

Civics & Economics CE.1

2023 Standards

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CE.1a Fundamental Principles of American Government

The U.S. government is based on a set of **important ideas** that help **protect people's rights** and prevent any one person or group from having **too much power**:

Limited Government:

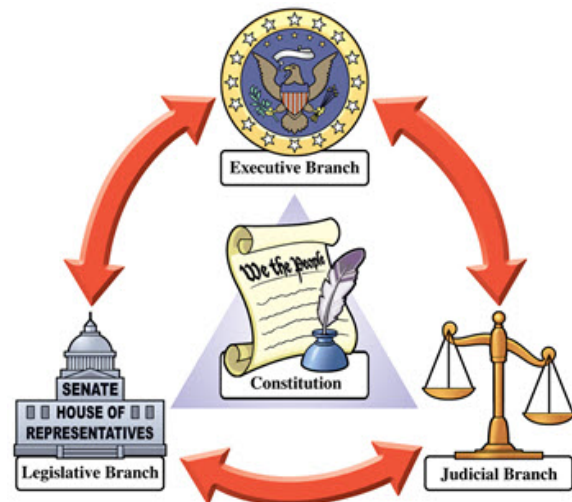
- Government power is **restricted** by laws and the Constitution.
- Leaders** must follow the **rules** just like everyone else.

Republicanism:

- The people **elect representatives** to make decisions and pass laws on their behalf.

Federalism:

- Power is **shared** between the **national** government and the **state** governments. Each has its own responsibilities.



CHECKS AND BALANCES

Each branch of government can limit the power of the other keeping any one branch from becoming too powerful

Checks and Balances:

- Each **branch** of government (legislative, executive, judicial) can **limit the power** of the others.
- This keeps any one branch from becoming **too powerful**.

Separation of Powers:

- Government power is **divided** among the **three branches**, with each branch having its own duties.

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Popular Sovereignty:

- The power of government comes **from the people**.
- Citizens **vote** and have a **voice** in how they are governed.

CE.1b Historical Influences on the U.S. Constitution

Many earlier documents and traditions helped shape the **U.S. Constitution** and the **Constitution of Virginia**:

Magna Carta (1215):



King John signs the Magna Carta in the year 1215

- An English document that **limited the king's power** and introduced the idea that everyone—even **rulers**—must follow the law.

English Common Law:

- Traditional **English laws** based on court decisions and customs, which influenced American legal ideas like **trial by jury**.

Charters of the Virginia Company of London:

- Gave English settlers the right to **form a colony** in Virginia and guaranteed them the **same rights** as English citizens.

Declaration of

Independence (1776) Written by **Thomas Jefferson**, it announced that the American colonies were **breaking away** from Britain and listed the reasons why.



DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776):

- Written by **George Mason**, this document declared rights like freedom of the **press** and **religion**—many of which were later included in the **U.S. Bill of Rights**.

Articles of Confederation:

- The first U.S. **government framework**.
- It gave too much **power to the states** and was replaced by the **Constitution** because it was too weak.

Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (1786):

- Written by **Jefferson**, it said people should **be free to choose** their **religion**.
- This helped inspire the **First Amendment**.

CE.1c Creating and Ratifying the Constitution

The **U.S. Constitution** didn't happen overnight—it was the result of **debates** and **compromises**:

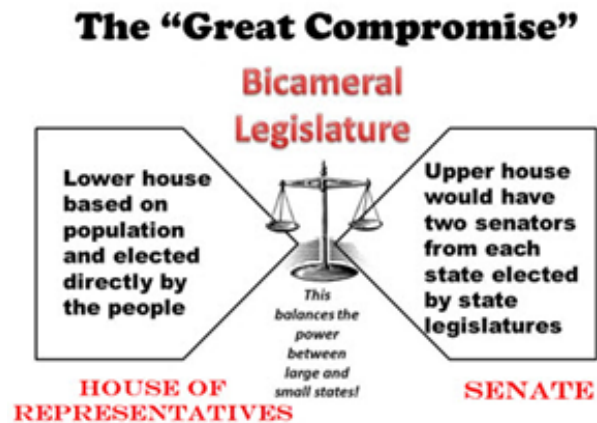
Debates:

- Delegates disagreed about how much power the **federal government** should have and how **states** should be represented.

Plans:

- The **Virginia Plan** favored **big states** by giving more votes to states with larger **populations**.
- The **New Jersey Plan** gave all states **equal power**, no matter their size.

Great Compromise:



- Combined the **two plans**—Congress would have **two houses**: one based on **population** (**House of Representatives**) and one with **equal representation** (**Senate**).

Three-Fifths Compromise:

- Decided how **enslaved** people would be counted for representation and taxes.

Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists:

- Federalists** supported the Constitution; **Anti-Federalists** worried it gave too much power to the **federal government**.
- The **Bill of Rights** was added to protect individual freedoms and convince Anti-Federalists to support it.

CE.1d The Preamble to the Constitution

The **Preamble** is the introduction to the Constitution explains the purpose of the government:

- "**We the People** of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union..."
- It goes on to list the goals of the Constitution, like ensuring **peace**, providing **defense**, promoting general **welfare**, and protecting **liberty**.

CE.1e Key Concepts of U.S. Government

Here are some ideas that guide how the government works and protects our rights:

- Due Process:** The government must follow **fair procedures** and before taking away a person's life, liberty, or property.
- Equal Justice Under the Law:** Everyone must be treated **fairly** in court, no matter who they are.
- Equal Protection:** The laws must apply **equally** to all people.
- Elections and Representative Government:** Citizens **vote** to choose leaders who **represent** their views.
- Right to Private Property:** People can own things, and the **government can't take their property** without good reason and fair payment.
- Rule of Law:** **Everyone**, including leaders, must follow the **law**.
- Supremacy Clause:** The U.S. Constitution is the **highest law** in the land. If state and national laws conflict, the **national law wins**.
- Separation of Powers:** Repeated here to emphasize how government power is **divided** among branches to **avoid abuse**.



CE.1f Amending the Constitution

Changing a constitution is a serious and thoughtful process:

- **U.S. Constitution:**
 - An **amendment** must be approved by **two-thirds** of **both houses** of Congress and then ratified by **three-fourths** of the **state legislatures**.
- **Virginia Constitution:**
 - An **amendment** must be passed by the **General Assembly** (Virginia's legislature) two times and then approved by Virginia **voters** in a general election.