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Government, Choices, & You



Community

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ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

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Edward Byrne Memorial
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Attorney Admissions Fund

With support from these donors, other organizations, and individuals, Project REAL is able to provide our resources at no cost to tens of thousands of Nevadans each year.

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This book is inspired by and partially adapted from '*Play By the Rules: A Guide to 200 Nevadan Laws*', That publication was originally created by the Alabama Center for Civic Education in partnership with Project REAL in 2004, and then printed and produced by Project REAL with their permission from 2004 - 2018.

Nearly 100,000 students have better lives today because of the work *Play By the Rules* helped us achieve, and so we would like to thank everyone who helped make that resource such a significant success in Nevada for nearly 15 years.

Government, Choices, & You is what comes next,
and we can't wait to see what happens!

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About Project REAL

Project REAL reduces crime, protects students' futures, and makes Nevada safer for everyone by engaging them in conversations about laws and the consequences of breaking them, and their Constitutional rights and how to exercise them.

Justice is rooted in knowledge, and our work brings more fairness and justice into the lives of the students we reach. We ensure that all of our resources are available at no cost to the schools, organizations, and families who wish to use them.

Project REAL helps the students of Nevada to become the greatest versions of themselves with respect for the law through unique activities and educational resources that engage them in critical thinking about citizenship, selfless action, democracy, and the law.

Our program helps to ensure that Nevada is populated by residents who respect the law, contribute to their community, and work to create a world they are proud to call home. By fostering actions of mutual respect and selflessness, and by encouraging commitments to local communities, we contribute to a safer Nevada for us all.

Legacies

This book – and the many other **Project REAL** activities and publications that have preceded it – would not have been possible were it not for the vision, generous support, and championing of Irwin Molasky and **Project REAL**'s other founders.

Since 2004, **Project REAL** has been teaching the students of Nevada about the law and their rights. **Project REAL** was founded to ensure that the young residents of Nevada have consistent access to informative and empowering law related education. Because of **Project REAL**, Nevada's students are and shall remain safer, wiser, and more informed members of the communities they live in.

About This Book & How You Should Treat It

The book you hold in your hands has been provided to your school by **Project REAL**, a nonprofit organization that serves the students of Nevada. Where most companies exist to make money, nonprofits work to spend money in ways that make the world a better place. The money to do this kind of work comes from donations made by companies, government agencies, and people just like you.

Since we are a nonprofit, we provide these books at no cost to anyone in Nevada who requests them, when we have them in stock and are able to provide them. We are happy to do that – it's why we exist as a nonprofit - but that also means we can only print and distribute a limited amount of books each year based on the donations we receive. Given that, we *hope* you will treat this book carefully and with respect while it is in your possession.

Even though this guide has been donated to a school or community organization, you can get your own free copy!

Free digital versions of this guide and access to other resources are available on our website and in our mobile app that can be downloaded from Google Play and iTunes.



bit.ly/realandroid



projectrealnv.org



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About These Lessons

Government, Choices, & You has been designed to help you understand scenarios in which you and other students your age (around 10 – 15 years old) might think the biggest risk you're taking is getting grounded or detention, when you're taking risks that could get you arrested or lead to other serious criminal consequences.

This isn't just a book-length lecture or a list of laws you need to learn. In fact, it isn't that at all! Even if you pay more attention than anyone else in your class, we're not expecting you to memorize the more than 200 laws in this guide (let alone the consequences of breaking them). Instead, this guide has been designed to help you avoid 'accidental crimes' by teaching you to 'think within the law'.

This also isn't just about teaching you about laws you might end up breaking – knowingly or accidentally. It's also about teaching you about laws that protect you from others, and that help give you control over your own life, safety, and happiness. Like the criminal laws that will be explained though, we won't be giving you a list to memorize. Instead, if you pay attention, you'll learn how to find the help you need when you suspect the law is on your side (without just assuming you know there's a law that helps you in a way that actually causes you more trouble than you were in before).

Students, Parents, & Guardians: This Is Not Legal Advice

The information in this book is not intended as legal advice. **No legal advice is being given.** If you are facing legal issues, whether criminal or civil, seek professional legal counsel to get your question answered. This book is not a replacement for legal advice. Instead, *Government, Choices, & You* is designed to be a first step as adolescent readers develop an understanding of just how American Law will shape their choices and outcomes on a 24-hours 7-days-a-week rest-of-their-lives basis. Rather than serving as an index of laws and a guide to applying them, this guide can aid the reader in understanding how laws might apply to many different situations they may encounter while living their day-to-day lives.

To be 100% clear: If you ever find yourself in a situation where your life is intersecting with the law, we highly encourage you to seek the advice and services of a licensed and practicing attorney.

You should also keep in mind that laws are ever-changing. Consider how you are taught from an early age that The United States Constitution is a living document. Laws work similarly and each year many new laws are created while some existing laws are repealed. Given the ever-changing landscape of laws in the United States, we highly suggest that you contact an attorney if you ever find yourself with questions related to the law.

Project REAL's staff and volunteers worked extensively to research the book you hold in your hands. We have ensured that the information provided herein is accurate, true, and up-to-date at the time of publication (with this edition's publication occurring in September 2022). While the book will introduce you to key concepts, rights, responsibilities, and laws which you are likely to encounter throughout your life, it is neither an encyclopedia nor a replacement for sound legal advice. This is a starting point meant to empower you, however the laws which are referred to in this book may be different based on where you live and when you are reading the material. It was also written with Nevada's laws in mind. Whether you're from another state or moving away, laws can be different depending where you live, especially when it comes to issues like immigration, technology, civil law, and gun rights. Should you find yourself living outside of Nevada, be sure to familiarize yourself with local laws and statutes as they may be different from the ones detailed in this manual.

On a final note, we are committed to maintaining this guide with up-to-date information. We will update the digital version of this text regularly as the laws continue to change. You can always download the most up-to-date version we have available from our website. On our site, we've dedicated a page specific to this guide where you'll find the digital copy. Once there, you'll also be able to access a number of other links & resources you may find helpful. That page, and all the resources it contains, can be found here:

ProjectRealNV.org/choices

CHAPTER 12

Community

There's a saying about how, with some things in life "you only get back what you put into it" but that's not how things go with communities. With communities, some people can put nothing in and get plenty out of it, and maybe that'll be your life. People will go about their lives paying sales tax when they buy stuff, paying the taxes grown-ups pay when they turn 18, and then they'll just go about their lives and reap the benefits of living in a taxed community. They'll drive on the roads, have working traffic lights, and be able to call emergency services like firefighters and police if they need them. The entire time, they'll live their lives in the world that's been shaped by people who've put 'more' into their communities.

What if you don't just want to live in a world that's been shaped for you by other people? What if you want to shape the world around you in some meaningful way?

So far, you've spent time with this guide learning how to pause before you prank, think within the law, and to generally understand how the law shapes your life and the community you live in. Now, let's find out how you can put more into your community, how you can get more enjoyment and satisfaction out of it, and the ways these kinds of efforts can sometimes result in serious legal consequences you need to be aware of.

Direct & Indirect Service

Direct service is work that shapes a community by doing work 'directly' in it. Examples of this include giving food to people that need it and cleaning up graffiti when it shows up in a park. **Indirect service** is work that helps direct service happen, or that helps the direct service that happens to be the most helpful. Examples of indirect service include organizing volunteers for a project like cleaning up graffiti, or creating a list of homes that need food donations delivered to them and then assigning people to do those deliveries.

VOLUNTEERING

One of the easiest ways you can begin shaping a community is by volunteering. **Volunteering** is when someone offers to do something without asking for payment or reward for doing it. When talking about service, volunteering usually means someone is donating their time and availability to help with some community need.

Volunteers can take part in both direct and indirect service. Volunteers do all sorts of things.

When you volunteer, you may get some kind of award, recognition, or hours for a class, but generally the idea is that your payment is the knowledge that you've somehow helped to improve a community – maybe even the one you live in!

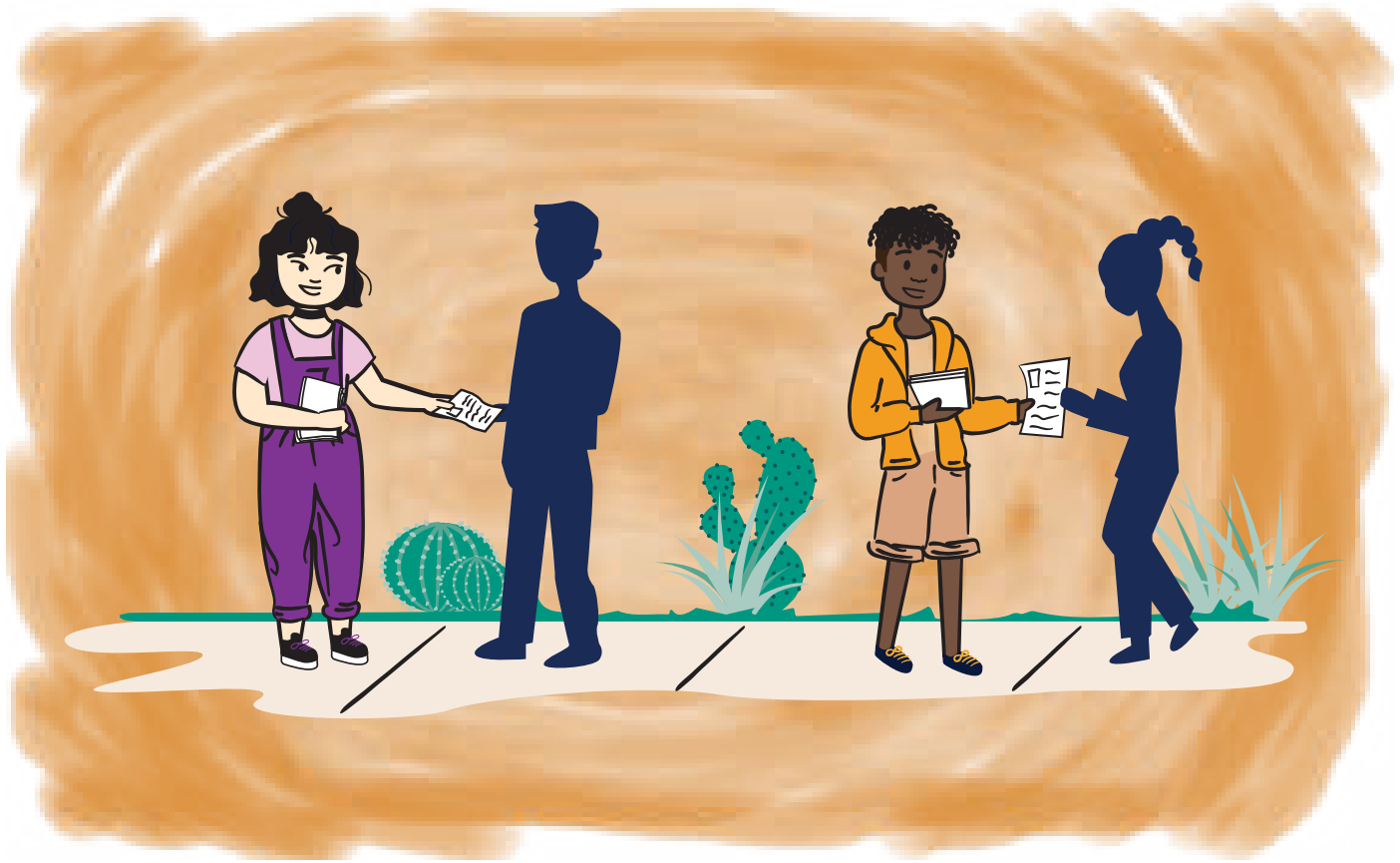
PUBLIC SERVICE

Another way you can shape communities is by taking part in public service. **Public Service** is work that is done to benefit communities in an organized way. Joining the military or a local firefighting service are some examples of how people can serve the public.

Corps Programs like AmeriCorps and Peace Corps are also forms of public service. In these programs, people are given a what's considered a very small amount of money for the work they'll be doing. That work can be anything from creating a volunteer program to building a home for a family that doesn't have a lot of money. The programs typically last 6 months to three years.

All of those are public service options for adults though. One thing you can do now is take part in **National Days of Service**. These are days that the government declares as good days for lots of people to volunteer in their community. During National Days of Service, many community organizations create projects to get the most out of a lot of people wanting to come together and help out all at once.





Activism

An **activist** is someone that takes on a role trying to directly shape their community by getting laws, policies or the way people are treated to change. The work trying to make a community change by getting the government to help make that change happen is called **activism**.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Community education is not just teaching people about a subject, but teaching them in a way that is meant to create some kind of positive change.

Holding free talks that are open to the anyone that wants to attend is one way you could take part in community education. Another example would be handing out flyers or pamphlets about how a law or community rule (also known as a **policy**) shapes an issue you're hoping to see change come to.

Although they may not seem like education at first, even when people call for change in visible and noticeable ways – acts known as **protests** – they are taking part in a form of community education. By attempting to get attention for an issue and the need to create some change around it, a person protesting is educating people that the issue exists in the first place.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Community organizing is when people (usually volunteers, but it can be anyone) try to get members of a community to help change some law or policy.

An example of community organizing would be if you got a group of students together to collect signatures from students and parents saying they wanted there to be an official 'wear pajamas to school' day. By telling people about the project, and getting volunteers to help you collect signatures of support (which you would use to convince your school's principal that it was a good idea), you would be taking part in a form of community organizing.



CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Sometimes people decide to draw attention to issues by breaking the law in a way that is meant to improve the chances of drawing the most attention to the issue the activists are working to address. This is an act known as **civil disobedience**.

Famous people have used civil disobedience in ways that have worked, but it's important to understand that their choice to use it caused them to face the legal consequences of their actions.

The lunch counter sit-ins of the 1960's are a well-known example of civil disobedience. These were instances of Black Americans refusing to leave restaurants with policies that only allowed white people to dine in them (at the time, that was legal).

These protesters faced charges of trespassing and disturbing the peace – not to mention violence during the process of being arrested. Even though today they are thought of as heroes, many at the time still had to face the legal consequences of their important actions.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE & THE LAW

We live in a world where many people find many reasons to protest. Sometimes people hold protests... just to protest other protests!

We also live in a nation where the rights to free speech and free expression are so highly valued that they are listed first in the Bill of Rights.

It is very important to understand that free speech and free expression are not get-out-of-jail-free excuses for breaking the law. For example, you have a right to gather signatures for a petition to help pass a law but you do not have a right to do that on private property (like inside of a shopping center). If you're asked to leave and you refuse to go away, you are criminally trespassing, and can face the legal consequences that come with that.

If a person chooses to get arrested to draw attention to the cause they care about, they should at least first make themselves fully aware of the consequences of their actions. It is very easy for a person to break laws with greater consequences than they realize.

One famous case involved an 84-year old Catholic nun named Megan Rice who protested a nuclear weapons plan in Tennessee in 2012. At one point, she faced 12 years in prison for nonviolent actions she took during her protest (she only ended up serving three, but still – that was a huge risk)!

Direct Law-and-Policy Making

Activism and volunteering help to shape communities - and the policies and laws that regulate them - but the most direct way to shape a community is by getting involved with helping to write laws and to get them passed. While many different factors help to shape laws, the most powerful voices belong to two groups of people: public officials and lobbyists.

PUBLIC OFFICE

When the only way to get a job is to be voted into it rather than being hired by a 'boss' of some kind, that job is an **elected position**. The person who gets that job is referred to as an **elected official**. To try and get elected, you need to do things to get people to vote for you. Those steps you take are called a **campaign**.

Running for public office involves risk – you can put a lot of time and money into getting elected, and get others to do the same, but still end up not getting the job. Sometimes you can still shape a community just by running for office, even when you lose though!

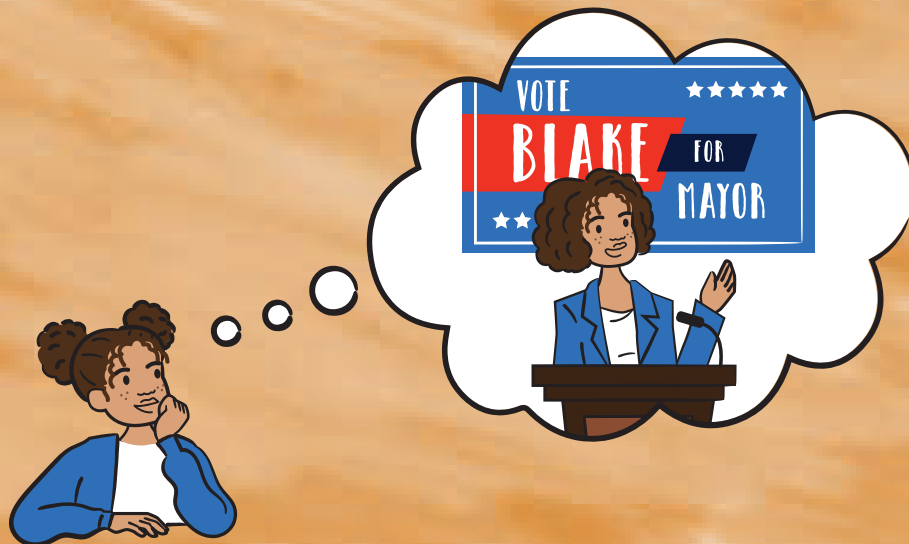
The votes you earn (even if you lose) represent people who believe in the ideas you promote during your campaign. The winning candidate – seeing that you were able to get votes talking about those issues – may feel like they need to adopt some of your ideas. That's because elected officials represent all voters – not just the ones who voted for them!

Elected officials have the most influence on laws that shape the communities they serve. Some of them write **bills** (the words that – if accepted – will become laws), and most of them vote whether or not each bill will become a law or not.

It's never too early to start thinking about running for public office. In fact, if you live in Las Vegas or Reno, you may even be able to run for Mayor during your last year of high school (if you turn 18 in time and have registered to vote!).

NOTE: *If you might be a future politician, you should really check out this awesome website:*

www.runforoffice.org





LOBBYING

Lobbying is the act of attempting to influence the laws and policies that shape a community. People that lobby are referred to as **lobbyists**.

An example of a lobbying would be if after hearing local lawmakers in your community were going to ban violent video games, you went to speak with each of those law makers and showed them research explaining why that would actually be a bad idea.

If you think that sounds similar to community education, you're not mistaken. The difference with lobbying and community outreach is that the lobbying audience is limited to lawmakers and policy shapers.

If you want to lobby, that's great! Just be sure to do it without breaking laws! If you tried to give gifts to the lawmakers you visit in exchange for their votes, that would be a crime called **bribery**! In fact, there are a few different laws to prevent bribery from happening during lobbying. One of those requires lobbyists to register themselves and their lobbying activities.

VOTING

A third indirect but important way to shape laws? Vote (once you turn 18 that is – that's the legal minimum age)! When people vote in elections, they may not pick the words of laws that are passed, but they pick the people who will write and pass (or prevent) laws. That's because our nation is managed using a system called **representative government**.

Representative government is where we elect people to represent the 'general idea' of what we want, and then they vote 'in the spirit' of the people who elected them. Basically, when you vote, you're voting on who you trust to 'get it' when it comes to who you are, the world you want to live in, and how you want to see other people treated. Who you vote for once you're old enough to vote – or the votes you don't bother to use – will shape the world around you in nearly every election.

If you got to vote on every law that was ever made, that is what's called **direct democracy**. Maybe one day we will get to try that out as a city, state, or even a nation. For now, not enough people vote and people don't learn enough about how the government works for that to be a good idea. Instead, we have representative government.

Laws & Consequences

KEYWORD	CLASSIFICATION	SUMMARY + DETAILS	CODIFICATION
AmeriCorps	Establishment Law	President Bill Clinton signed the NCST Act of 1993 establishing AmeriCorps, which was an organization designed to help communities within the United States of America that needed support. That support would be used to improve the lives of Americans in communities that were less fortunate than others, meaning they had less 'basics' like roads, homes, schools, or community organizations compared to other communities.	National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993
Bribery (Lobbying)	Category C Felony	A person is guilty of a category C felony if they offer something of value to a government official or professional in a seat of power, in order to influence how that person responds to a situation or votes on an issue.	NRS 197.270
PeaceCorps	Establishment Law	In September 1961, congress enacted Public Law 87-293 which established ongoing funding for the PeaceCorps which President John F Kennedy had already created through Executive Order 10924. This organization would support the growth of democracy and freedom in the world by sending America's youth to help less-fortunate nations build things they needed – things designed to help them one day become wealthy as the US, with as many rights for their people as the US grants to United States Citizens.	Executive Order 10924 Public Law 87-293
Lobbying General Violations	Misdemeanor	A person who fails to follow special procedures outlined for lobbyists, including failure to disclose any items provided to elected or soon-to-be elected officials, is guilty of a misdemeanor if they had no criminal intent.	NRS 218H.930
Voting	Constitutional Right	On July 1, 1971 the 26 th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, establishing that all US Citizens ages 18 and older had the right to vote (unless there was some kind of disqualifier, like a felony conviction).	26 th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution



REAL Helpful: Reporting Your Participation

Project REAL's pre-tests & post-tests are a vital element of our ongoing service in Nevada!

Project REAL relies on generous supporters who like to see how many students their contributions have reached, and the impact those gifts have had with the students we serve. The pre-tests and post-tests students take part in help us to show those supporters all of the amazing work their generosity has produced. This encourages them to continue supporting our work, allowing us to continue providing our law-related education experiences for free to all of the families, students, schools, and community partners we serve throughout Nevada. We also use the information collected from pre-tests and post-tests to continually increase the value of our materials with updates and expansions based on student feedback.

If you appreciate *this* Project REAL experience, please be sure to take part in the post-test for it (even if you didn't take the pre-test first).

Project REAL Pre-Tests

<http://projectrealnv.org/pretest>

Project REAL Post-Tests

<http://projectrealnv.org/posttest>

REAL Continued Learning

Our law blogs are loaded with interesting stories about the law!

Whether you're a teacher looking to expand the experience beyond this publication, or a student who just really enjoyed the learning experience we provided in this guide, we have more material for you. On our Project REAL law blogs, we collect weird, fun, and interesting news stories involving courts, laws, and other civics-related topics. Each of our stories summarizes an interesting law-related news story, and then gets capped off with a series of questions that can be used as prompts for classroom discussions or writing exercises.

Project REAL Law Blogs

<https://projectrealnv.org/connect/blog/>

REAL Opportunity: Contact Us For More Free Resources

We offer many other free resources & experiences to Nevada's schools & community partners!

Trunks filled with costumes and giant set-pieces for our mock trials! Field trips to the courts! Lawyers, judges, and law enforcement specialists as guest speakers! Project REAL offers all of these things and more – all at no cost to the families, schools, and community partners we serve: You just need to contact us to request them!

Having served Nevada since 2004, there are a number of Project REAL books 'out in the wild'. Perhaps you're a teacher who found 15 copies of this guide shoved into a drawer of a classroom you've inherited. Maybe someone emailed you a pdf file and you'd like physical copies of this publication. You might be a teacher who's working with mock trial scripts that were printed at the school and assembled with staples, wishing you had a teacher's guide for the material you're working with.

Whatever circumstance led you to this page, know that there are many other free resources waiting for you – you just need to get in touch with us to request them. We hope to hear from you soon.

Requests & More

<https://projectrealnv.org/project/requests/>

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