

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- Affirmative action**—A policy designed to correct the effects of past discrimination; requirement by law that positive steps be taken to increase the number of minorities in businesses, schools, colleges, and labor.
- Agenda setting**—The process of forming the list of matters that policymakers intend to address.
- Amendment**—A revision or change to a bill, law, or constitution.
- Amicus curiae brief**—Friend of the court; interested groups may be invited to file legal briefs supporting or rejecting arguments of the case.
- Anti-Federalists**—Opposed the adoption of the U.S. Constitution because it gave too much power to the national government at the expense of the state governments and it lacked a bill of rights.
- Appellate jurisdiction**—Gives the court authority to hear cases on appeal from the lower courts.
- Apportionment**—Distribution of representatives among the states based on the population of each state.
- Appropriations**—Money granted by Congress or a state legislature for a specific purpose.
- Articles of Confederation**—The first national constitution of the United States that created a government lasting from 1781 to 1789; replaced by the current Constitution.
- At-large**—All the voters of a state or county elect their representative.
- Bicameral**—A legislature divided into two chambers; Congress has the Senate and the House of Representatives.
- Bill**—A law proposed by the legislature.
- Bills of attainder**—Prohibits a person being found guilty of a crime without a trial.
- Bill of Rights**—The first 10 amendments to the Constitution guaranteeing certain rights and liberties to the people.
- Blanket primary**—Voters may vote for candidates of either party.
- Block grant**—Money given to states for general programs within a broad category.
- Brief**—Legal document submitted to the court setting forth the facts of a case and supporting a particular position.
- Brief orders**—The returning of a case to a lower court because a similar case was recently decided.
- Brown v. Board of Education**—Supreme Court decision that overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson*; ended legal segregation, said school segregation is unconstitutional.
- Bureaucracy**—A systematic way of organizing a complex and large administrative structure with responsibility for carrying out the day-to-day tasks of the organization, departments, and agencies of the government.
- Bureaucratic theory**—The hierarchical structure and standardized procedures of government allow bureaucrats to hold the real power over public policy; proposed by Max Weber.
- Cabinet**—Government departments headed by presidential appointees to help establish public policy and operate a specific policy area of governmental activity.
- Casework**—Assistance given to constituents by congressional members, answering questions or doing favors.
- Categorical grants**—Federal grants for specific purposes defined by law.
- Caucus**—Locally held meeting in a state to select delegates who, in turn, will nominate candidates to political offices.
- Caucus (congressional)**—An association of congressional members who advocate a political ideology, regional, ethnic, or economic interest.
- Certificate**—A lower court asks the Supreme Court about a rule of law or procedure.
- Checks and balances**—Each branch of government is subject to restraints by the other two branches.
- Civil liberties**—Constitutional freedoms guaranteed to all citizens.
- Civil rights**—Positive acts of government designed to prevent discrimination and provide equality before the law.
- Closed primary**—Only registered party members may vote.
- Cloture**—Prevents filibustering and ends debate in the Senate, by a three-fifths vote of the Senate.
- Coattail effect**—Weaker or lesser-known candidates from the president's party profit from the president's popularity by winning votes.

- Commerce and Slave Trade Compromise**—Resolved differences between northern and southern states; Congress could not tax exports nor ban the slave trade for 20 years.
- Comparable worth**—Women should be paid salaries equal to men for equivalent job responsibilities and skills.
- Concurrent jurisdiction**—The authority to hear cases is shared by federal and state courts.
- Concurrent powers**—Powers shared by the federal and state governments.
- Concurring opinion**—Justice or justices who agree with the majority's opinion but not with the reason behind the decision.
- Conference committee**—A temporary committee to work out a compromise version of a bill that has passed the House of Representatives and Senate in different forms.
- Congressional districting**—State legislatures draw congressional districts for states with more than one representative.
- Connecticut (Great) Compromise**—Settled disputes between the states over the structure of the legislative branch.
- Conservative**—A person whose political views favor more local, limited government, less government regulations, conformity to social norms and values; tough on criminals.
- Constituency service**—Casework, assistance to constituents by congressional members.
- Constituent**—All residents of the state for Senators, all residents of a district for House members.
- Constitution**—The document setting forth the laws and principles of the government; a plan of government.
- Constitutional courts**—Federal courts created by Congress under Article III of the Constitution, including the district courts, Courts of Appeals, and specialized courts such as the U.S. Court of International Trade.
- Constitutional law**—Laws relating to the interpretation of the Constitution.
- Cooperative federalism**—Cooperation among federal, state, and local governments; “marble cake” federalism.
- Courts of Appeals**—Federal courts that review decisions of federal district courts, regulatory commissions, and other federal courts.
- Critical election**—Sharp changes in the existing patterns of party loyalty due to changing social and economic conditions.
- Dealigning election**—Party loyalty becomes less important to voters, and they vote for the other party candidate or independents.
- Dealignment**—When a significant number of voters choose to no longer support a particular political party.
- Declaration of Independence**—Drafted in 1776 by Thomas Jefferson declaring America's separation from Great Britain.
- Deficit**—Government spending exceeds revenue.
- Delegated powers**—Powers specifically granted to the national government by the Constitution.
- Democracy**—A system whereby the people rule either directly or by elected representation.
- Deviating election**—Minority party is able to win the support of majority party members, independents, and new voters.
- Devolution**—An effort to shift responsibility of domestic programs (welfare, health care, and job training) to the states in order to decrease the size and activities of the federal government (first-order devolution); some states have attempted to shift responsibilities further to local governments (second-order devolution).
- Direct democracy**—Citizens meet and make decisions about public policy issues.
- Direct primary**—Party members vote to nominate their candidate for the general election.
- Discretionary spending**—Spending set by the government through appropriations bills, including operating expenses and salaries of government employees.
- Discrimination**—Unfair treatment of a person based on race or group membership.
- Dissenting opinion**—Justice or justices who disagree with the majority opinion.
- District courts**—Lowest level of federal courts, where federal cases begin and trials are held.
- Divided government**—One party controls the executive, and the other party controls one or both houses of Congress.
- Double jeopardy**—Being tried twice for the same offense.
- Dual federalism**—Federal and state governments each have defined responsibilities within their own sphere of influence; “layer cake” federalism.

- Elastic Clause**—The Necessary and Proper Clause, Article I, Section 8, Clause 18 that allows Congress to pass laws to carry out its powers.
- Electoral college**—Representatives from each state who formally cast ballots for the president and vice president.
- Electorate**—People qualified to vote.
- Elite theory**—A small group of people identified by wealth or political power, who rule in their self-interest.
- Eminent domain**—Allows the government to take property for public use but also requires the government to provide just compensation for that property.
- Entitlement program**—Payments made to people meeting eligibility requirements, such as Social Security.
- Environmental impacts statement**—Required studies and reports of likely environmental impacts, filed with the Environmental Protection Agency prior to the beginning of a project.
- Equal Protection Clause**—Constitutional guarantee that everyone be treated equally.
- Establishment Clause**—Prohibits the establishment of a national religion.
- Exclusionary rule**—Rule that evidence acquired as a result of an illegal act by police cannot be used against the person from whom it was seized.
- Executive agreement**—Agreement with another head of state not requiring approval from the Senate.
- Executive order**—The president directs an agency to carry out policies or existing laws.
- Executive privilege**—The right of the president to withhold information from Congress or refuse to testify; limited by the Supreme Court in *U.S. v. Nixon*.
- Ex post facto law**—Laws applied to acts committed before passage of the laws are unconstitutional.
- Extradition**—States may return fugitives to a state from which they have fled to avoid criminal prosecution at the request of the state's governor.
- Federal budget**—Amount of money the federal government expects to receive and authorizes government to spend for a fiscal (12-month period) year.
- Federal system**—Power is divided between the states and the federal government.
- Federalism**—A division of governmental powers between the national government and the states.
- Federalist Papers**—Written by Hamilton, Jay, and Madison to support ratification of the U.S. Constitution.
- Federalists**—Supported a strong central government and expanded legislative powers.
- Filibuster**—A lengthy speech designed to delay the vote on a bill; used only in the Senate.
- Fiscal federalism**—National government's use of fiscal policy to influence states through the granting or withholding of appropriations.
- Fiscal policy**—The policies of taxation and spending that comprise the nation's economic policy.
- Fiscal year**—A 12-month period, October through September, for planning the federal budget.
- Floor leaders**—Direct party strategy and decisions in the House of Representatives and Senate.
- Franking privilege**—Privilege that allows members of Congress to mail letters and other materials to constituents postage-free.
- Free Exercise Clause**—Congress may not make laws restricting or prohibiting a person's religious practices.
- Freedom of expression**—Freedom of speech or right to petition the government for redress as a First Amendment right.
- Front-loading**—Choosing an early date to hold the primary election.
- Full Faith and Credit Clause**—States are required to recognize the laws and legal documents of other states.
- Gatekeepers**—Media executives, news editors, and prominent reporters who decide what news to present and how it will be presented.
- General election**—Voters choose office holder from among all the candidates nominated by political parties or running as independents.
- Gerrymandering**—Drawing of congressional districts to favor one political party or group over another.
- Get-out-the-vote**—A campaign near the end of an election to get voters out to the polls.
- Government**—The formal and informal institutions, people, and processes used to create and conduct public policy.
- Grants-in-aid**—Programs, money, and resources provided by the federal government to state and local governments to be used for specific projects and programs.
- Grassroots**—Average voter at the local level.

- Gridlock**—When opposing parties and interests often block each other's proposals, creating a political stalemate or inaction between the executive and legislative branches of government.
- Hatch Act**—Prohibits government employees from engaging in political activities while on duty or running for office or seeking political funding while off duty; if in sensitive positions, may not be involved with political activities on or off duty.
- Hyperpluralism**—Democracy seen as a system of many groups pulling government in many directions at the same time, causing gridlock and ineffectiveness.
- Ideology**—A consistent set of beliefs by groups or individuals.
- Impeachment**—Bringing charges of wrongdoing against a government official by the House of Representatives.
- Implied powers**—Not expressed, but may be considered through the use of the Necessary and Proper (elastic) Clause.
- Impoundment**—Refusal of the president to spend money Congress has appropriated.
- Incorporation**—Application of portions of the Bill of Rights to the states under the Fourteenth Amendment.
- Incorporation doctrine**—The Supreme Court ruling that most guarantees in the Bill of Rights are applicable to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment.
- Incrementalism**—Small changes in policy over long periods of time; usually in reference to budget-making—that the best indicator of this year's budget is last year's budget plus a small increase.
- Incumbency effect**—Tendency of those already holding office to win reelection due to advantages because they already hold the office.
- Incumbent**—The person currently holding office.
- Inherent powers**—Powers that exist for the national government because the government is sovereign.
- Initiative**—Allows voters to petition to propose legislation and then submit it for a vote by qualified voters.
- Interest group**—A group of private citizens whose goal is to influence and shape public policy.
- Interstate compacts**—Agreements between states to work together on common issues.
- Iron triangle**—Alliances that develop between bureaucratic agencies, interest groups, and congressional committees or subcommittees.
- Issue network**—Individuals in Washington—located within interest groups, congressional staff, think tanks, universities, and the media—who regularly discuss and advocate public policies.
- Joint committee**—Committee made up of members of both houses of Congress.
- Judicial activism**—The Court should play an active role in determining national policies.
- Judicial restraint**—Holds that the Court should avoid taking the initiative on social and political questions, operating strictly within the limits of the Constitution.
- Judicial review**—Authority given the courts to review constitutionality of acts by the executive, states, or the legislature; established in *Marbury v. Madison*.
- Jurisdiction**—The authority of the courts to hear and decide issues in certain cases.
- Legislative courts**—Courts created by Congress for a specialized purpose with a narrow range of authority.
- Legislative veto**—To reject the actions of the president or executive agency by a vote of one of both houses of Congress without the consent of the president; ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Immigration and Naturalization Service v. Chadha*.
- Lemon test**—Standard set by the Supreme Court in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* to measure the constitutionality of state laws in regard to freedom of religion.
- Liberal**—A person whose views favor more government involvement in business, social welfare, minority rights, and increased government spending.
- Limited government**—Basic principle of U.S. government that each person has rights that government cannot take away.
- Line item veto**—The president can reject a part of a bill while approving the rest; declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.
- Lobbying**—Attempting to influence policymakers through a variety of methods.
- Lobbyist**—Uses political persuasion to influence legislation and benefit his or her organization.
- Logrolling**—The exchange of political favors for support of a bill.
- Loose constructionist**—The belief that judges should have freedom in interpreting the Constitution.
- Maintaining elections**—Traditional majority power maintains power based on voters' party loyalty.
- Majority leader**—The elected leader of the party with the most seats in the House of Representatives or Senate.

- Majority-minority districts**—Drawing district boundaries to give a minority group a majority.
- Majority opinion**—The majority of justices agree on the decision and the reasons for the decision.
- Mandates**—Requirements imposed by the national government on state and local governments to comply with federal rules and regulations.
- Mandatory spending**—Required government spending by permanent laws.
- Marbury v. Madison**—Established the principle of judicial review.
- Markup**—Rewrite of a bill after hearings have been held on it.
- Mass media**—All forms of communication that reach a large portion of the population.
- McCulloch v. Maryland**—Supreme Court decision upholding the supremacy of the national government over the states.
- Media event**—A speech or photo opportunity staged to give a politician's view on an issue.
- Miranda v. Arizona**—Requires that anyone arrested for a crime be advised of the right to counsel and the right to remain silent.
- Moderate**—Person whose views are between conservative and liberal and may include some of both ideologies.
- Monetary policy**—Economic policy in which money is controlled through the Federal Reserve.
- Motor Voter Law**—Allows citizens to register to vote at welfare and motor vehicle offices.
- National chairperson**—Appointed by a committee as head of the party.
- National debt**—Amount of money owed by the government.
- Natural rights**—Basic rights that are guaranteed to all persons; basic rights that a government cannot deny.
- Necessary and Proper Clause**—Gives Congress the powers to pass all laws necessary to carry out their constitutional duties, found in Article I, Section 8, Clause 18; also called "Elastic Clause."
- New Deal coalition**—Alliance of southern conservatives, religious, and ethnic minorities who supported the Democratic Party for 40 years.
- North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)**—Created to allow the free movement of goods between Canada, Mexico, and the United States by lessening and eliminating tariffs.
- Off-year election**—An election taking place in a year when no presidential elections are occurring; midterm election.
- Open primary**—Voters may choose the candidates of either party, whether they belong to the party or not.
- Opinion leaders**—Those individuals held in great respect because of their position, expertise, or personality, who may informally and unintentionally influence others.
- Original jurisdiction**—Court hears and decides a case for the first time.
- Oversight**—Congress monitors policies of the executive branch.
- Pardon**—A convicted person is exempt from the penalties of a crime.
- Plessy v. Ferguson**—The Supreme Court case that upheld separate-but-equal segregation in 1896.
- Pluralist theory**—Interest groups compete in the political arena with each promoting its own policy preferences through organized efforts.
- Policy adoption**—The approval of a policy by legislation.
- Policy evaluation**—Determines if a policy is achieving its goals.
- Policy formulation**—The crafting of a policy to resolve public problems.
- Policy implementation**—Carrying out a policy through government agencies and courts.
- Political action committee (PAC)**—Extension of an interest group that contributes money to political campaigns.
- Political agenda**—Issues that merit action, as determined by the public or those in power.
- Political culture**—A set of basic values and beliefs about one's country or government that is shared by most citizens and that influences political opinions and behaviors.
- Political efficacy**—Belief that a person can influence politics and public policymaking.
- Political ideology**—A consistent set of beliefs about politics and public policy that sets the framework for evaluating government and public policy.
- Political party**—Voluntary association of people who seek to control the government through common principles, based on peaceful and legal actions such as the winning of elections.

- Political socialization**—Complex process by which people get their sense of political identity, beliefs, and values.
- Politics**—Method of maintaining, managing, and gaining control of government.
- Popular sovereignty**—Basic principle of U.S. government which holds that the people are the source of all governmental power.
- Pork barrel legislation**—Legislation giving benefits to constituents through sometimes unnecessary or unwise projects within a state or district, to enhance a member's chance of reelection.
- Precedents**—Standards or guides based on prior decisions that serve as a rule for settling similar disputes.
- Presidential preference primaries**—Voters select delegates to the presidential nominating convention.
- President pro tempore**—Serves as president of the Senate in the absence of the vice president; chosen by the majority party.
- Primary election**—Nominating election held to choose party candidates who will run in the general election.
- Prior restraint**—Censorship of information before it is published or broadcast.
- Privileges and Immunities Clause**—States are prohibited from unreasonably discriminating against residents of other states.
- Procedural due process**—Method of government action, or how the law is carried out according to established rules and procedures.
- Public opinion**—A collection of shared attitudes of citizens about government, politics, and the making of public policy.
- Public policy**—The exercise of government power in doing those things necessary to maintain legitimate authority and control over society.
- Pure speech**—Verbal communication of ideas and opinions.
- Radical**—Ideological view that favors rapid fundamental change in the existing social, economic, or political order.
- Ratification**—Method of enacting a constitution or amendment into law.
- Reactionary**—Ideological view that favors a return to a previous state of affairs.
- Realigning elections**—When a minority party wins by building a new coalition of voters that continues over successive elections.
- Realignment**—A shift of voting patterns to form new coalitions of party support.
- Reapportionment**—Redistribution of the congressional seats among the states after the census determines changes in population distribution.
- Recall**—Special election initiated by petition to allow citizens to remove an official from office before his or her term expires.
- Referendum**—Procedure whereby the state submits legislation to its voters for approval, allowing citizens to vote directly on issues.
- Representative democracy**—Citizens choose officials (representatives) who make decisions about public policy.
- Reserved powers**—Powers belonging specifically to the states and the people because they were not delegated to the national government nor denied to the states.
- Revenue sharing**—Giving money back to state and local government with no strings attached.
- Rider**—An addition or amendment added to a bill that often has no relation to the bill but that may not pass on its own merits.
- Rule of four**—Requirement that a case can only be heard by the Supreme Court if four justices vote to hear the case.
- Rules committee**—Determines the rules of debate for bills in the House of Representatives.
- Runoff primary**—When no candidate receives a majority of votes, an election held between the two candidates who received the most votes in the primary.
- Sampling**—Using a representative cross-section of the general population chosen at random in the polling process.
- Sampling errors**—Percentage of possible errors in the polling process.
- Select committee**—Committee selected for a specific purpose.
- Self-incrimination**—Accusing oneself or giving evidence that may prove oneself guilty.
- Senatorial courtesy**—The practice of allowing senators from the president's party who represent the state where a judicial district is located, to approve or disapprove potential nominees for the lower federal courts.
- Seniority system**—System in which the chairmanship of a committee is given to the member with the longest continuous service.

- Separation of powers**—Practice by which power is separated among three branches of government; each branch has its own powers and duties and is independent of and equal to the other branches.
- Single-member districts**—Only one representative is chosen from each district.
- Social contract**—A voluntary agreement between the government and the governed.
- Social insurance programs**—Programs to help the elderly, ill, and unemployed if the claimant has paid into them.
- Social welfare program**—Government program to enhance quality of life.
- Soft money**—Money distributed from a national political party organization that was not regulated by law; restricted by the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2002.
- Sound bite**—A brief statement on TV or radio.
- Speaker of the House**—Leading officer in the House of Representatives, chosen by the majority party.
- Speech plus**—Verbal and symbolic speech used together.
- Split-ticket voting**—Voting for candidates from more than one party in the same election.
- Standing committee**—Permanent committee.
- Stare decisis**—Let the decision stand; decisions are based on precedents from previous cases.
- Straight-ticket voting**—Voting for candidates all of the same party.
- Straw poll**—Early form of polling that asks the same question of a large number of people.
- Strict constructionist**—The view that justices should base decisions on a narrow interpretation of the Constitution.
- Substantive due process**—The policies of government or the particular subject matter of the laws determining what the law is about and whether the law is fair or if it violates constitutional protections.
- Suffrage**—The right to vote.
- Superdelegates**—Party officials in the Democratic Party who attend the national convention without having to run in primaries or caucuses.
- Super Tuesday**—Day when most southern states hold presidential primaries.
- Supremacy Clause**—National law supersedes all other laws passed by states; found in Article VI of the Constitution.
- Symbolic speech**—Using actions and symbols rather than words to convey an idea.
- Three-Fifths Compromise**—Agreement that each state counted as three-fifths of a person in determining representation in the House of Representatives and for taxation.
- Traditional democratic theory**—Government depends upon the consent of the governed.
- Trial balloon**—Tests the public reaction to policy or appointments by releasing information to the media and gauging public reaction.
- Trustee**—After listening to constituents, elected representatives vote based on their own opinions.
- Two-party system**—Several political parties exist, but only two major political parties compete for power and dominate elections.
- Unfunded mandates**—Requires states to enforce legislation without the funding necessary.
- Virginia Plan**—Madison's plan for a bicameral legislature, with the executive and judiciary chosen by the legislature.
- War Powers Act**—Limits the ability of the president to commit troops to combat.
- Watergate**—Break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate building in 1972 that resulted in a cover-up and the subsequent resignation of President Nixon.
- Writ of certiorari**—Order by the court directing a lower court to send up the records of a case for review.
- Writ of habeas corpus**—Requires a judge to evaluate whether there is sufficient cause to keep a person in jail.