

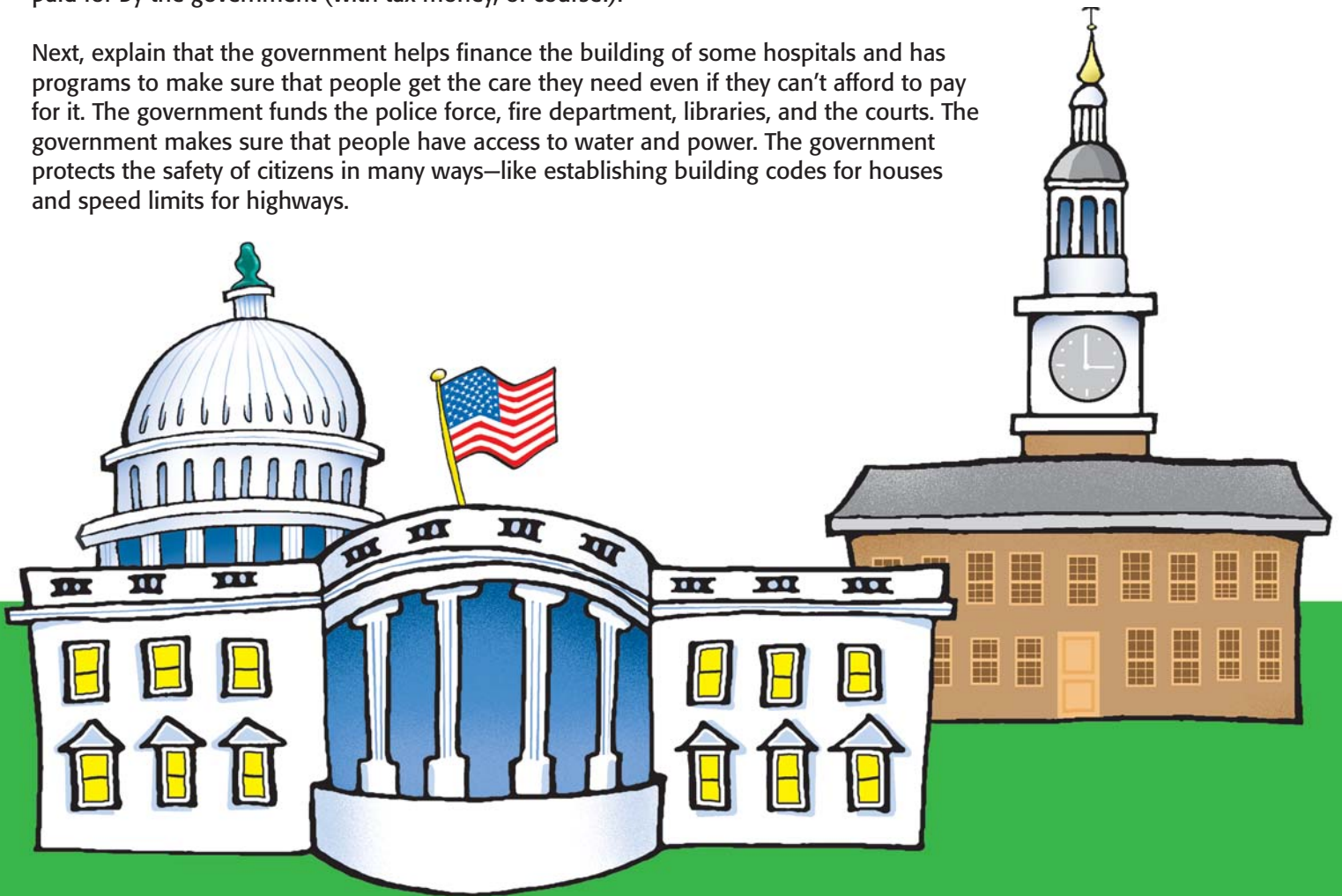
Who Needs Government?

Before students can understand the importance of elections, they need to understand government and what it does for them. What role does government play in their daily lives? Why do societies need a government? Why are government leaders important?

To explain the role of government, start with a vision of your everyday town...a public school, hospital, fire department, police department, library, court, and highways.

Start with the school and explain how the government helps to fund public schools. The money for desks, computers, supplies, books, and teachers' salaries comes largely from the government. And don't forget transportation! The buses and the roads they travel on are paid for by the government (with tax money, of course!).

Next, explain that the government helps finance the building of some hospitals and has programs to make sure that people get the care they need even if they can't afford to pay for it. The government funds the police force, fire department, libraries, and the courts. The government makes sure that people have access to water and power. The government protects the safety of citizens in many ways—like establishing building codes for houses and speed limits for highways.



Activity: Build a Town

Description:

This is a town made of shoeboxes where students draw and construct government buildings.

Objective:

Students will think about all the things that government does for them on a daily basis, and recognize government facilities.

Materials:

Shoe boxes, art supplies including crayons, colored pencils, glue, and decorative items like pipe cleaners, toothpicks, ribbon, cardboard, buttons, construction paper, modeling clay, etc. Students may also want to bring in rocks, leaves, or other natural items.

What to Do:

1. Divide the class into teams. Ask teams to pick something to build. Choices include a hospital, school, fire station, police station, library, or highway.
2. Decorate your box! Create the inside of the building. For example, the hospital will have beds and an operating room, and the police station will have a jail. The highway box might include a bridge, trees, highway signs, and cars, of course.
3. Put all the boxes together to make a town. Create an entrance with a sign. Ask each group to explain the role that their "box" plays in the life of a town. Ask each group where their "box" is located in their town!

