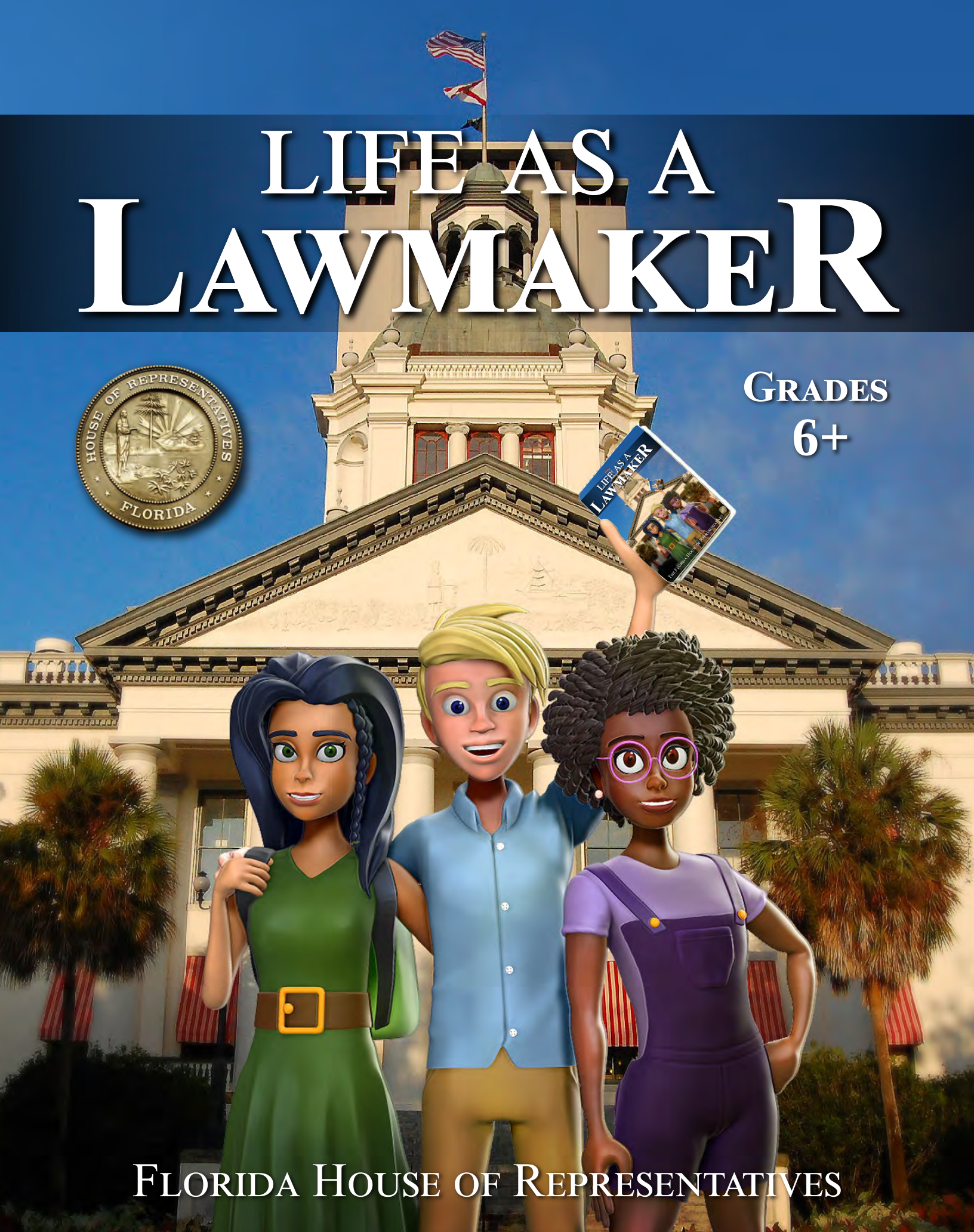
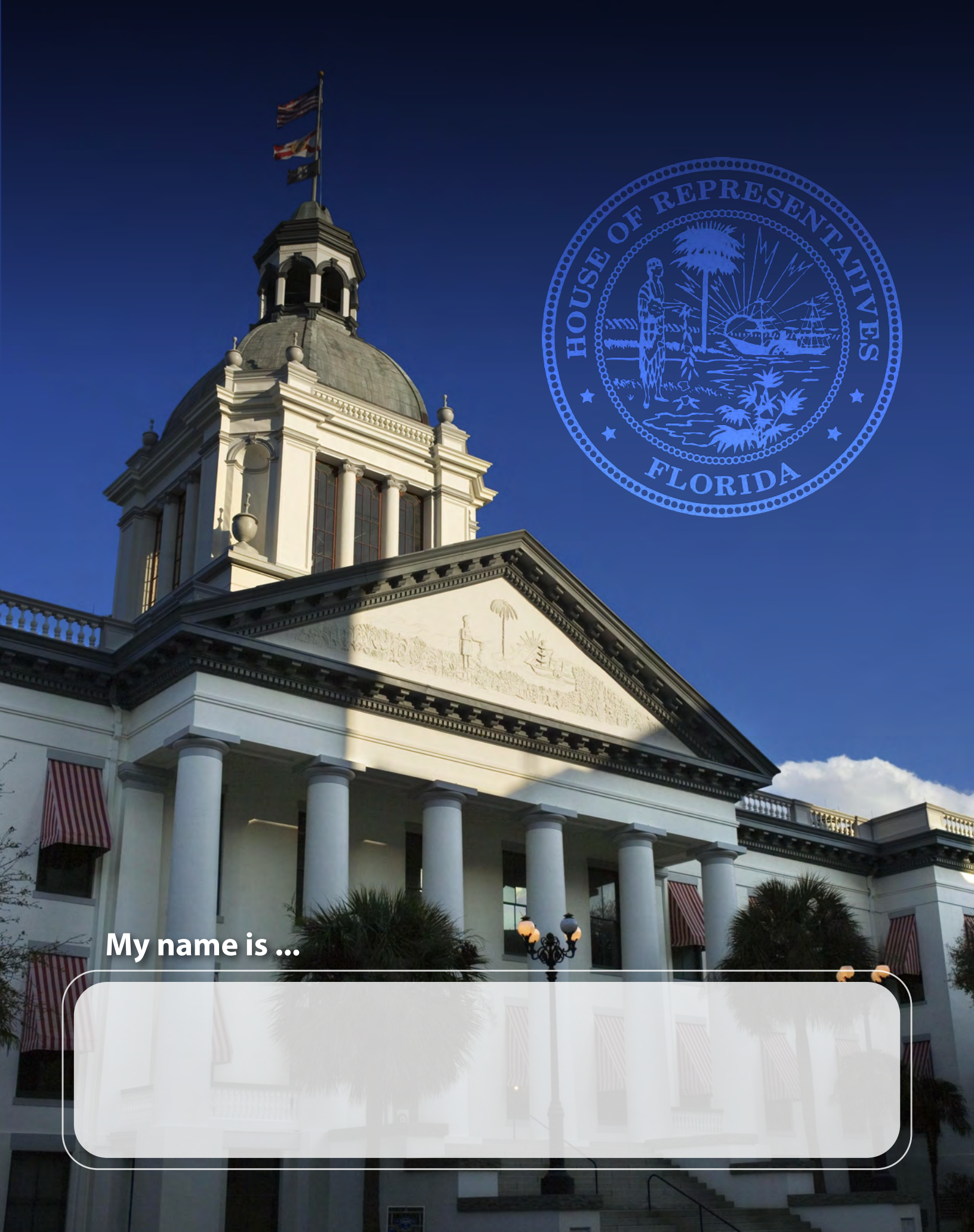
LIFE AS A LAWMAKER



GRADES 6+

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



My name is ...

A Note from the Florida House of Representatives

Congratulations on your decision to learn more about becoming a Florida Legislator! We hope this book serves as a helpful guide as you begin your journey.

Three Branches of Government

Just like most states in America, the Constitution of the state of Florida is based on the U.S. Constitution. Because of this, there are many similarities between the two, including three coequal branches of government that are called the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches.

The **legislative branch** is responsible for creating and passing Florida's laws and is divided into two Chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate. In Florida, there are 120 members of the Florida House and 40 members of the Florida Senate who gather in Tallahassee for 60 days each year to pass laws. The legislative branch is also responsible for preparing the state budget each year.

The **executive branch** is responsible for enforcing Florida's laws. While the head of the executive branch at the federal level is the President of the United States, the head of Florida's executive branch is the Governor. The Governor is responsible for hiring people to positions in state government like the Department of Education and the Department of Environmental Protection. The Governor is also responsible for approving all of Florida's laws, including the state budget.

The **judicial branch** is responsible for reviewing Florida's laws and making sure that they follow the Florida Constitution. There are four levels of Florida's judicial system that deal with both civil and criminal cases: County Courts, Circuit Courts, District Courts of Appeal, and the Florida Supreme Court, which is the highest court in Florida.

Three Branches of Government

Use the previous page to match the jobs and powers with the branch of government. Write "L" for Legislative, "E" for Executive, and "J" for Judicial next to the job that each branch of the state government carries out.

Check your answers on page 17 with the answer key.

- ☐ Approves the budget
- ☐ Makes laws
- ☐ Tries civil and criminal cases
- ☐ Grants pardons
- ☐ Has power of judicial review
- ☐ Prepares the budget
- ☐ Executes laws of Florida
- ☐ Creates state statutes

4 What it Takes to Become a Florida Legislator

Answer the questions to test your knowledge on the qualifications and expectations of a Florida Legislator.

1. How old do you have to be in order to serve as a Florida Legislator?

   A. 35 years old
   B. 40 years old
   C. 18 years old
   D. 21 years old

2. How many years do you have to be a resident of Florida before you can become a Legislator?

   A. 8
   B. 10
   C. 6
   D. 2

3. How long does the Legislative Session last in Florida each year?

   A. 60 days
   B. 120 days
   C. 30 days
   D. 180 days

4. How long is an elected State Representative's term?

   A. 1 year
   B. 4 years
   C. 2 years
   D. 8 years

5. There is a term limit for how long a Florida Legislator can serve.

   A. True
   B. False

6. You cannot have another job and be a Florida Legislator at the same time.

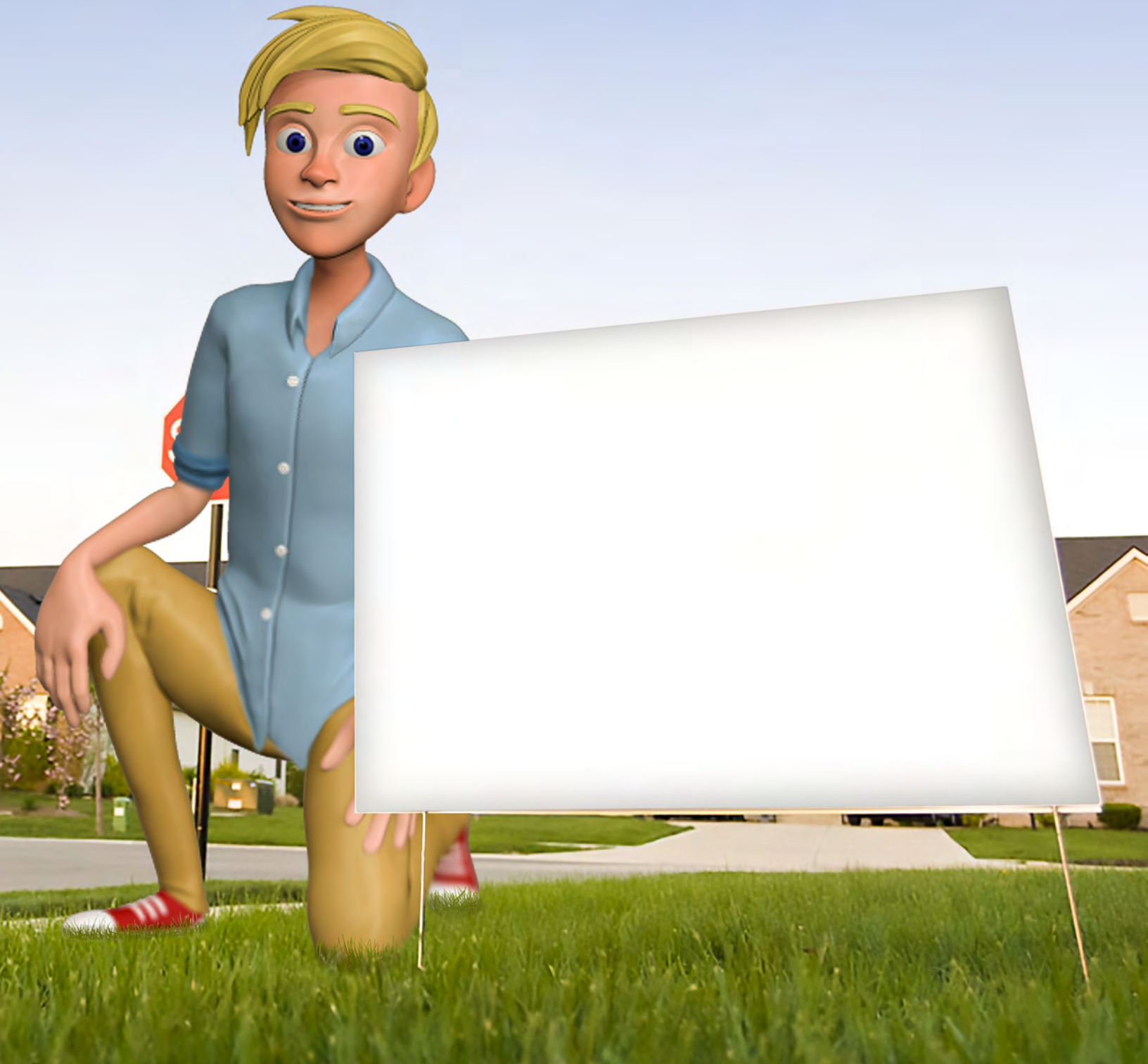
   A. True
   B. False

7. To serve as a State Representative in Florida, you have to live in the district you represent.

   A. True
   B. False

Let's Make this Official

So, you want to become a State Representative?
Design your campaign poster to get the word out that you're running for a seat in the Florida House of Representatives!



Law in Order

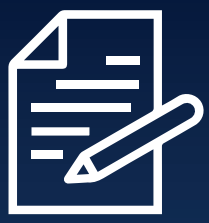
Congratulations! Your campaign sign was a hit and you were elected to the Florida House of Representatives. Now it's time to create some laws that will make your community and state better.

The following images represent all the steps a bill must go through before it becomes a law. Put all of these images in the correct order on the next page.

1. The Bill
placed on the House Calendar

2. The Law
the finished product

3. The Governor
receives the bill when it passes both houses



4. Bill Drafting
writes the bill so the Representative can file it

5. Representative
submits the idea to bill drafting

6. Clerk's Office
"reads" the bill the first time in the *Journal*

7. Committees & Subcommittees
discuss the bill, amend the bill, hear public testimony, and vote on the bill

8. Rules Committee
places the bill on the Special Order Calendar to be considered for action in the House Chamber

9. Concerned Citizens
suggest legislation

10. Speaker of the House
refers the bill to committees, subcomittees, or the House Calendar

11. House Chamber
this is where the members may amend, debate, and vote on the bill

12. The House
sends the bill to the Senate with a message stating the House passed the bill and requests the Senate to do the same

13. The Senate
takes the bill through a similar process as the House, passes the companion bill, and returns the bill to the House

Law in Order

Place all the images on the previous page in the correct order to make a bill become a Law.

START

9
Concerned Citizens

6
Clerk's Office

1
The Bill

2
The Law

FINISH

Legislative Lingo

If you're going to be a State Representative, you have to learn how to talk like one, right? See if you can find all of the legislative words below!

R	G	W	S	S	P	L	E	G	I	S	L	A	T	O	R	N	B
N	E	A	Y	O	W	D	A	O	L	N	Z	L	A	W	C	Y	S
F	U	S	V	A	M	E	N	D	M	E	N	T	O	J	A	K	E
A	S	G	O	E	H	N	Q	C	O	M	M	I	T	T	E	E	C
M	X	E	P	L	L	T	C	O	K	Y	K	B	U	S	F	Z	H
R	P	D	N	N	U	B	C	M	I	N	O	R	I	T	Y	J	A
X	X	O	C	A	J	T	Q	P	T	R	E	C	E	S	S	J	M
U	G	A	M	F	T	R	I	R	D	J	B	W	M	C	G	T	B
V	L	V	X	U	S	E	O	O	N	S	P	E	A	K	E	R	E
A	M	A	J	O	R	I	T	Y	N	K	C	L	S	L	M	P	R
J	Y	G	R	F	V	A	H	O	U	S	E	Y	H	K	B	D	[illegible]
G	C	B	I	L	L	S	X	F	C	A	P	I	T	O	L	[illegible]	[illegible]

Word Bank

Law	Legislator	House
Bill	Committee	Senate
Recess	Majority	Speaker
Gavel	Minority	Chamber
Resolution	Capitol	Amendment

The Constitution of Florida

Just like the United States, Florida has its own Constitution that protects the rights of citizens. The Florida Constitution can be changed at any time if Florida voters decide the change is necessary.
Do you know what these changes are called?
Use your math skills to decode the hidden message below and find out.

6+5	12÷3	10+12	18+7	4x5	3x1	30-10	25÷5	11+9	7-4	4÷1	20+2	16-15	100÷10

1x1	20-3	12÷6	11x2	4x4	13+4	18÷9	30-8	80-60

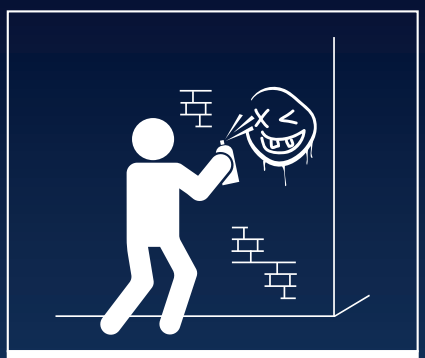
Decoder Key

A=1	B=8	C=11	D=16	E=2	F=19	G=9
H=21	I=3	J=24	K=13	L=10	M=17	N=22
O=4	P=&	Q=15	R=26	S=25	T=20	U=5
	V=23	W=6	X=12	Y=18	Z=14	

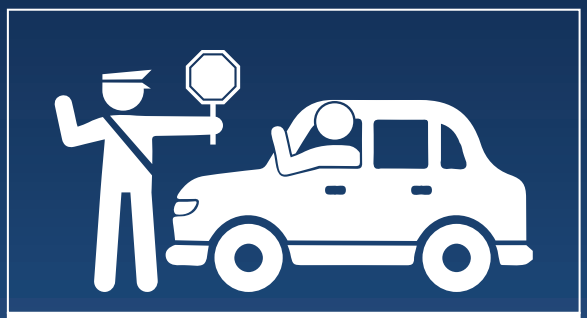
Caring for Your Community

Imagine the community below is the one you represent in the Florida Legislature. As you can see, there are some problems you need to address! Now that you're a State Representative, you can use laws to get your community back in order. Using each law only once, match the law with the issue you see in the pictures.

1.



2.



3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

Community Laws

Leash Law: Keep pets on a leash in public places.

Litter Law: Place trash in proper containers.

Zoning Law: Businesses serving "adults only" must not be placed near school buildings.

Public Nuisance Law: Do not disturb the peace of others in public.

Traffic Law: Drivers and pedestrians must obey street lights & traffic signs.

Graffiti Law: Do not damage or deface the property of others.

Shoplifting Law: Customers must pay for any merchandise they take from a store.

Smoking Law: No smoking in most public and private businesses, including restaurants.

Your First Day as a State Legislator

Since the Legislature is only in session two months a year, Legislators spend much of their time in their home districts raising families and working other jobs, in addition to taking care of their duties as elected officials. Just because it's technically a part-time job, doesn't mean that their schedule is easy! A Legislator's schedule can be very hectic at times when they try to balance everything.

Using the appointments below, try to schedule your busy day as a Legislator, parent, and citrus farmer. Make sure to use a pencil in case of mistakes!

Wed 21 Jan

APPOINTMENTS		TASKS
8 am	☐	
9 am	☐	
10 am	☐	
11 am	☐	
12 pm	☐	
1 pm	☐	
2 pm	☐	
3 pm	☐	
4 pm	☐	
5 pm	☐	
6 pm	☐	
7 pm	☐	
8 pm	☐	

- You must attend a ceremony honoring a constituent at 5 p.m.
- You need to drop off the citrus from your orchard at the local farmers market
- Your oldest child has a doctor's appointment at 9 a.m.
- You have a lunch meeting at noon with a grocery store that is looking to buy your citrus
- You have 32 constituent emails that need responses
- You are invited to a town hall forum about a controversial issue at 7:30 p.m.
- A group of concerned citizens would like to meet with you to discuss a new law they'd like for you to introduce next session
- Your youngest child is performing in the school play at 6 p.m.
- You are invited to do a radio interview at 11 a.m.
- You need to call the dentist to set up your next appointment
- You have been invited to attend the ribbon cutting for a new building at the local university at 2 p.m.
- Coordinate with your staff to drop off letters/responses to constituents at the post office
- One of your constituents wanted to meet with you to discuss the possibility of building a parking garage in a busy shopping district

Did You Know ...

… you don't have to wait until you're 18 to start making a difference? You can start right now! Take Paloma, for example.

Paloma is a student from Tallahassee who was born with a rare condition called Peters Anomaly, which affects her vision. She actually had to have new pupils made for both of her eyes! Additionally, Paloma uses special equipment that helps her see certain things in the classroom. A few years ago, Paloma realized that not all of Florida's visually impaired children were given the same resources that she had. You see, there was funding available for newborns to 5-year-olds and teenagers between 14 and 18, but somehow there was nothing provided for those between 5 and 14 years of age! This left over 900 of Florida's visually impaired kids without a way to access the equipment and mobility training they needed, regardless of their financial status. So Paloma decided to do something about it. She started a campaign called "Fund the Gap" to ask the Florida Legislature to fund the Division of Blind Services (DBS) Children's Program, which would help over 300 kids in need. Then she visited the Capitol in Tallahassee and asked her state Legislators to support new funding so all of Florida's kids have the tools they need to be successful students. She even got to meet the Governor! And guess what … it worked! So far, $1,250,000 has already been secured for the DBS Children's Program with $500,000 repeating in Florida's budget every year! Wow! There are many challenges out there that are simply waiting for the right person to come along with a solution.

What's a problem in your community that YOU could help solve?

Write Your Own Law

Now it's time to write your very first law!
Use the guidelines below to identify a real problem that you think should be addressed by the state government, then craft a bill that fixes that problem.

1. **Problem**
   Identify a problem that you think should be addressed by state government.
   How (if at all) is this problem currently being addressed by decision makers?

2. **Solution**
   List some options for solving the problem.
   What will happen if nothing is done to address the problem?

3. **Your Proposal**
   Which option do you think is the best and why?
   Which community members will be affected by these changes?
   How do you think they will react to your proposal (positively or negatively)?

Turn Your Idea into a Bill

Use the bill template to write your proposal from the previous page into law!

BILL #1 ORIGINAL Year _____

1 A bill to be entitled The _____ Act
2
3 An act relating to _____;
4
5
6 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
7
8 Describe what your bill does :
9 _____
10 _____
11 _____
12 _____
13 _____
14 _____
15 _____
16 _____
17 _____
18 _____
19 _____
20 _____
21 _____
22 _____
23 _____
24 _____
25 _____
26 _____

Pages & Messengers

Did you know that you can get involved in the legislative process as a student?

Pages and Messengers are students in 6th grade through 12th grade who come to the Capitol and work one week during the 60-day Regular Session. Each of the 120 State Representatives may sponsor one Page and one Messenger.

Pages and Messengers assist the Representatives and their staff during the Capitol's busiest time of the year while observing state government in action.

Are you interested in becoming a Page or Messenger?
To learn more, visit: www.myfloridahouse.gov or call the House Office of the Clerk at (850) 717-5401.

Get Involved

You can play a vital role in the formation of Florida's laws. As a Florida citizen, you have the power to work with your State Senator and Representative to create laws that make your community stronger. In fact, Florida Legislators love hearing from students! Here are some ways that you can make your voice heard in the Florida Legislature:

Write a Letter

Write a letter to your Representative! You can find their district office and Capitol addresses on our website.

Pro Tip: Double check that you are using the correct forms of address!
Visit our website and look over the Practical Protocol for Floridians – it goes over all the proper etiquette!

Become a Page or Messenger

The Page & Messenger Program is a long-standing tradition in the Florida House of Representatives and offers students a fun and educational experience that will not be forgotten!
This is your opportunity to observe lawmakers, lobbyists, staff, and constituents working together in the legislative process.

For more information, email:
housepagesandmessengers@myfloridahouse.gov

Visit the Capitol

We always encourage you to personally visit the Capitol in Tallahassee. Whether your goal is to speak with a Representative, view session proceedings from the House Gallery, or even take a tour of the Chamber, we have a number of resources to make your visit as enjoyable, productive, and informative as possible.

Visit the Website

Our website has it all! You'll find resources for finding and contacting your Representative, scheduling a tour, applying for the Page & Messenger Program, and so much more!

Be sure to check it out at:
www.myfloridahouse.gov

Answer Key

Use this page to check your answers to the previous activities.

E Approves the budget	J Has power of judicial review
L Makes laws	L Prepares the budget
J Tries civil and criminal cases	E Executes laws of Florida
E Grants pardons	L Creates state statutes

1. How old do you have to be in order to serve as a Florida Legislator?
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   - B. 10
   - C. 6
   - D. 2
3. How long does the Legislative Session last in Florida each year?
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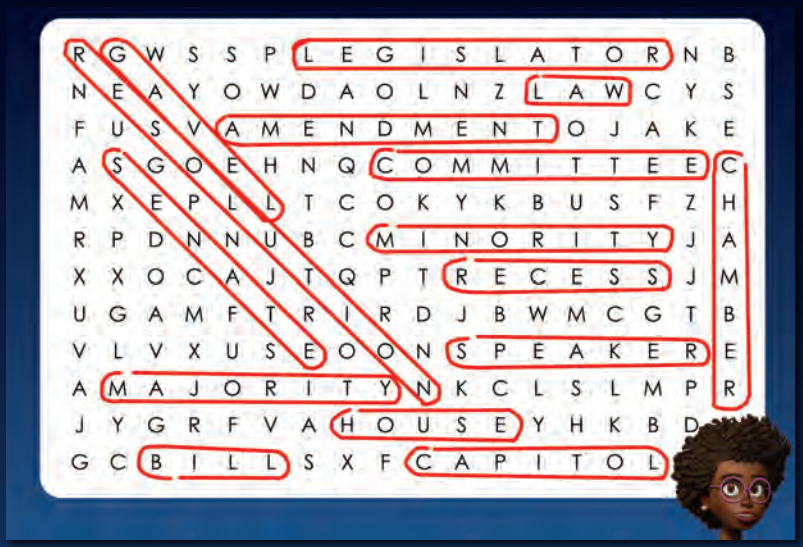
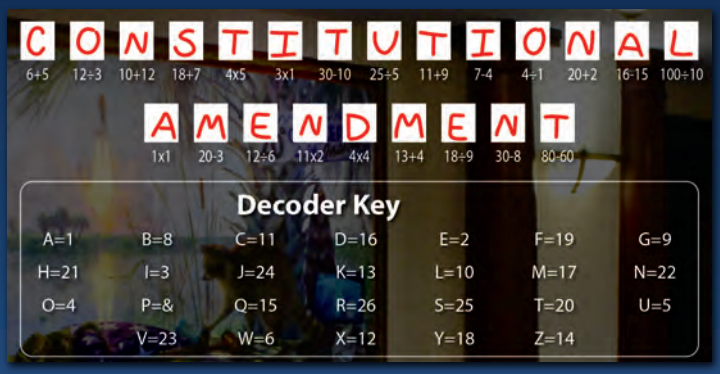
   - B. 120 days
   - C. 30 days
   - D. 180 days
4. How long is an elected State Representative's term?
   - A. 1 year
   - B. 4 years
   - C. 2 years
   - D. 8 years
5. There is a term limit for how long a Florida Legislator can serve.
   - A. True
   - B. False
6. You cannot have another job and be a Florida Legislator at the same time.
   - A. True
   - B. False
7. To serve as a State Representative in Florida, you have to live in the district you represent.
   - A. True
   - B. False



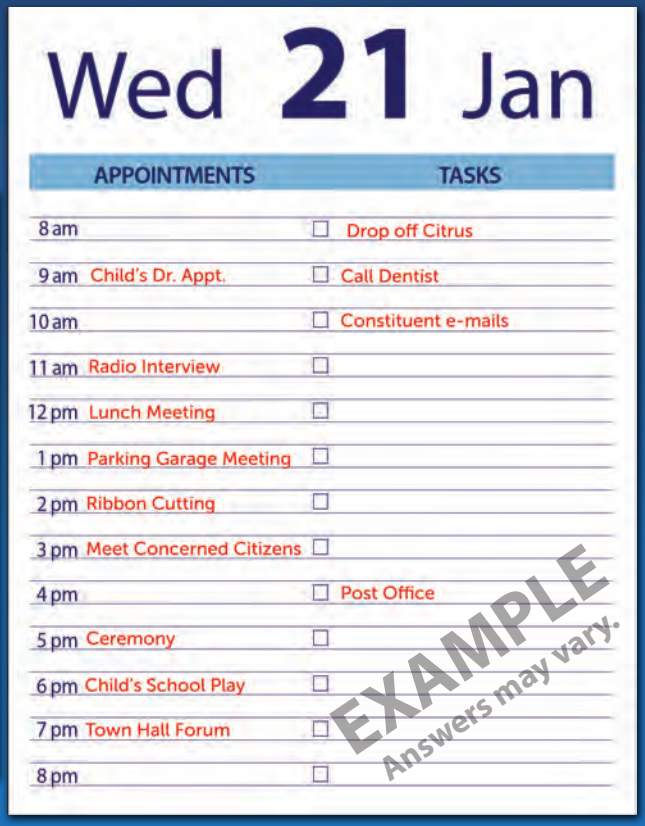
R	G	W	S	S	P	L	E	G	I	S	L	A	T	O	R	N	B
N	E	A	Y	O	W	D	A	O	L	N	Z	L	A	W	C	Y	S
F	U	S	V	A	M	E	N	D	M	E	N	T	O	J	A	K	E
A	S	G	O	E	H	N	Q	C	O	M	M	I	T	T	E	E	C
M	X	E	P	L	L	T	C	O	K	Y	K	B	U	S	F	Z	H
R	P	D	N	N	U	B	C	M	I	N	O	R	I	T	Y	J	A
X	X	O	C	A	J	T	Q	P	T	R	E	C	E	S	S	J	M
U	G	A	M	F	T	R	I	R	D	J	B	W	M	C	G	T	B
V	L	V	X	U	S	E	O	O	N	S	P	E	A	K	E	R	E
A	M	A	J	O	R	I	T	Y	N	K	C	L	S	L	M	P	R
J	Y	G	R	F	V	A	H	O	U	S	E	Y	H	K	B	D	
G	C	B	I	L	L	S	X	F	C	A	P	I	T	O	L		



C	O	N	S	T	I	T	U	T	I	O	N	A	L	
6+5	12÷3	10+12	18+7	4x5	3x1	30-10	25÷5	11+9	7-4	4÷1	20+2	16-15	100÷10	
A	M	E	N	D	M	E	N	T						
1x1	20-3	12÷6	11x2	4x4	13+4	18÷9	30-8	80-60						

Decoder Key

A=1	B=8	C=11	D=16	E=2	F=19	G=9
H=21	I=3	J=24	K=13	L=10	M=17	N=22
O=4	P=&	Q=15	R=26	S=25	T=20	U=5
	V=23	W=6	X=12	Y=18	Z=14	



Wed **21** Jan

APPOINTMENTS		TASKS
8 am	☐	Drop off Citrus
9 am Child's Dr. Appt.	☐	Call Dentist
10 am	☐	Constituent e-mails
11 am Radio Interview	☐	
12 pm Lunch Meeting	☐	
1 pm Parking Garage Meeting	☐	
2 pm Ribbon Cutting	☐	
3 pm Meet Concerned Citizens	☐	
4 pm	☐	Post Office
5 pm Ceremony	☐	
6 pm Child's School Play	☐	
7 pm Town Hall Forum	☐	
8 pm	☐	

EXAMPLE
Answers may vary.

Copies of this book may be obtained upon request from:

Office of the Clerk
Florida House of Representatives
513 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1300

Designed and Produced by:
Office of the Clerk

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www.MyFloridaHouse.gov