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Making It Official: From Idea to Law

ou might know that NYS has many official symbols, like the Beaver, the Apple or the Ladybug. What you might not know is that for something to become an official state symbol a law must be passed by the New York State Legislature. Ideas for laws come from the citizens of New York State, and that includes kids!

In 1980, fifth-grader Kristina Savoca of Commack, had the idea to make the Lady Bug the official state insect. And in 1987, the "Apple Muffin Gang", fourth graders in Mrs. Craven's class at Bear Road Elementary School in North Syracuse, decided that they wanted a law making the apple muffin the official muffin. These students learned how to make their ideas become laws.

Citizens cannot just take their ideas to the legislature and ask them to vote. There is a process that must be followed. The first step is sharing the idea with a state lawmaker. In New York State we have a state legislature that has two parts, the Senate and the Assembly. Our state is divided into districts for each of these parts. Each Senate and Assembly district has an elected representative. To get their ideas for laws to the legislature, the students needed the help of their representatives. They also needed the help of other people. They asked their neighbors to sign petitions and write letters supporting their idea. Experts also wrote letters explaining why the law would be beneficial.



- The specific Lady Bug that is official in NYS is the 9-spotted lady beetle. It is very rare.
- There was concern over the apple becoming our official state fruit. Some people thought it was unfair to the other fruits grown in NYS.
- The official reptile, the snapping turtle, can live for 30-40 years.
- If you're hungry after school you might have milk, yogurt or an apple. All are official foods of NYS.



Once an idea has the sponsorship of a state legislator, it is called a bill. The bill then goes through a long journey to become a law. It travels to our state capital in Albany, the city where the business of our state government is conducted. It will spend time going through committees, both parts of the legislature, and more, before hopefully landing on the governor's desk to be signed into law or vetoed if the governor doesn't agree.

In this issue, we are going to dive deeper with our Archivist Archie as we look at how some of our state symbols and official items came to be. Maybe you'll be inspired to lobby for a law yourself! Kristina Savoca, aka "Ladybug Kris" says, "Get involved when you hear about things that are not right, or you have an idea. You can actually make change!"





- Garnet Mine Tour, North River. See our state gem, the garnet, is mined. <u>visitadirondacks</u>. <u>com/attractions/garnet-mine-tours</u>
- **Visit a Farm!** Find a farm near you that grows or makes one of our state's official foods. <u>iloveny.</u> com/things-to-do/tours-excursions/farm-tours/
- Beaversprite: The conservation center of the Utica Zoo. Attend their "The History of Beavers in New York State" program. <u>uticazoo.org/</u> <u>beaversprite/</u> (Archie thinks this one is REALLY interesting!).



This is an image of one page of a **petition** that the Apple Muffin Gang submitted in their request to have the apple muffin made the official state muffin. There are many pages with hundreds of signatures. A petition is a formal written document making a request. All the people signing it are saying that they agree with the request.

	To Governor Cuomo, Assembly Majority Leader Warren Anderson, Assemblyman				
	Hy Miller, Assemblyman Michael Bragman, Senator Tarky Lombardi, Senator				
	Nancy Lorraine Hoffman:				
	We are petitioning you to make the apple muffin the "Official				
	New York State Muffin."				
	We feel there should be a state muffin because there are other				
	things designated as state symbols.				
	The apple is the state's leading fruit crop, last year producing				
	950 million pounds of apples, making New York second only to				
	Washington in the production of apples. We would like to honor the				
	apple growers of our state, and we would like to promote and sell				
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Observe:

In the text, the Apple Muffin Gang gave reasons why they thought the apple muffin should be the official muffin. Underline them in the text.

(a) ← (a) Infer:

On the lines below, explain why you think having hundreds of signatures would be helpful.

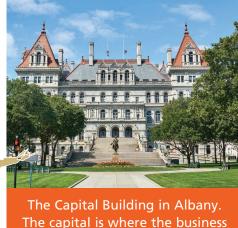




Learning Activity

Now it's your turn! On your own, with a friend or your class, talk about what you like and don't like about the way life is in New York State. Is there an issue you care about deeply? Do you have an idea that will make people safer? Or maybe an idea for another state symbol? In our online resources, we have materials to help you get your idea ready to start the journey to becoming a law.

considerthesourceny.org/new-york-archives-jr/special-edition-making-itofficial/iunior-archivists



of government takes place.

Just like the federal, or national government, the New York State government has three branches.

ALBANY



The **Executive Branch**. led by the Governor, who is elected by the people of the state. This branch makes sure that laws are enforced.



The **Legislative Branch** makes the laws. It is divided into two houses (parts), the Senate and the Assembly. Elected officials represent their districts in each house.



The **Judicial Branch** determines the meaning of laws and applies them. It makes sure that laws that are passed are constitutional.

To have an idea considered for a law, you must start with the legislative branch. You will need to find out who represents your districts.

To find your New York State Senator use this website: nysenate.gov/find-my-senator	STATE OF THE PARTY
My New York State Senator is:	
E-mail address:	

Now you have to get to work!

Archie would love to know what ideas you submit to your representatives.

You can share them with him by e-mailing ARCHEDU@NYSED.GOV