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| Direct Democracy | All eligible citizens in an area make decisions about government. This was used in ancient Athens and influenced US government. | Monarchy | A government ruled by a king or queen who may have absolute authority or be limited in power by a Constitution. |
| Representative Democracy | People elect others to speak for them in deciding how the government should be run. | Natural Rights Philosophy | Everyone is born with individual rights that should not be taken away. These rights include life, liberty, and property. |
| Parliamentary Democracy | The people elect representatives to a legislature. The Prime Minister, the leader of the majority party in the legislature, heads the government. | Popular Sovereignty | The people, through their elected representatives, are the source of political power. |
| Presidential Democracy | The people elect their leader who heads the executive branch. There is a separate legislative branch. | Consent of the Governed | A government’s power comes from the people who agree to follow the government. |
| Constitutionalism | Government’s authority comes from and is limited by a set of written laws. | Rule of Law | Everyone must obey the law, even the President of the United States. |
| Majority Rule and Minority Rights | When ideas are in conflict and there is a vote, the side with the most votes wins. Yet the rights of the people who believe differently from the majority must be protected. | In Brown v. Board of Education, the Supreme Court ruled that “separate but equal” schools that separated racial minorities were not equal and must be desegregated. | When President Nixon tried to block the FBI from investigating the Watergate burglary, he was almost impeached and eventually resigned. |
| Checks and Balances | One branch of government is able to limit the power of the other branches. | The President vetoes a law passed by Congress. The Supreme Court declares that a law passed by Congress and signed by the President is unconstitutional. | Individual Rights |
| Separation of Powers | To limit each branch of government’s powers, the Constitution divides power between branches. For example, the legislature creates laws but the executive can veto them. | Congress creates the laws, the President enforces the law, and the Supreme Court says what the law means. | Every person has certain rights that the government must respect. |
| Federalism | A written constitution divides power between a national government and other governments like states and cities. | Executive Branch Structure | This branch contains the President, Vice-President, and 15 departments including state, treasury, defense, education, and justice. |
| Powers of the Federal Government | The national government can:  - print money  - declare war  - establish post offices  - create an army and navy | Legislative Branch Structure | This branch contains Congress which is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate. |
| Powers of the State Government | State governments can:  - create local governments  - issue driver’s licenses  - conduct elections  - regulate businesses  within their state | Judicial Branch Structure | This branch contains the Supreme Court and other federal courts such as the US District Courts, US Court of Appeals, and US Bankruptcy Courts. |
| Shared Powers between the Federal and State Governments | Both the national and state governments can:  - collect taxes  - set up courts  - make laws  - borrow money | Executive Branch Authority | This branch of government makes sure that laws are enforced (carried out). |
| Legislative Branch Authority | This branch of government makes laws. | Cabinet Secretaries | These people lead the executive departments, advise the President, and include the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Secretary of Education. |
| Judicial Branch Authority | This branch of government interprets the laws (says what the law means). | Speaker of the House of Representatives | This person presides over the House of Representatives and is second in presidential succession. |
| President of the United States | This leader of the executive branch’s job is to make sure that laws are carried out. | President Pro Tempore of the Senate | This person presides over the Senate and is third in presidential succession. |
| Vice President of the United States | This executive branch member is first in line to the Presidency if the President dies, resigns, or is removed from office and serves as President of the Senate. | Chief Justice of the Supreme Court | This person heads the US federal court system and is the chief judge of the Supreme Court. |
| US Department of State | This executive department oversees the US’s relations with countries all over the world. | Internal Revenue Service (IRS) | Part of the Treasury Department, this government agency collects taxes for the US Government. |
| US Department of the Treasury | This executive department manages money for the US Government including printing money, paying the government’s bills, and managing the federal debt. | Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) | This government agency guarantees the safety of people’s bank deposits. |
| US Department of Defense | This executive department oversees all government functions relating to national security and the US Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines) | Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) | This government agency enforces laws that safeguard natural resources and air quality across the country. |
| US Department of Justice | This executive department makes sure the law is enforced and that all Americans are treated fairly. | Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) | This government agency works to prevent workplace injuries. |
| Bill of Rights | These principles of freedom are the first 10 amendments to the Constitution and include the freedom of speech, the right to bear arms, and protection against unlawful searches. | Fifth Amendment | In criminal cases, people cannot be held for trial unless accused of a crime, be a witness against yourself, be tried for the same crime twice; people cannot lose their rights or property without due process of law. |
| First Amendment | People have the freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly, and petition. | Sixth Amendment | In a criminal trial, people have the right to a speedy trial, a lawyer, and trial by jury. |
| Second Amendment | People have the right to bear arms (freedom to own weapons). | Seventh Amendment | People have the right to a jury trial in cases about money and property (civil cases). |
| Fourth Amendment | Your property cannot be searched or taken without a good reason or search warrant. | Eighth Amendment | People have the right to reasonable bail and to not have cruel punishments. |
| 26th Amendment | Citizens 18 years of age and older have the right to vote in elections. | General Election | Held after primary elections, voters choose the one candidate who will hold office. For US President, these are held every four years in early November. |
| Political Parties | An organization that tries to influence and direct government policy. There are two major ones in the US, the Republicans and Democrats. | Electoral College | In US presidential elections, voters choose members of this who cast the official votes for President and Vice-President. |
| Interest Groups | These organizations work to promote certain causes. Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) is an example as they try to stop drunk driving and protect its victims. | Political Campaign | Candidates work to influence people to vote for them leading up to primary and general elections. Fund raising and speeches are a big part of this. |
| Primary Election | An election that narrows down the field of candidates. For the US Presidency, these elections choose one candidate from each major party. |  |  |