

US Government Foundation

First Continental Congress

Twelve of the thirteen colonies met in Philadelphia in September 1774

Author the Declaration of Independence

Thomas Jefferson

Adoption of the Declaration of Independence

July 4, 1776

Major theme of the Declaration of Independence

Man as the natural rights of "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness"

Articles of Confederation

Post-independence document with limited national government

Anti-Federalists

Believed that the Constitution gave too much power to the central government

Adoption of the US Constitution

September 17, 1787 in Philadelphia

Thomas Jefferson and the Democratic Republicans

Advocated a weak central government

States rights

Strict interpretation of the 10th Amendment limiting the federal government's authority

US Constitution

Written code that defines the basic structure of the national government

US Government Foundation Part 2

Amendment

The only method to legally modify the Constitution

Republic

Elected representatives government with the consent of the people

Three divisions of government

Executive, legislative and judicial

Federalism

Division of power between the national government and the states

Bill of Rights (1789)

Twelve amendments outlined specific individual freedoms (speech, bear arms, etc)

Term limits

Legal limits on the number of times an individual may hold a particular office

Legislative Branch

Two chamber of Congress

Senate and the House of Representatives

Powers of Congress

Include collecting taxes, regulating commerce, coining money and declaring war

Term for members of Congress

Two years

Term for members of the US Senate

Six years

Elected by the citizens of an entire state

US Senators

Franking privilege

Right of senators and congressmen to send mail to their constituents at no cost

Reapportionment

Adjustment to the number of congressional districts in each state

Gerrymandering

Creating an oddly-shaped district to insure election of a particular individual or party

Incumbents

Individuals who currently hold an office

Constituents

Voters whom an elected official represents

Legislative Branch Organization

Speaker of the House

Member of the majority party who presides over day-to-day work of Congress

Majority floor leader

Representative who advances the agenda and lines up votes of the majority party

Minority floor leader

Representative who advances the agenda and lines up votes of the minority party

President of the Senate

The Vice President

President Pro Tempore

Member of the majority party who presides over the daily work of the US Senate

Majority whip

Senator who advances the agenda and lines up votes of the majority party

Minority whip

Senator who advances the agenda and lines up votes of the majority party

Committee chairmen

Chosen by the majority party on the basis seniority (time served in office)

Standing committee

Permanent committees that determine if legislation will be presented for a vote

Select committee

Temporary committees that examine a specific issue

Legislative Branch Part 3

Filibuster

Lengthy speech wherein a senator will not yield the right to speak to block a vote

Rider

Amendments attached to a bill that are completely unrelated to the bill itself

Pork-barrel legislation

Bills that benefit a specific state or locality

Veto

Rejection by the president of new legislation

Override

Two-thirds of both houses voting to reject the president's veto of legislation

Sunset laws

Programs and agencies that require period review and renewal to remain active

How a bill becomes law (steps in order)

1

Legislation is introduced in the House or Senate

2

The bill is assigned to a committee for approval, modification or rejection

3

Favorable bills are brought to the floor for a vote (by a unanimous consent agreement in the Senate or the Rules Committee in the House)

4

Approved bills are sent to the other house of congress for consideration

5

Legislation passed by the House and Senate is sent to the president

6

The president will either approve or veto (reject) the legislation

7

New laws are subject to review by the Supreme Court if challenged

Executive Branch

Term of the president

Four years for no more than two terms

Impeachment

Removing the president from office through charges by the House of Representatives and conviction by the Senate

Confirmation

Senate approval of the members of the president's cabinet

How can the president make laws?

By proposing legislation that is then introduced by a legislator

What is the president's status with the military?

He is the highest ranking officer in the armed services

White House Staff

The closest personal advisors to the president

What happens when the federal government grows?

The number of executive departments increase

Core of the president's cabinets

The secretaries of the executive departments

Vice President

Assumes the presidency if president dies, is removed or unable to perform his duties

Judicial Branch

State court system

Organized hierarchy of courts from the local to the state supreme court

Supreme court

The highest court in the judiciary system

Judicial review

Power of the Supreme Court to declare a law unconstitutional

District court

Lowest level of the federal court system

Circuit court

Court of appeals (next level up in the court system)

Term of federal judges

Appointment to a federal court, including the Supreme Court, is for life

Appointment of judges

The president appoints federal judges who are then confirmed or rejected by the senate

Docket

The Supreme Court's agenda or list of cases

Dissenting opinion

The opinion rendered Supreme Court justices in disagreement with the majority

Courts and the Law

Defendant

The person charged with a crime or offense

Plea bargain

Defendant pleads guilty to a lesser charge under a deal with the prosecution

Civil cases

Disputes over property, money, contracts, or personal injury

Plaintiff

Person initiating the suit in a civil case

Government Agencies

Bureaucracy

Workers who perform specialized tasks that call for training and expertise

Hierarchy

Succession of job levels from entry workers to the highest executive

Spoils system

Federal jobs given as rewards to supporters and friends whether qualified or not

Hatch Act

Prohibits federal workers from running for office or actively campaigning for another

Welfare state

The federal government assumes responsibility for the well-being of the people

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Chief law enforcement agency of the Federal government

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

Gathers foreign intelligence and undertakes covert (spy) activities

National Security Agency (NSA)

Largest intelligence gathering agency in the country

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF)

Investigates illegal use or sale of guns, explosives, alcohol and tobacco

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

Investigates and enforces illegal drug use and sales in the US and abroad

Opinion and Media

Public opinion

The attitudes and positions that Americans people hold on particular issues

Polls

Method to measures public opinion

Representative sample

Scientifically method insuring that poll accurately reflects the entire population

Margin of error

Level of accuracy of a poll

Gender gap

The difference in the options of men and women's

Exit polls

Interviewing voters on election day in order to predict the winner in advance

Print Media

Mass media such as magazines and newspapers

Broadcast media

Electronic mass media such as television and the Internet

Yellow journalism

Style of reporting that emphasizes the sensational side of the news

Tabloid press

Smaller newspapers that employ yellow journalism

Opinion and Media Part 2

Muckrakers

Reporters who expose political corruption

Spin

Presenting information in a biased way to create a favorable appearance

Leaks

Unauthorized releases of information to the press

Infomercial

Paid television program wherein a certain political view is promoted

Lobbying

Developing good relations with office holders in order to influence their votes

Grassroots campaign

Organized effort to get citizens to contact elected officials to influence legislation

Politics and Elections

Party platform

Extensive statement of the beliefs and goals of a political party

Planks

Explanation of the party's positions on particular issues of concern

Caucus

Meeting of party members which chooses the candidates for the next election

Slates

Lists of the candidates for office from the same political party

Closed primary

Only a particular party's registered voters can participate

Open primary

All voters may participate in choosing a political party's candidate for office

Federal Election Commission

Oversees the election process for federal offices

Electoral college

Individuals chosen by the voters who actually elect the president

Midterm elections

Legislative election in the 'middle' of the President's term with low voter turnout

Voter Registration

Required at age 18 and when a voter moves to a new location

Politics and Elections Part 2

Initiative

Direct citizen vote on legislation which bypasses the legislative and executive branches

Recall

Removing incumbent from office by special vote of the citizens

Political machine

Politicians using government jobs to reward supporters to generate loyalty and votes

Political action committees

Independent organization that contributes money or direct advertising for candidates

Proportional representation

Officials are elected based on percentage of the votes their parties receive

Nonpartisan election

Candidates run as independents without party identification

Laissez-faire

Idea that government should be kept small and keep out of most areas of life

Libertarian party

Opposes almost all government activism in society

Populist

Idea that active governmental intervention is acceptable

Coattails effect

Popularity of the presidential candidate helps fellow party candidates get elected

Civil Rights

Civil rights

Protection of citizens against discrimination due to race, ethnicity, gender, or disability

First Amendment

Freedom of religion, speech, press, peaceful assembly and to petition the government

Clear and present danger

Restriction on the freedom of speech when it will endanger others

Libel

Publishing statements that are malicious, untrue, and harmful to a person's reputation

Slander

Making statements that are malicious, untrue, and harmful to a person's reputation

Obscene materials (pornography)

Are not protected under the First Amendment

Miranda warning

Advising individuals of their constitutional rights by the police at the time of arrest

Roe vs, Wade

1973 Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion in the United States

Suffrage

The right to vote

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Mandates special accommodation in most public places for those with disabilities

Civil Rights and Race

Dred Scott decision

1857 ruling that slaves remained property of their owners even in free states

Emancipation Proclamation

Abraham Lincoln's proclamation that freed the slaves in the Confederacy

Jim Crow Laws

Racial segregation laws in the US South following in the Civil War

Poll tax

Charging a fee to vote in order to discourage voting (targeted southern blacks)

Literacy tests

Kept southern blacks from voting by requiring a high level of reading comprehension

Brown v. the Board of Education

1954 case where segregation of the public schools was declared unconstitutional

Affirmative action

Giving preference to selected racial or gender groups in hiring and training

Desegregation

Eliminating laws that separated the races

Integration

Government programs designed to bring different races together in society

Civil disobedience

Challenging an unjust law by purposely and publicly breaking it

Economy

Inflation

Increase in the price of goods and services that decreases the value of money

Unemployment rat?

Percentage of labor force that is out of work

Goss National Product (GNP)

Value of all good and serviced produced by the nation

Progressive taxes

Taxes that increase in proportion to the wealth of the individual

Sin taxes

Taxes on liquor, cigarettes and gambling that have negative impact on society

Flat tax

Single, low rate tax paid by every citizen

Medicare

Provides basic health coverage for those over age 65

Medicaid

Health benefits for the poor

Social Security Program

Federal pension program financed by equal amounts from employers and employees

Foreign Affairs

NAFTA

Treaty that established a free trading zone between Mexico, the US and Canada

Isolationism

Policy of staying uninvolved in world affairs

Monroe Doctrine

1823 policy pledging US action against European attempts to colonize the Americas

Containment

Policy of applying a counter force to any aggressive moves by the communists

Domino theory

Belief that if one country became communist, nearby nations would soon follow

Detente

Nixon-era policy communication between the US and the Soviets to ease tensions

Joint Chiefs

Heads of the four branches of the armed services with a chairperson

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Seeks to promote international monetary cooperation between nations

World Bank

Provides loans and technological assistance to member nations

World Trade Organization (WTO)

Fosters trade between nations

Types of Government

Anarchy

No one is in charge of the government (disorder)

Autocracy

One person rules

Democracy

Citizens vote and the majority rules

Oligarchy

Rule by an elite few

Republic

Rule by elected representatives

Theocracy

Rule by members of the dominant religion (on behalf of God)

Federation

Central government uniting self-governing regions

Empire

Single control over widespread cultural and ethnic groups

Aristocracy

Rule by hereditary royalty (ie Duke, Lord, etc)

Specific Types of Government

Dictatorship

Absolute rule by a person or small group (despotism)

Monarchy

Rule by a single member of the aristocracy (king, queen, etc)

Totalitarianism

State controls of all aspects of society

Communism

Totalitarian state loyal to the principles of Marx and Lenin

National socialism (nazism)

Totalitarian state loyal to the principles of Hitler

Fascism

Authoritarian system that puts the interests of the state first

Islamic Republic

Elected representatives must conform to Moslem Sharia Law

US Government Officials

President

Head of the national Executive Branch of government

Senator

Legislator representing a large geographic region

Congressman or Representative

Legislator representing a population-specific area

Governor

Head of a state Executive Branch of government

Attorney general

Chief legal officer (national or state)

Judge

Renders decisions on legal issues brought before a court

Assemblyman or delegate

State legislator

Mayor

Chief executive of a city or town

Councilman

Legislator representing areas of a city or town

Commissioner or supervisor

Legislator representing part of a county

Sheriff

Chief law enforcement official in a local government

