

How Does Our Government Work?

A Project of The Missouri Bar Young Lawyers Section
And The Missouri Bar Citizenship Education Program



MoBar.org

Introduction

The Young Lawyers Section of The Missouri Bar has supported civic education for numerous years. This book is designed to teach young people some of the very basic ideas about how our government works. The importance of an effective civic education cannot be overemphasized. These activities are designed to teach important principles about American government while students have fun.

Judges, lawyers and teachers are encouraged to contact The Missouri Bar Citizenship Education Program about civic education opportunities for teachers and students at 573 635 4128. Additional teacher resources may be found at <http://missourilawyershelp.org/educational-resources> .



What is government?



Government is a way for people to organize how they live in a way that is safe and fair for everyone. People set up a government to make rules and to make sure the rules are followed.

Why do we need rules?

This poem asks this question, too.

Rules, rules, rules, there seem to be so many.
Sometimes they are okay.
Sometimes they are not.
Some are rules that tell us things we have to do.
Some are rules that tell us things we should not do.

I wonder if life would be better if rules had never been found.
Then there would be no one to boss us around.
If there were no rules made for us to follow,
Would that make us excited and free?
Why do we have rules?
Why do folks make them?
There must be reasons. Can you help name them?

(Author unknown.)

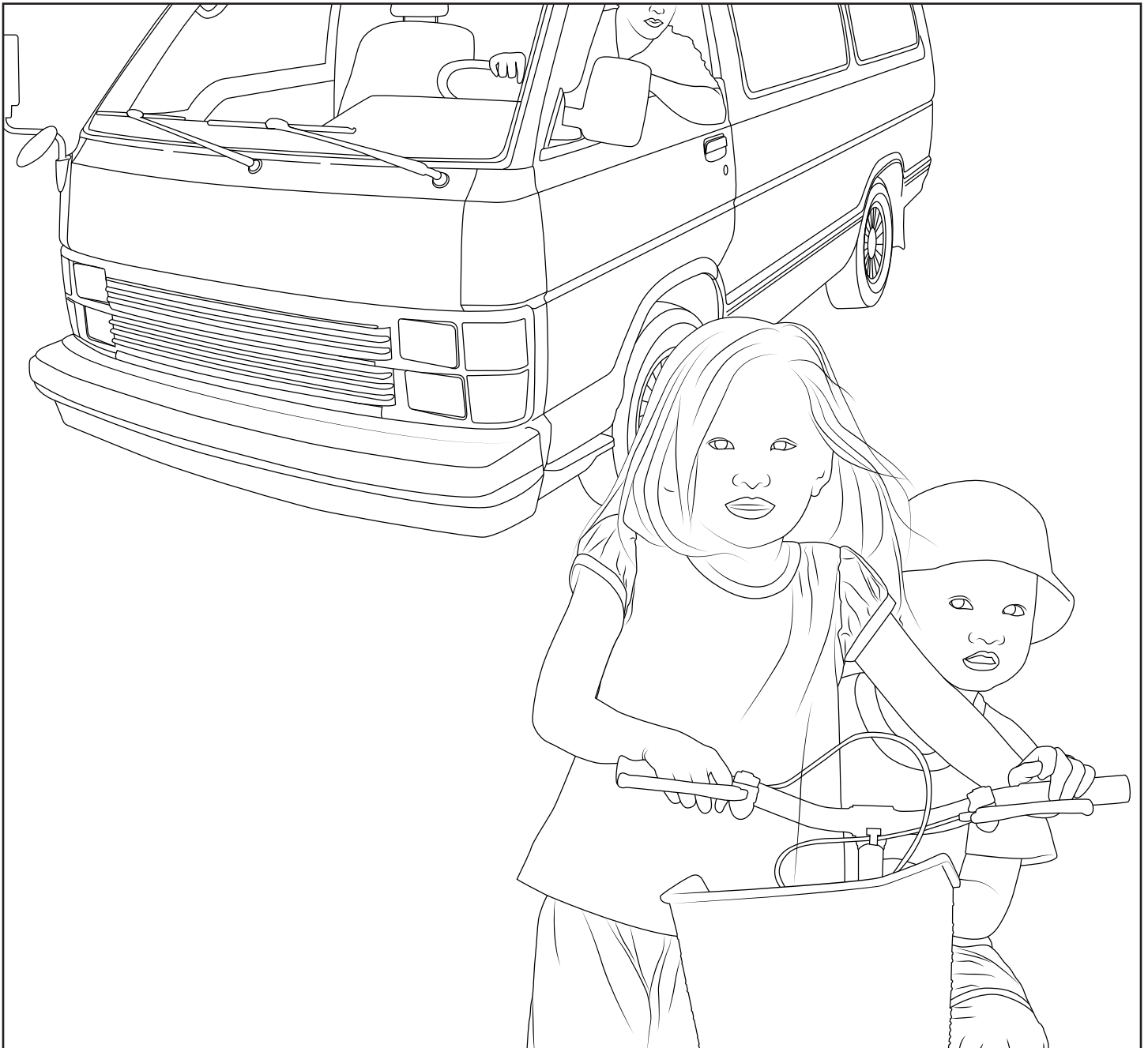
**ALL RULES ARE ABOUT KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE AND
RESPECTING OTHER PEOPLE'S SAFETY, TOO.**



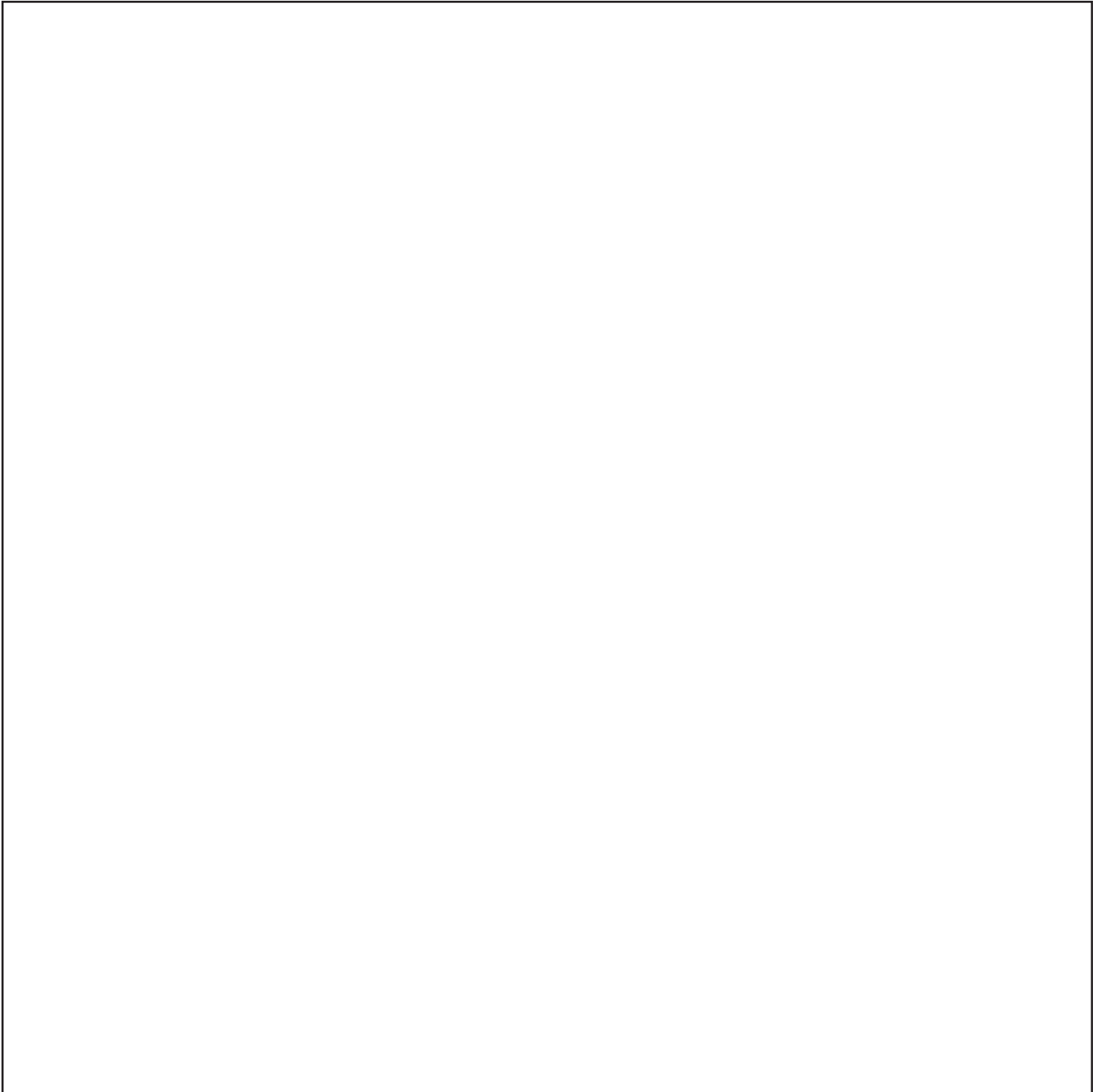
Some rules are made about being safe at home, like making sure we put our things away so nobody trips on them.



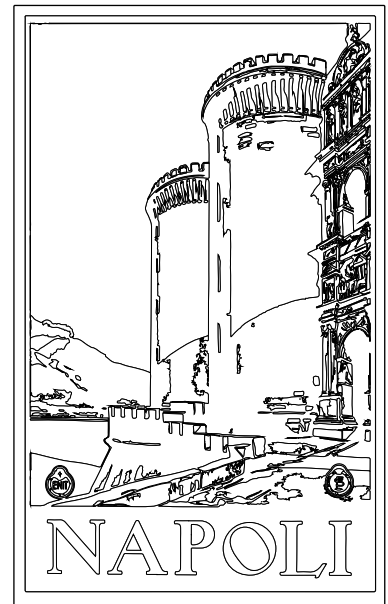
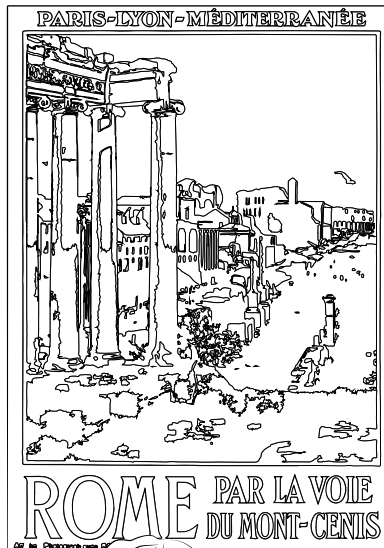
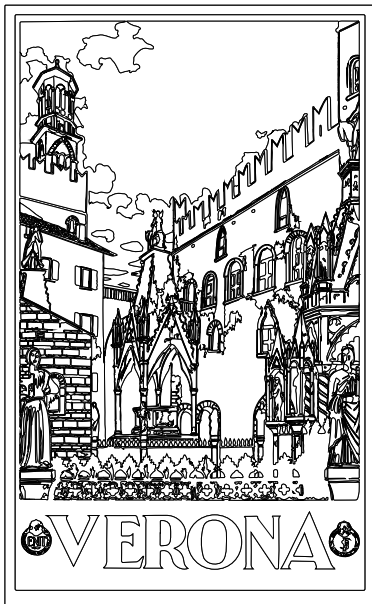
Some rules are about not talking to strangers or getting in cars with strangers because that can be very dangerous.



Some rules are made in school. Can you draw a picture about a school rule keeping you safe?



Some rules in school are about respecting others—like being quiet so everyone can hear the teacher and learn.



Some rules are about how to be safe when we are outside, like crossing the street only after looking both ways and using crosswalks when they are available.



Some rules are about keeping our country clean and beautiful. For example, you cannot litter, which means you cannot throw paper cups or other trash on the ground or out of the car.



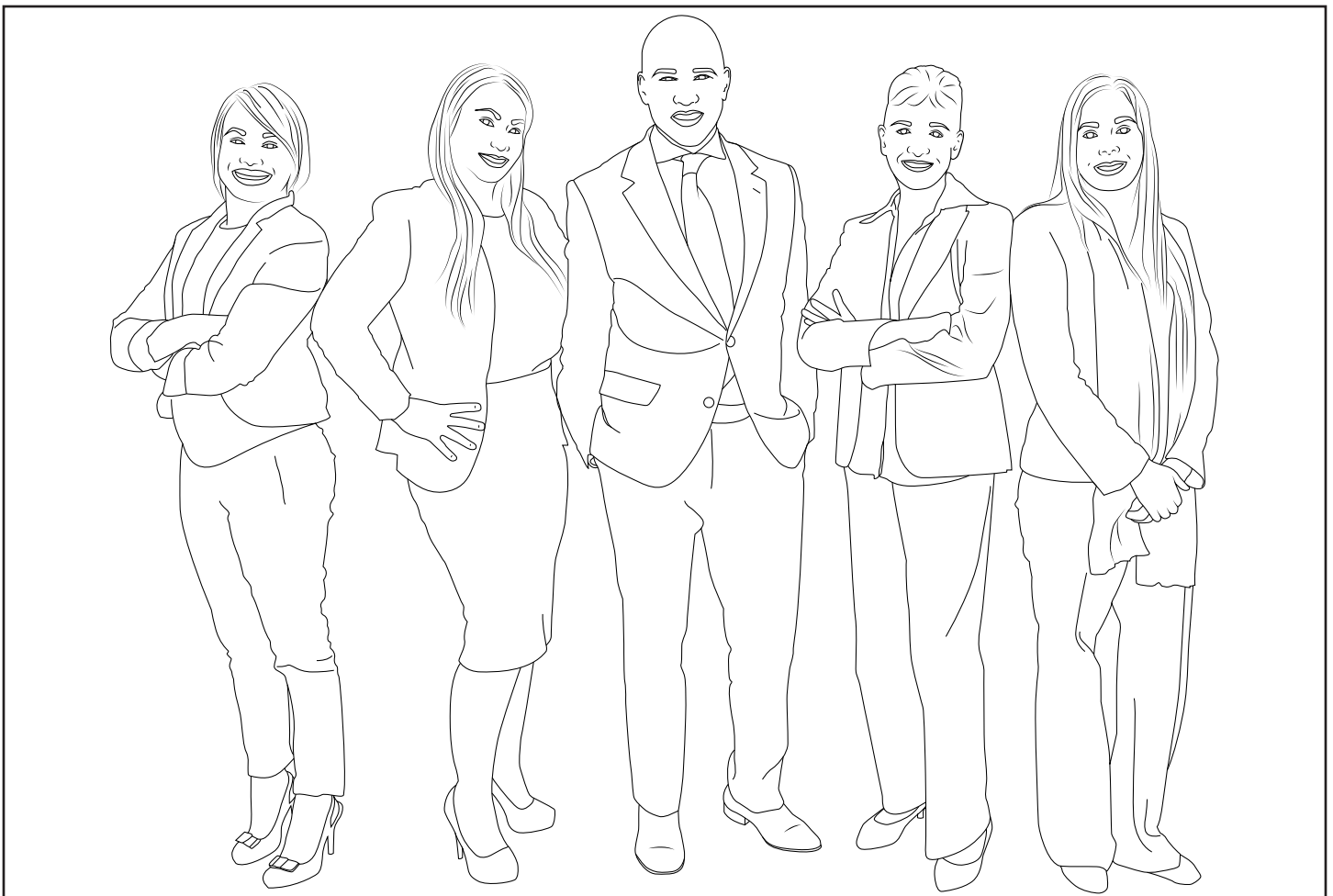
Who Makes the Rules?

At your house, your parents make the rules and decide what happens to you if you do not obey the rules. At school, your teachers and the principal make the rules and decide what happens to you if you do not obey the rules.

Government makes rules for people who live in towns and cities, in the State of Missouri, and in the United States, our country. Government rules are called laws. There are several levels of government that make laws.



Cities and towns have mayors and city councils, which are made up of people elected from your neighborhoods, to make the laws. The laws for cities and towns are called ordinances. The police make sure these rules are followed. If you live outside of a city or town, you will rely on the county sheriff to make sure that the laws of Missouri are followed.



We have local government bodies. For example, your school district has a school board made up of people elected by the people of your school district. The school board makes rules for the school.



A Word Search About Rules

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

COUNCIL

ELECTION

FAIRNESS

GOVERNMENT

LAWS

MAYOR

MISSOURI

ORDINANCES

POLICE

PRINCIPAL

RESPECT

RULES

SAFETY

SHERIFF

TEACHER



Government in Missouri and in the United States

There is a law for everyone in the United States. It is called the Constitution. Missouri also has a constitution. The Framers, the men who wrote the United States Constitution in 1787, wanted to make sure we had a very fair government. They created a government that had three parts: legislative, executive and judicial. Each of these branches has a special job. Each branch can make sure the other branches are doing their jobs. This means that no branch can get too much power. When Missouri became a state in 1821, the men who wrote the constitution decided to do the same thing.

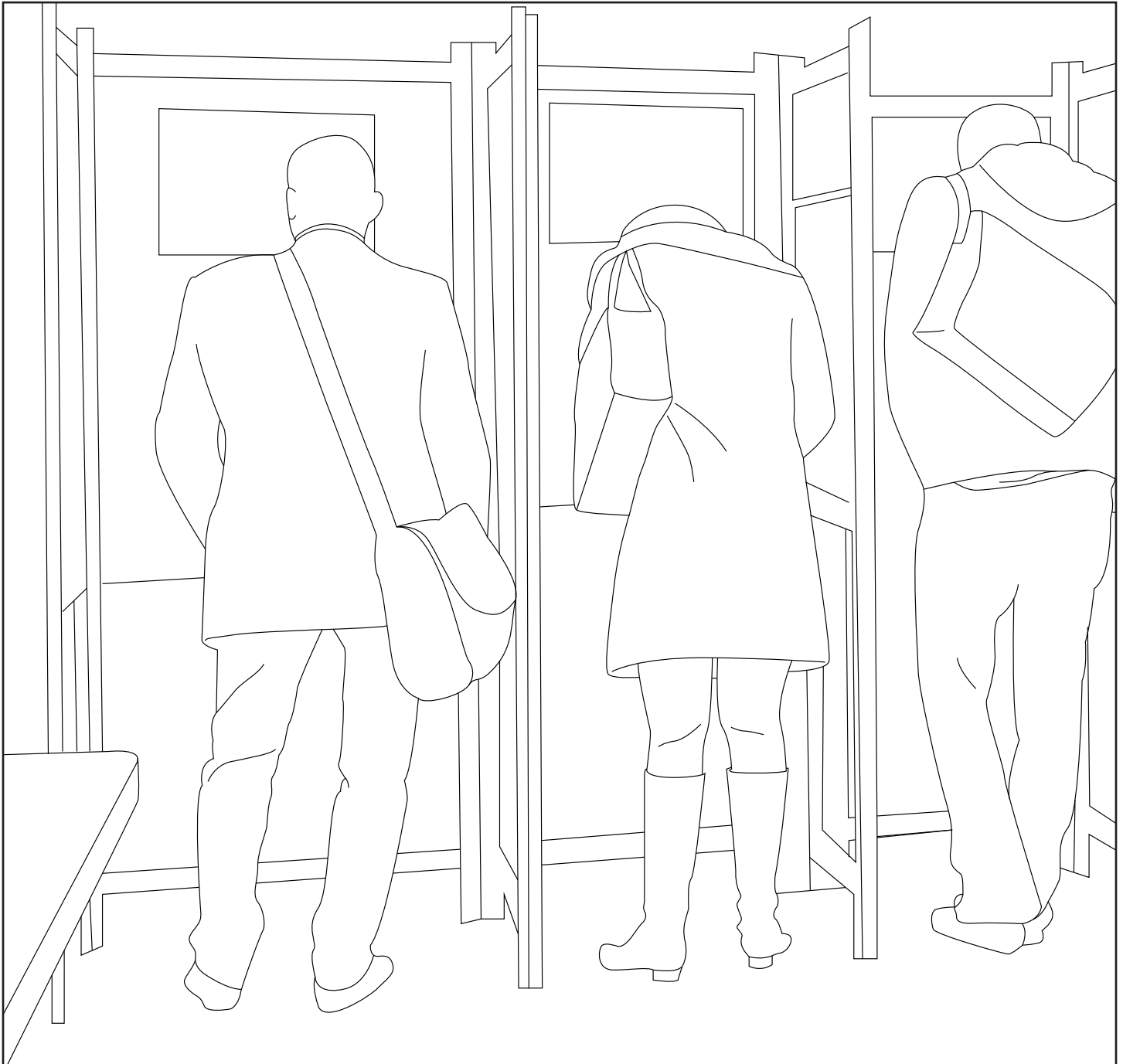
The seat of the United States government, or what we call the capital, is in Washington, D.C. The capital of Missouri is in Jefferson City.



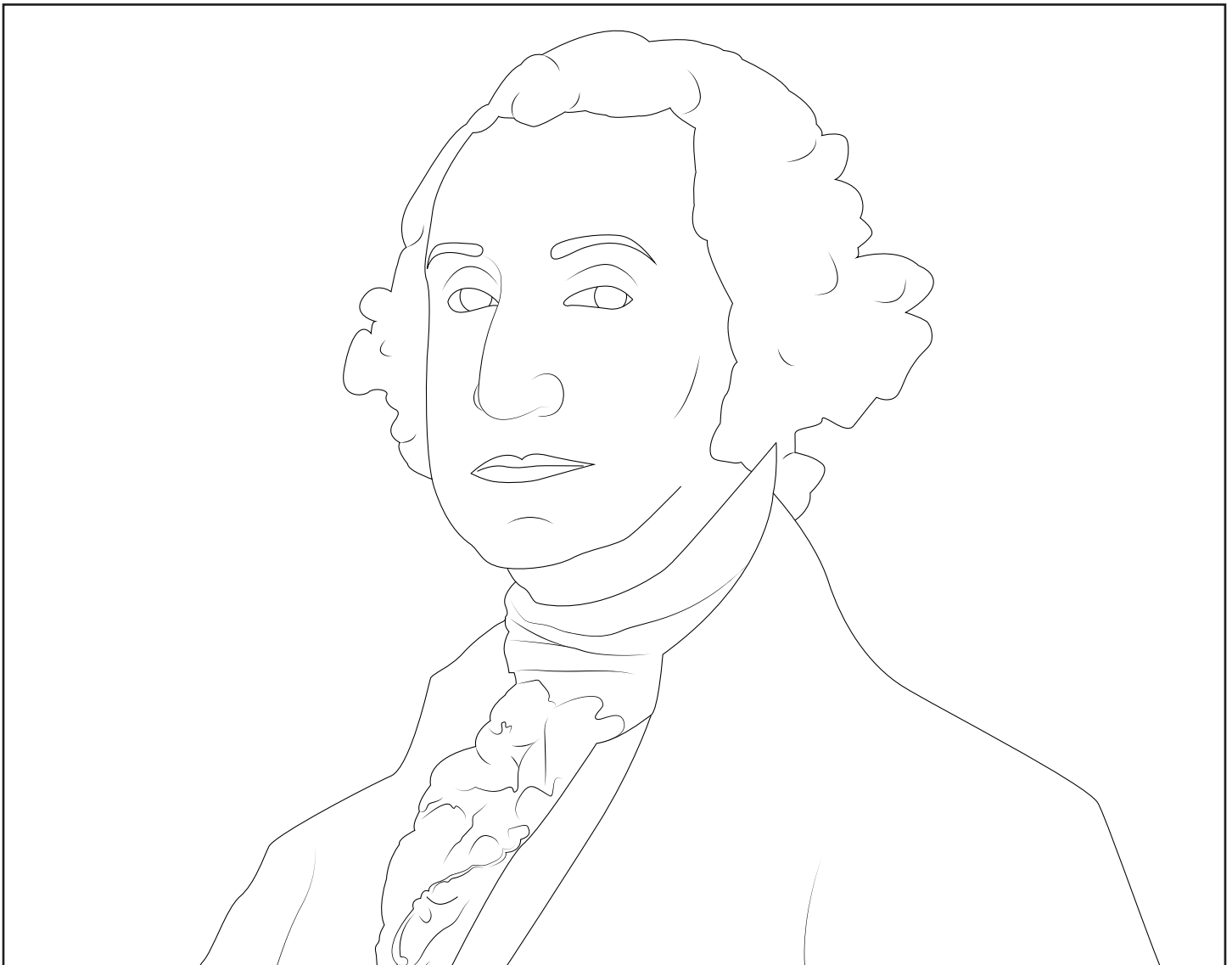
The legislative branch makes the laws. The legislative branch for the United States is called Congress. The legislative branch for Missouri is called the General Assembly. Both of these have two different parts. One part is called the House of Representatives. The other part is called the Senate. The two parts work together to make laws.



Representatives and Senators are elected by the people they serve. It is important that everyone who is over 18 years old votes in elections.



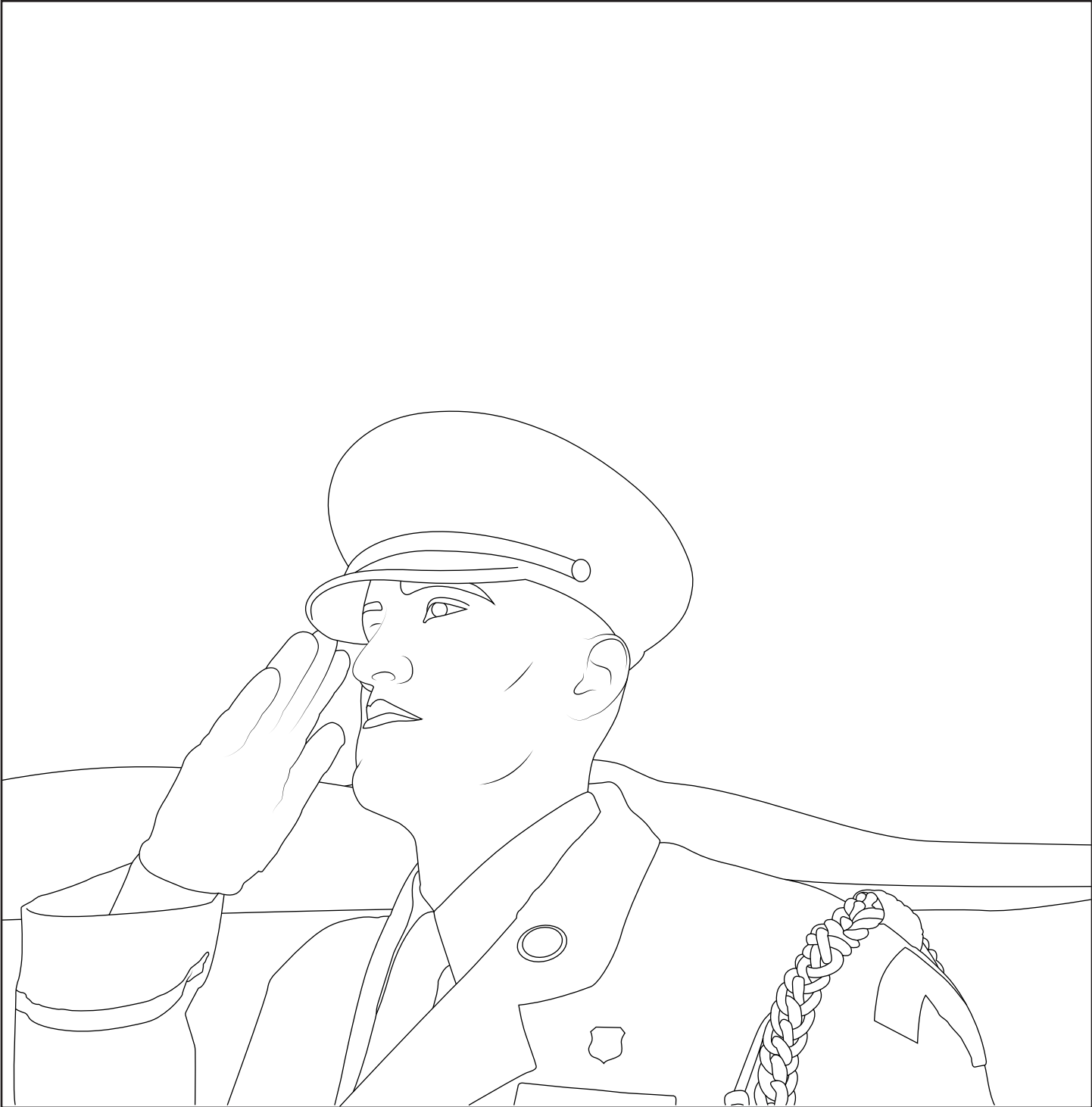
The executive branch has the power to make sure the laws that the legislative branch makes are followed. The head of the executive branch for the United States is the President of the United States. The president is elected by the people of the United States.



The president has a lot of help in making sure the laws are followed. For example, a park ranger in a national park makes sure that the laws about the parks are followed.



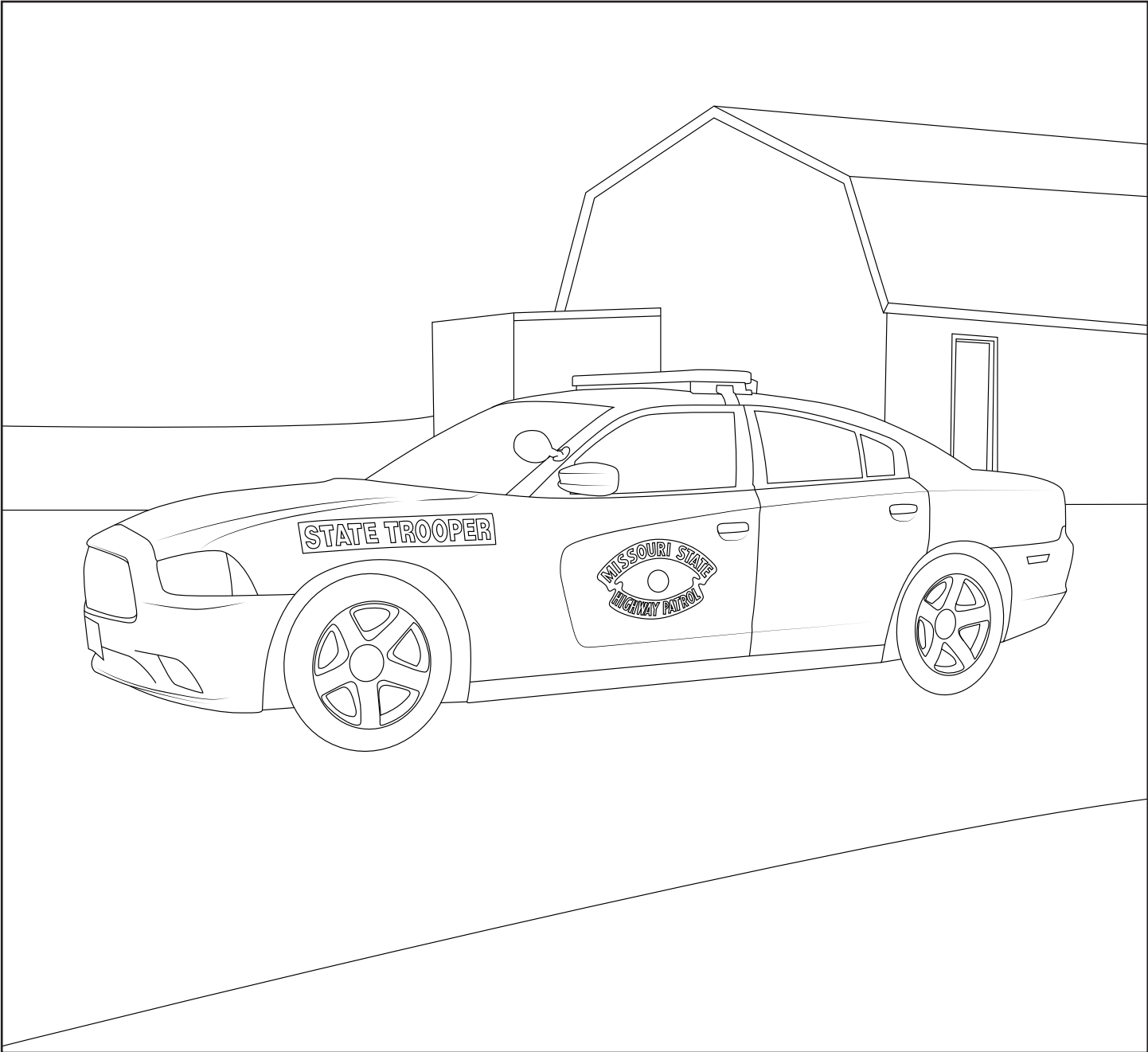
The president also gets help from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard.



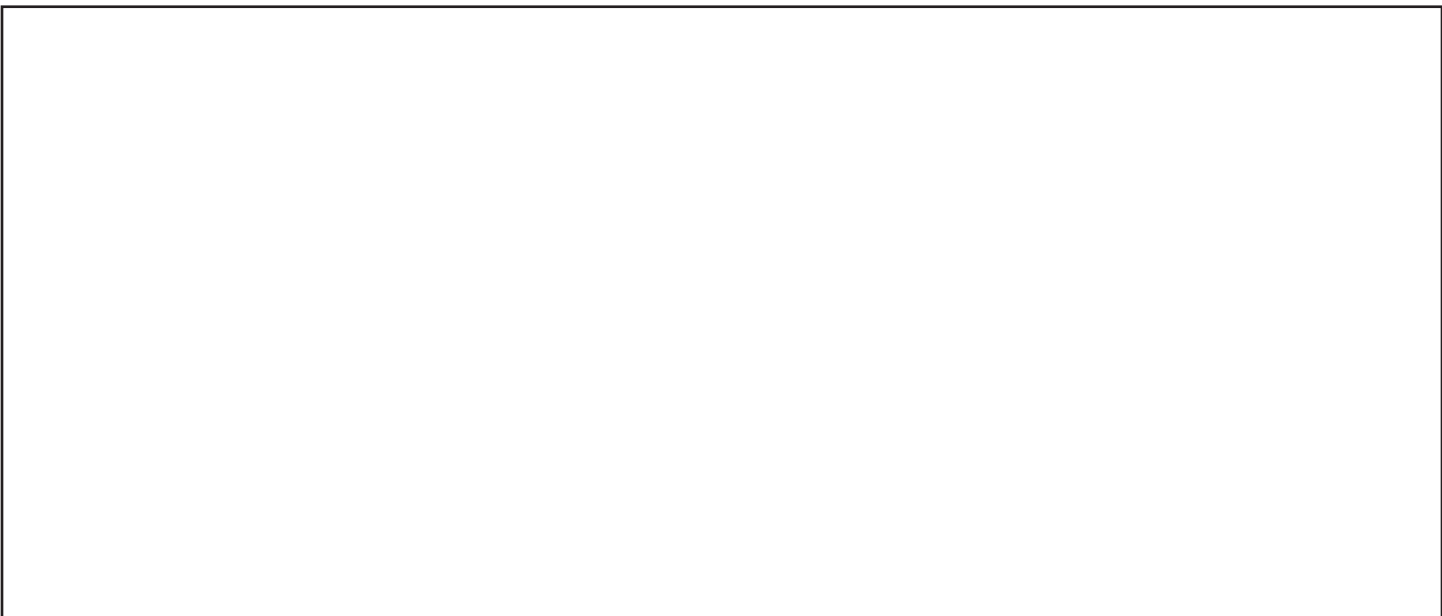
The head of the executive branch for the State of Missouri is the governor. The governor is elected by the people of Missouri.



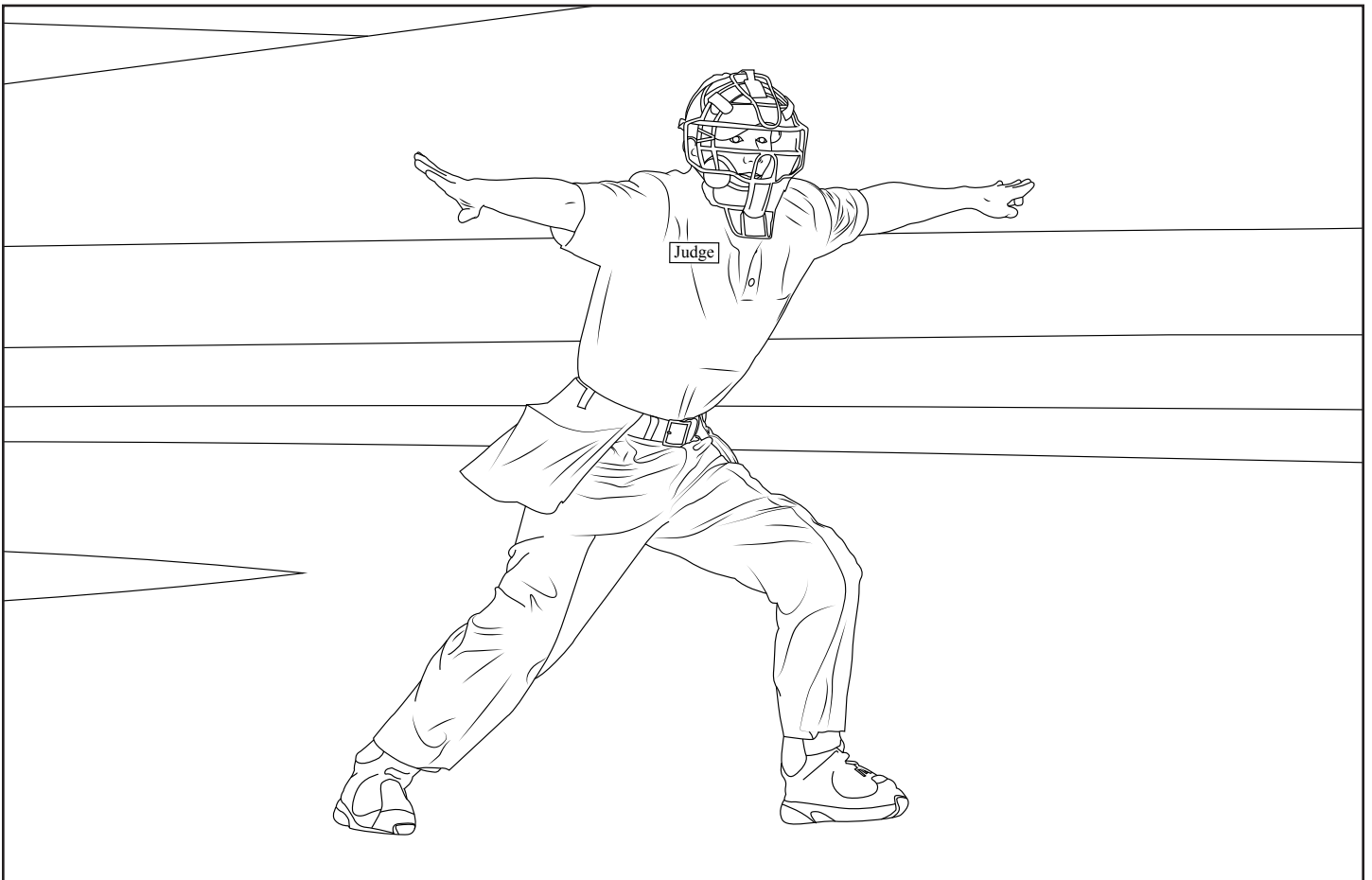
The governor also has a lot of help in making sure Missouri's laws are followed. For example, the Missouri Highway Patrol makes sure that drivers follow the traffic laws.



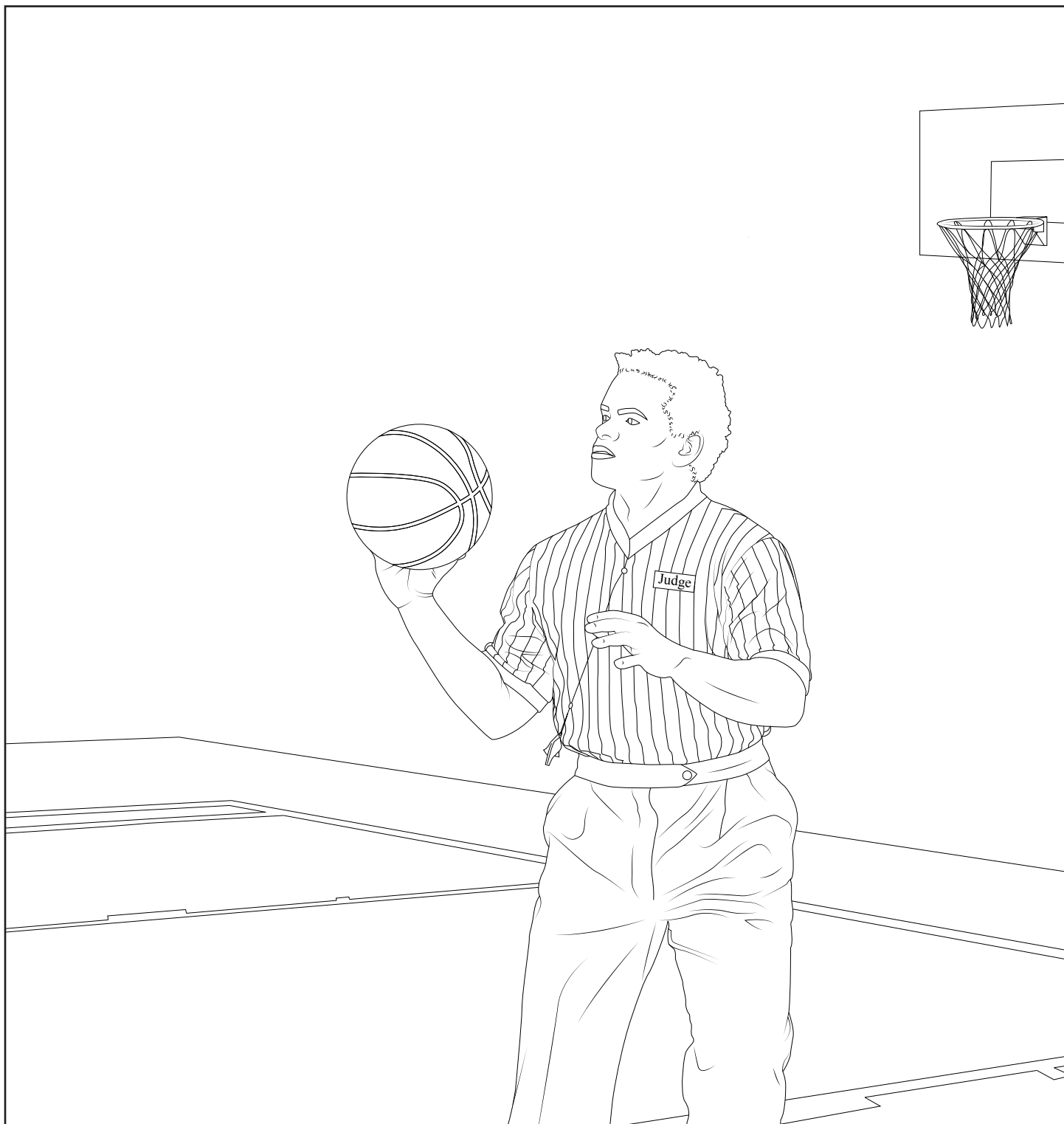
The judicial branch is where people go when there is a disagreement about what a law means. The judicial branch for both the United States and Missouri is made up of courts where judges and juries make decisions about how the law should be followed. Some examples of what judges and juries decide are if a person accused of a crime is guilty or innocent, if someone should be able to adopt a child, and if someone who damages someone's property should have to pay money to the person whose property was damaged. Draw a picture of what may happen in a courtroom with a judge or a jury.



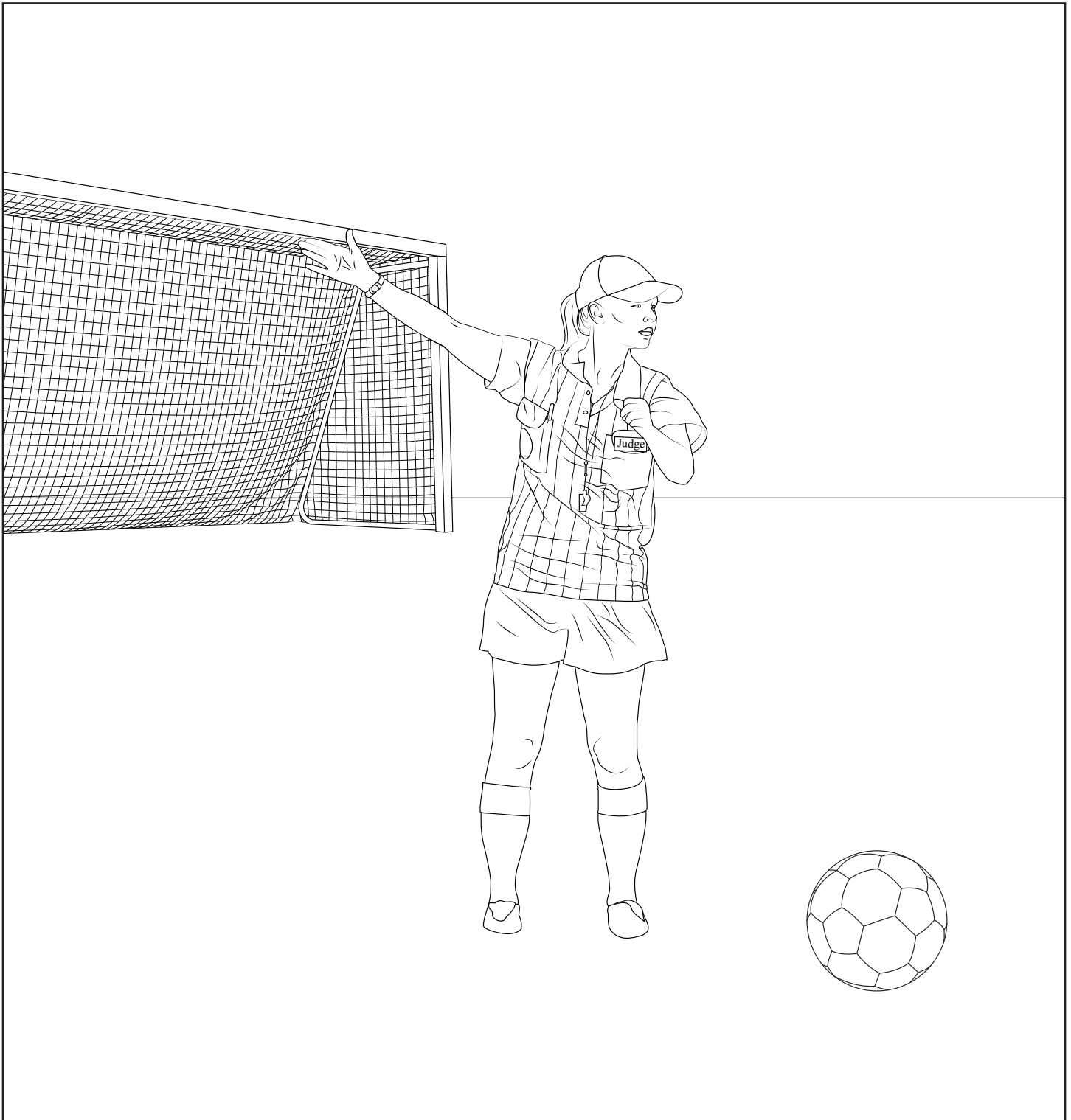
Judges are like umpires at a baseball game—they make sure the rules are followed and they are fair to both sides. They don't make the rules or choose the teams. They simply make sure that everyone follows the rules.



Or judges are like referees at a basketball game.



Or at a soccer game.



THINGS FOUND IN OUR GOVERNMENT

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

ELECTION

EXECUTIVE

JUDGE

JUDICIAL

LEGISLATIVE

PRESIDENT

REFEREE

REPRESENTATIVE

SENATOR

UMPIRE

VOTERS



You can be a good citizen by following all the rules in your house, in your school and in your community. You also be a good citizen by learning all you can about the governments in your town or city, your county, the State of Missouri and the United States. Can you draw a picture showing what it means to be a good citizen?

