors (Color them; you pick the color.)
- ★ states where people of color serve as governor (Draw a star, or sticker it.)



For a list of all the current governors, go to: [https://kids.kiddle.co/List of current United States governors](https://kids.kiddle.co/List_of_current_United_States_governors)

For more facts about the current U.S. governors, go to: <https://governors.rutgers.edu/fast-facts-about-america-governors/>

Connect to Curriculum

<http://www.corestandards.org>

Information/Activity	Core Idea	Common Core ELA Standard
p.1 Questions/prompts	Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims... Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric...	SL 3 (6-12) SL 3 (9-12)
p.4, 5, 6 Governor’s Toolkit game	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.	RH 4 (6-8, 9-10)
	Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.	SL 1 (K-5)
p.7 Women Governors	Read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts...	RI 10
p. 8 Map Governors	Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.	RH 7 (6-8)