



Accessibility

Southern Girllll: Tales and Tastes from the South



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DO YOU KNOW HOW YOUR GOVERNMENT WORKS?

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Feeling like too many people missed out on Schoolhouse Rock's "I'm Just a Bill" or Yellow Pain's rap on the branches of government? Here's a refresher on how our government works and why your vote is vital in shaping our lives, especially in light of recent events in Texas.

There are three branches of government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. The Executive Branch, including the President, governors, and mayors, is responsible for enforcing laws and managing public affairs. The Legislative Branch, comprising Senators, Congress members, and City Councils, creates laws that impact our daily lives, from social security benefits to healthcare. The Judicial Branch, which includes the Supreme Court, interprets laws and ensures they are constitutional.

A lot of anger is often aimed at the President and local officials like the mayor and governor. However, they don't create laws; they enforce them. For change to happen, it's essential to pay attention to the Legislative Branch. Legislators make decisions on vital issues such as healthcare, education, and economic policies (rules that influence the economy, like taxes and government spending). For example, they decide on social security benefits, maternal health policies (critical because Black women face alarmingly high childbirth mortality rates), decriminalization of marijuana, and funding for schools in minority communities.

The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo* overturned the 40-year-old practice of deferring to agencies' reasonable interpretations of ambiguous federal laws. This means agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may now have less power to enforce regulations. Companies, including those that have contributed millions to Supreme Court justices, could have more influence over decisions that were once guided by expert agencies. This is a significant shift, potentially affecting how environmental and public health policies are enforced.

In Texas, the local government delayed requests for disaster relief funding, leaving millions without electricity. Meanwhile, Governor Abbott, elected multiple times to a position without term limits, was out of the country. His appointee, Dan Patrick, also took his time responding. Policies and procedures are in place to handle such crises, yet local government actions have repeatedly shown inadequacies during national disasters, winter storms, hurricanes, and power grid failures.

Did you call the governor, mayor, or your congressman to complain? Applying pressure is crucial. When disaster strikes, and you're left without power, food spoiling, and no assistance in sight, it becomes personal. These elected officials need to feel the pressure from their constituents to act promptly and efficiently.

It's your responsibility to know your representatives. You can find your city council person or state representative easily online. Call them, email them, and let them know your concerns. Join a community board in Harris County. Stop allowing officials to hold office for decades without being active in the community. Your vote matters more than ever, especially in metropolitan areas like Houston. Even if Texas is a predominantly red state, local votes can still bring significant change. Don't let elected officials sit idle while the community suffers. It's time to take ownership and make your voice heard.

Understanding how the government works is crucial for making informed decisions. The recent Supreme Court decision and Texas's response to disasters highlight the importance of voting and holding officials accountable. Your vote is your voice; use it to demand better governance and



Recipe of the Week: Southern Fried Chicken

Ingredients:

- 1 whole chicken, cut into pieces
- 2 cups buttermilk
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 2 tablespoons Tony Chachere's Creole Seasoning
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- Vegetable oil for frying
- 2 limes

Instructions:

1. Clean the chicken pieces with lime and water, then rinse thoroughly.
2. Season the chicken with Tony Chachere's, onion powder, garlic powder, and black pepper. Let it marinate for at least 30 minutes.
3. Soak the chicken pieces in buttermilk for at least 2 hours (overnight for best results).
4. In a large bowl, mix the flour, cornmeal, Tony Chachere's, onion powder, garlic powder, and black pepper.
5. Heat the vegetable oil in a large skillet or deep fryer to 350°F (175°C).
6. Dredge the buttermilk-soaked chicken pieces in the flour mixture, ensuring they are well-coated.
7. Fry the chicken in batches until golden brown and crispy, about 15-20 minutes per piece. Ensure the internal temperature reaches 165°F (75°C).
8. Drain on paper towels and serve hot.

As you season and fry up this classic dish, remember that community advocacy and involvement are just as essential. Let's make sure our neighborhoods have the right ingredients for success.

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