

GLOSSARY

alliance: a group of countries with the same goals

amendment: a change

announcement of decisions: when the Supreme Court tells people what its decisions are on cases

appeal: to ask that a court case be reviewed by a higher court

appellate jurisdiction: the power to review cases that have already been decided by lower courts

appoint: to choose a person for an office

Articles of Confederation: the first plan for national government in the colonies

bicameral: a legislative branch made up of two houses

bill: a proposal for a new law

bill of attainder: a law that punishes a person for a crime without having a trial

boycott: to stop buying or using certain goods and services as a protest

brief: a paper that explains a side of a court case

Cabinet: a group of people that helps the President make decisions

campaign: candidates work to win the votes of the people

candidate: a person who is running for office

census: an official count of the people by the government

checks and balances: each branch of the government has ways to limit the power of the other branches, which keeps the power equal among all the branches

chief executive: the leader of the executive branch

chief justice: the leader of the Supreme Court

chief of state: the part of the President's job where he or she represents the country and its people

circuit: an area covered by a court of appeals

city manager: a person who is hired to run a city

civil case: a court case about a noncriminal matter

commission: the form of city government that is made up of a group of three to nine people

committee: a group in Congress that does a specific job

committee chair: the leader of a committee

compromise: when each side gives up something in order to agree

concurring opinion: a paper written by a justice to agree with the majority opinion but for a different reason or to agree with the majority opinion and make an extra point

confederate system: a government in which independent countries join together with a common goal

conference: a private meeting in which justices talk about a case

conference committee: a temporary committee that is made up of members of both houses of Congress

congressional oversight: the job of Congress to watch over what government agencies do

constituents: the people who members of Congress represent

constitution: a paper that lists the rules of a government

constitutional monarchy: a government that has a king or a queen, but the king or queen has no real power because another person or group makes the laws

Continental Congress: a group of representatives from the colonies

copyright: a paper that gives someone the right to be the only person to copy, print, or sell a book, a piece of music, or a work of art

council-manager system: the form of city government that is made up of a city manager, a city council, and a weak mayor

counterfeiter: a person who makes fake money

county: the largest division of local government

court of appeals: a court that can review and overturn the decision of a lower court

criminal case: a court case in which the defendant is accused of committing a crime

debate: each side gives its view on an issue

Declaration of Independence: the paper that said the colonies would become a separate country

defendant: the person who is on trial

democracy: a government that is run by the people

dictatorship: a government that is run by one person

diplomacy: making alliances and deals with other countries

dissenting opinion: a paper written by justices who do not agree with the majority opinion in a case

district court: federal trial court

Elastic Clause: the part of the Constitution that says Congress can make laws to help carry out its expressed powers

elected: chosen by getting the most votes

Electoral College: the group that is officially in charge of voting for President

electors: members of the Electoral College

English Bill of Rights: the paper listing the rights of the British people

executive agreement: a deal that the President makes with another country and that the Senate does not have to approve

executive branch: the part of a government that carries out the laws

executive orders: rules made by the President

ex post facto law: arresting someone or taking him or her to court for doing something that was not a crime at the time he or she did it

expressed powers: powers of Congress that are listed in the Constitution

federalism: the national government and the state governments share power

federal system: a government in which the national and state governments share power

floor leaders: leaders of the Senate and House of Representatives who carry out the plans of their political parties

foreign policy: dealing with other countries

habeas corpus: people cannot be held in jail without a good reason

head of state: the person or people in charge of a country's government

hearing: meeting with a committee

implied powers: powers of Congress that are not listed in the Constitution

independent: a candidate who is not part of any party

initiative: when voters sign a petition for a law and then vote on that issue

item veto: to reject part of a bill without rejecting the whole thing

joint committee: a permanent committee that is made up of members of both houses of Congress

judicial branch: the part of a government that interprets the laws

judicial review: the power of the courts to decide if laws and other government actions are allowed by the Constitution

jury: a group of people who listen to the facts in a court case and make a decision about the case

justice: a Supreme Court judge

legislative branch: the part of a government that makes the laws

legislature: another name for the legislative branch

limited government: a government that must follow rules

Magna Carta: the paper listing rules that the British monarch had to follow

majority opinion: a paper that tells what the Supreme Court's decision is in a case

majority party: the political party with more senators or representatives

markup: the committee decides exactly what a bill should say

mayor-council system: the form of city government that is made up of a mayor and a city council

megalopolis: an area made up of two or more metropolitan areas

metropolitan area: a central city, its suburbs, and the surrounding counties

minority party: the political party with fewer senators or representatives

monarch: a government leader who inherited his or her job by through his or her family

monarchy: a government whose leader inherited his or her job

multiparty system: three or more political parties try to control the government

municipality: a city, town, or village

naturalization: becoming a citizen by choice rather than by birth

nobility: kings, queens, and other royal positions

nonprofit organization: a business that provides a service to the public but does not make any money for its service

one-party system: one political party controls the government, and no other parties are allowed

oral argument: lawyers from each side of a case give their arguments to the justices

original jurisdiction: the authority to hear the first trial of a case

pardon: to legally forgive a person for a crime

parliamentary system: a government in which the chief executive is a member of the legislative branch

patent: a paper that says the inventor of a product owns the idea for the product

pocket veto: the President rejects a bill by keeping it for ten days without signing it at the end of a congressional session

police power: the power to protect the people

political party: a group that tries to control the government by winning elections and holding public office

popular sovereignty: the idea that the people are the supreme rulers of the government

popular vote: the votes of the people

precedent: guidelines based on an earlier case

precinct: the smallest type of voting district

preparing of opinions: the Supreme Court justices write the papers that tell the decision of a case

presidential system: a government in which the legislative and executive branches are separate from each other

president pro tempore: the leader of the Senate when the Vice President is not there

ratify: approve

recall: when voters remove an elected official from office before his or her term is completed

recognize: to set up an official relationship with another country

referendum: when the voters have the final say on whether a proposal becomes law

referral: to give a bill to a committee

regulations: rules

repeal: cancel

representative: an elected person who speaks for a group of people

representative government: the members of the government are elected by the people

rural area: an area with very few people; these people live in small towns or on farms and ranches

select committee: a temporary committee in the Senate or House of Representatives that is made for a specific reason

separation of powers: the power of the national government of the United States is divided among three branches

Speaker of the House: the leader of the House of Representatives

special district: a small division of local government that is set up for a specific reason

standing committee: a large, permanent committee in the Senate or House of Representatives

strong-mayor government: a mayor-council government in which the mayor has more power than the council

subcommittee: a smaller division of a standing committee in the Senate or House of Representatives

suburban area: an area around a central city where people live

third party: any political party that is not one of the two major parties

town: a smaller division of local government that is run by a town meeting and located in New England

township: a smaller division of local government that is run by a township meeting, a board of trustees, or a board of supervisors

treaty: a deal that the President makes with another country and that the Senate must approve

two-party system: two major political parties try to control the government

tyranny: when a government rules without worrying about the rights of the people

unanimous: when everyone agrees on a decision

unconstitutional: actions or laws not allowed by the Constitution

unitary system: a government in which the national government has all the power

urban area: a city and the places around the city

verdict: the outcome of a trial

veto: to reject and send back

ward: a small part of a city, made up of precincts

weak-mayor government: a mayor-council government in which the power is divided evenly between the mayor and other elected officials

whip: a person who is in charge of trying to get his or her party members to vote a certain way in the Senate or House of Representatives