Chapter 24 in Brief

SECTION 1
State Constitutions (pp. 684–688)
★ The first State constitutions were based on popular sovereignty and limited government, and they provided for a separation of powers, checks and balances, and protection of individual rights.
★ Today, State constitutions retain those basic principles; they also set out the structure, powers, and processes of government, and detail methods of constitutional change.
★ Most present-day constitutions are in need of reform.

SECTION 2
State Legislatures (pp. 689–693)
★ The legislature is the lawmaking branch of State government. It has the power to pass any law that does not conflict with the State constitution or with federal law.
★ State legislators are chosen by popular vote.
★ State legislatures are organized much like Congress.
★ The legislative process is also similar to that of Congress. However, some States also allow voters to participate directly in the lawmaking process through the initiative and referendum.

SECTION 3
The Governor and State Administration (pp. 694–700)
★ The governor is the chief executive officer of the State.
★ In addition to executive powers, the governor has some legislative and judicial powers.
★ The governor shares executive powers in most States with other executive officers, who are also popularly elected.

SECTION 4
In the Courtroom (pp. 702–705)
★ The law is the code of conduct by which society is governed. State courts apply constitutional, statutory, and administrative law as well as common law and equity.
★ The law can also be classified as either criminal or civil law.
★ There are two kinds of juries: the grand jury, which brings indictments; and the petit jury, which decides the facts in trials.

SECTION 5
The Courts and Their Judges (pp. 707–712)
★ State courts are usually organized into unified court systems, which contain courts of first instance, such as general trial courts; intermediate appellate courts; and a State supreme court.
★ Judges are selected most often by popular election but also by appointment by either the governor or the legislature.