

Listed below is a sampling of the events that led to America's independence and the adoption of a new constitution. You will find the years and the significant events that happened during that time.

1763 - 1765
Protests Against
British Rule



England decides on a program of taxation and control of the colonies. The American colonists begin organized protests against British rule. Patriotic groups such as the *Sons of Liberty* are formed. Laws such as the *Quartering Act*, *Stamp Act*, and *Sugar Act* anger the colonists, who are forced to pay unjust taxes and provide supplies to British troops.

1770 - 1773
Uprisings in
Boston



Colonists reduce their boycott of British goods when they withdraw all of the *Townshend Act*, except the tax on tea. *Boston Massacre* (March 5, 1770) occurs when an angry crowd of citizens surrounds a group of soldiers, causing them to open fire. With the American colonists and merchants still angry over British tax policies, an uprising called the *Boston Tea Party* occurs (December 16, 1773).

1774
First Continental
Congress



In response to the Boston Tea Party, the Parliament passes several acts to punish Massachusetts. Twelve of the 13 colonies name delegates to *The First Continental Congress*. On September 5th, they convene at *Carpenters Hall* in Philadelphia to deal with Britain's actions.

1775
The American
Revolution



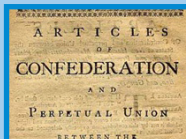
When the Americans learn the British plan to seize their guns and ammunition, *Paul Revere* is sent to alert the countryside and gather the *Minutemen*. An unidentified shot triggers the Battle at Lexington. This starts the *American Revolution* and also leads to another famous battle, *Bunker Hill*. In May, the *Second Continental Congress* meets in Philadelphia.

1776
The Declaration
of Independence



On July 4th, The Second Continental Congress adopts the *Declaration of Independence* (written by *Thomas Jefferson* and committee). The Declaration was debated by 56 courageous men and signed at *Independence Hall*. A few days later, church bells are rung across Philadelphia to call people to the first public reading of the Declaration.

1777 - 1781
The Articles of
Confederation



After considerable debate and alteration, the *Articles of Confederation* were adopted by the Continental Congress on November 15, 1777. However, the document was not fully ratified by the states until March 1, 1781. This document served as the United States' first constitution. In October of 1781, British forces surrender at Yorktown.

1787 - 1788
The Constitution
is Ratified



On May 14th, 1787, *The Constitutional Convention* met in Philadelphia. Here the delegates reviewed and approved the *Constitution*. In 1788, nine states ratified the Constitution, and it is put into effect (the remaining four states will ratify by 1790). America prepares to operate under this new document.

1789
Our New
Government



On March 4th, the new federal government is inaugurated in New York. In April, the first House of Representatives is organized. *George Washington* is elected the first president on April 6th. He is inaugurated on April 30th. On September 25th, the first ten amendments (*Bill of Rights*) are adopted by Congress.

QUESTIONS

PUT THE EVENTS IN ORDER. For each question group, write the numbers **1, 2, or 3**, to indicate which event happened first, second, and third.

Group 1. Boston Massacre _____, Adopted Declaration of Independence _____, Washington becomes president _____

Group 2. Articles of Confederation _____, Boston Tea Party _____, Constitution ratified by nine states _____

Group 3. England sets taxation policy for colonies _____, Constitutional Convention _____, Battle of Bunker Hill _____

Group 4. Paul Revere alerts colonists _____, Stamp Act is law _____, First House of Representatives organized _____

Group 5. Bill of Rights adopted _____, First Continental Congress _____, Declaration is read to the public _____

Group 6. Second Continental Congress meets _____, Sons of Liberty forms _____, American Revolution ends _____

The Politics of Lawmaking

Although the charts on the previous pages show the lawmaking process, it does not reflect how complicated this process is. Many informal conversations and discussions take place with members of Congress. Each wants to voice his or her position, learn what arguments opponents will use, and make the necessary adjustments to help get a bill passed. Members of Congress must understand the president's view on the legislation and the political impacts of the bill. A representative who votes for or against a controversial bill will have that on his or her voting record.

There are several terms that you should research that involve strategy and agreements that lawmakers use. These include *filibustering*, *logrolling*, *pork-barrel spending*, and *pigeonholing*, to name a few.

Lobbies in Washington, D.C.

Our lawmakers in Congress feel the effect of *political action committees* (PACs), special-interest groups, and lobbies. PACs and special-interest groups are individuals interested in particular goals. Lobbies are the active parts of these groups that seek to influence our legislators.

Lobbies are controlled by law, and most operate legally. Some even provide helpful service to legislators by informing them how certain groups feel about important issues. However, a legislator must be careful that these lobbies do not exert too much influence over them and that other Americans' views are not overlooked.

It is the right and duty of organized groups to let their legislators know their opinions on legislative matters, but keeping these groups within proper bounds is essential.

Lobbyists are hired by companies involved in areas such as finance and banking, construction, defense, organized labor, health care, transportation, and energy. The specific topics may involve gun politics, proper use of the environment, immigration, energy sources, and regulations surrounding the banking industry.

Liberals, Conservatives, and Extremists

Often when reading about Congress and politics, you will find the terms *liberal*, *conservative*, or *extremist*. A *liberal* is someone who believes the national government should be very active in helping individuals and communities promote health, education, justice, and equal opportunity. Twentieth-century presidents who would be known as liberals include Democrats Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy.

A *conservative* is someone who believes that the role of government in society should be minimal and that individuals should be responsible for their well-being.

Twentieth-Century presidents who would be known as conservatives include Republicans Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan.

Both conservatives and liberals have played a large part in the success of our nation. Both liberal and conservative views have merit, and the honest political debate between them has been good for our country. In many instances, workable compromises between the two views have been found.

An *extremist* is someone who stops at nothing to get his or her political way. They would ruin the reputations of political enemies, lie, cheat, steal, or even kill. The 1995 bombing in Oklahoma City and the 9/11 events are examples of extremist activity. Extremism is a threat to our Constitution, laws, and society. There is no justification for extremism.

The Internet and Lawmaking

The internet is now the primary source for learning about legislation and contacting members of Congress. One way to find your legislators' official social media contacts is through their websites. Social media, of course, does not replace the traditional methods of constituent communications, but some – particularly, Twitter, Facebook, blogs, and YouTube – are now essential for public officials.

These new means of communicating allow for quicker sharing of information, which may include:

- **position taking** - their position on a policy or issue;
- **upcoming schedule** - events of interest to constituents;
- **direct responses to citizens** - allows quick response to citizens' questions or concerns.

Your Participation in Lawmaking

The U.S. government is the basis for participatory democracy, which Abraham Lincoln described as a government made "of the people, by the people, and for the people." Under the Constitution, U.S. citizens have the right to influence public policy and lawmaking.

You may voice your opinions through written letters or emails, which are the most popular method of communicating with your representatives. The following are suggestions for writing a powerful message:

- state the purpose of your letter in the first few sentences;
- be polite and concise, include key information, and use examples to support your position;
- keep the message brief, one page is ideal, and discuss only one issue per letter or email;
- give your full name, along with your mailing and email addresses;
- indicate if you are a member of an organization interested in the proposed legislation.

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Perhaps the most prolonged debate at the Constitutional Convention concerned the method of selecting the president. An early suggestion was to give this power to Congress. However, that would have destroyed the idea of the separation of powers. How could we have three branches of government, each checking the other if the legislative branch (the Congress) picked the head of the executive branch (the president)?

The Constitution writers were also not ready to give the president's selection to the people or the "common man." So they wrote a compromise into Article 2, Section 1 of the Constitution. The compromise set up a system of electors to select the president. These electors became known as the Electoral College, but the Constitution itself does not mention the term "Electoral College."

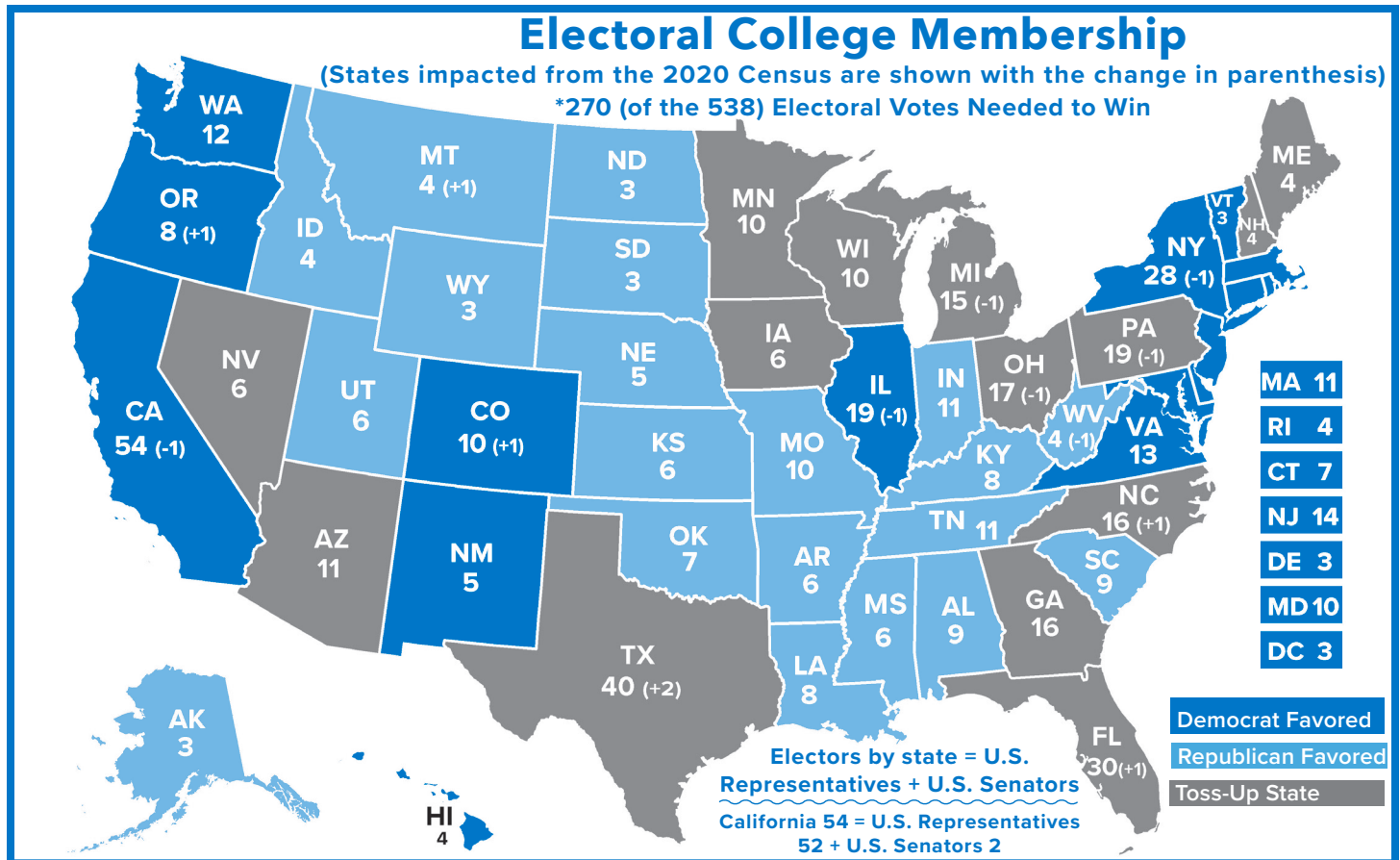
This unique election method was modified by the 12th and 23rd Amendments. Before 1961, the voters in Washington, D.C., did not get to vote for the president at all. This was not considered fair in the capital of our country. The 23rd Amendment was added in 1961, giving three electoral votes for Washington, D.C. That made 538 electors (electoral votes for each state equals the number of representatives plus two for the senators). A majority of 270 or more would be necessary to select the president. The map below shows the distribution of the electoral votes based on changes from the 2020 census. These changes will be reflected in the 2024 presidential election.

To summarize, if a candidate gets the most popular (people) votes in the state, the "electors" will then cast their votes the same way. All the electoral votes for the state (except for Maine and Nebraska) will go to the winner of the state. The writers of the Constitution also thought that the Electoral College gave states with a small population more equal weight in the presidential election.

One of the problems political scientists see in the Electoral College is that it allows a person to be elected president who has not won the popular vote in the country. In our growing beliefs in the power and rights of democracy in our nation, that could be a problem. Because all the electoral votes of a state go to the candidate who wins the election in that state, whether the candidate wins by a single vote or a million votes, it is possible to be elected president without having the most votes.

That has not happened very often, but it did occur in 2000 when George W. Bush became president and again recently in the 2016 election. Donald Trump became president even though Hillary Clinton won a majority of the popular votes. And, because this has happened so recently, Americans are debating the Electoral College's pros and cons. Since a change in the electoral vote would require a constitutional amendment, the change will not come quickly. Supporters of the current system say that it has served the nation well and forces candidates to gain broad geographic support rather than concentrating only on large metropolitan areas.

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California has had an exciting and important history thanks to the contributions of many nationalities, religions, and the contributions of brave men and women.

Various Indian tribes lived in California before the white men came. The Hupa Indians lived in the far northwestern part of what is now California. The Maidu lived in the central section, and the Yuma lived in the south. The Pomo Indians occupied the territory that now makes up Lake, Mendocino, and Sonoma counties. Other Indian groups included the Miwok, Modoc, and Mohave tribes.

The recorded history of California goes back 450 years to 1542 when the Spanish explorer Cabrillo discovered San Diego Bay and explored the coast. English explorer Sir Francis Drake explored the California area in 1679 and unsuccessfully claimed the area for England.

Beginning in 1697, the Spanish established missions and other settlements on the southern coast of California, and by 1776, Spanish settlers had arrived at sites like Monterey, San Diego, and San Francisco.

However, Spain did not have a firm hold on the California Territory. Russia had a fur-trading interest in Alaska and searched for furs farther south along the California coast. Here they established Fort Ross on the northern California coast. In 1824, Russia agreed to limit its settlement to Alaska.

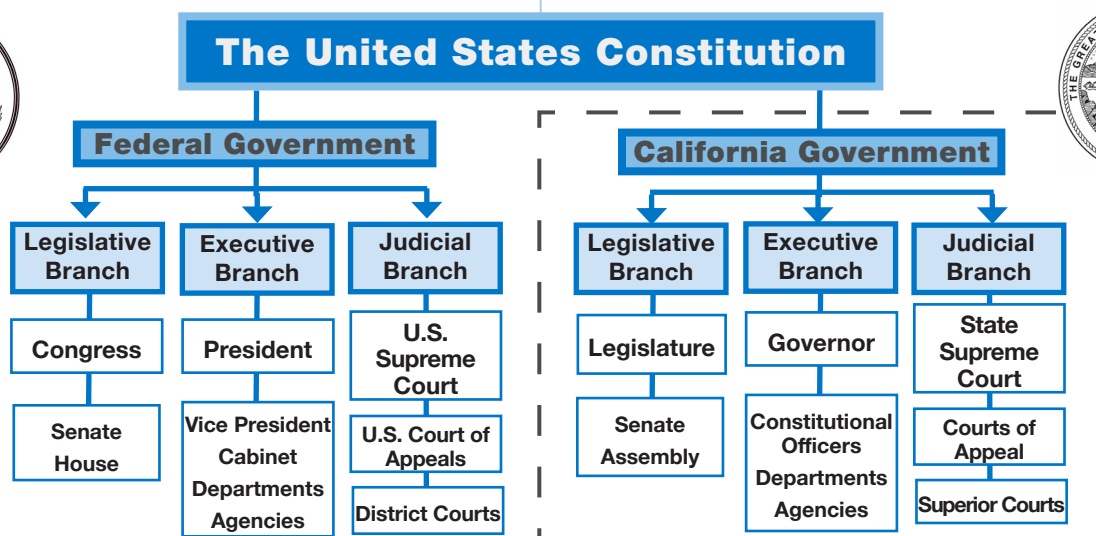
Franciscan friars of the Catholic Church played an essential part in the Spanish settlement of California. Father Junipero Serra established the first California mission in 1769. This mission was called San Diego de Alcalá, near the present site of San Diego. By 1823, the Franciscans had built a chain of 21 missions. Each mission was about a day's walk from the next. The friars converted many Indians to Christianity. They taught the Indians many skills, but there was criticism about the Indians' treatment. Many people in California and Mexico wanted the missions broken up. In the early 1830s, the government began selling mission land to private citizens. By 1846, almost all of the mission lands had been sold, much of it to wealthy rancheros.

California became a province of Mexico in 1822 after Mexico won its independence from Spain. The province set up its legislature and military force. Mexico sent a series of governors who clashed with the local people and, after 1831, Mexico's control of the area was weak.

The "Otter," the first American sailing vessel to reach the coast of California from the East, arrived in California waters in 1796. The first American explorer to reach California by land arrived in 1826. He was Jedediah Strong Smith, a trapper. In 1841, the first organized group of American settlers came to California by land. They were led by John Bidwell and John Bartleson. The new settlers wanted California to become part of the United States. The United States offered to buy the land from Mexico, but Mexico refused.

Between 1844 and 1846, the explorer John C. Fremont led two surveying parties into California. The Mexicans ordered him to leave and fighting was narrowly avoided. In May 1846, the United States and

continued



The U.S. Constitution splits governing powers between the federal government and the states. This section will cover the state government portion of the chart above. It will also include the study of local government bodies.

Article XIX - Motor Vehicle Revenues

Article XIX explains that fuel taxes shall be used to construct and maintain roads and highways along with public mass transit systems.

Article XX - Miscellaneous Subjects

Article XX covers various subjects ranging from provisions specific to the County of Sacramento to the regulations surrounding alcoholic beverages.

Article XXI - Redistricting

Because of shifting populations, the boundaries of the Senate, Assembly, Congressional, and Board of Equalization districts must be periodically adjusted to ensure voter equality in representation. The adjustment of these districts, known as *redistricting*, is mandatory per Article XXI.

Article XXII - Architectural & Eng. Services

Article XXII was added to the California Constitution in November 2000, when *Proposition 35* was approved by the state's voters. This allowed the governmental entities of California to contract with qualified private companies for architectural and engineering services for all public works projects.

There are no Articles XXIII through XXXIII of the California Constitution.

Article XXXIV - Public Housing Project Law

Article XXXIV requires local voter approval of housing projects intended for low-income people that receive funding or assistance from the federal and/or state government. Throughout its 70 years of enactment, this article has been constitutionally challenged at the state level and limited in scope by judicial decisions.

Article XXXV - Medical Research

Article XXXV was added to the state constitution in 2004 when Proposition 71, the Stem Cell Research Initiative, was approved. This gave the state the right to conduct stem cell research, creating and funding the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM).

State Constitution vs. U.S. Constitution

Initially, state constitutions were short and brief. Today the 50 state constitutions average about 30,000 words. In comparison, the United States Constitution has 7,591 words (including the 27 amendments). State constitutions are longer because they have many details. It is easy for these to become outdated. Remember that the U.S. Constitution leaves the details to the lawmakers in Congress and the courts. This makes the U.S. Constitution very flexible, and state constitutions often inflexible.

QUESTIONS

WHICH ARTICLE? In which article of the state constitution would you find information on the following? (Give section number when possible.)

1. Rights of Individuals _____
2. The Governor _____
3. Jury Trial _____
4. Religious Freedom _____
5. The Judicial System _____
6. Revising the Constitution _____
7. Voting Qualifications _____
8. Local Government Rules _____
9. Minimum Wage and Labor Compensation _____
10. Property Taxes _____
11. Rights of Crime Victims _____
12. Stem Cell Research _____
13. Adjusting Legislative Districts _____
14. Water Conservation _____
15. Recall Elections _____

TRUE OR FALSE? Write a **T** or **F** in the space provided.

- ___ 1. Voters must approve changes in the state constitution.
- ___ 2. The governor may change the state constitution without voter or Legislature approval.
- ___ 3. An amendment to the state constitution may be proposed in either house of the Legislature.
- ___ 4. The California Constitution helps establish federal laws and treaties.
- ___ 5. State constitutions are always shorter in length and contain fewer details than the U.S. Constitution.
- ___ 6. Freedom of speech is not listed in the California Constitution, only in the U.S. Constitution.
- ___ 7. The California Bill (or Declaration) of Rights contains 10 sections or amendments.
- ___ 8. The wording in the California Constitution preamble is the same as the United States Constitution preamble.
- ___ 9. Initiative, referendum, and recall are considered the three forms of direct democracy.
- ___ 10. There are more amendments to the United States Constitution than in the California Constitution.
- ___ 11. Providing an educational system is the duty of state government.
- ___ 12. The U.S. Constitution is considered the supreme law of the land.
- ___ 13. All taxing authority is the responsibility of the federal government.

domestic policy – government's decisions about issues within the nation.

double jeopardy – the putting of an accused person on trial a second time after that person has been found innocent in the first trial (prohibited by the Constitution).

elastic clause – a statement in the Constitution giving Congress the power to do what is “necessary and proper” for carrying out its other powers.

Electoral College – the group of politicians (several from each state) who are authorized by the Constitution to cast official ballots for president and vice president.

embargo – agreement prohibiting (not allowing) trade.

excise tax – a tax on the sale of specific items, such as gasoline.

executive branch – the part of the U.S. government headed by the president and responsible for enforcing federal laws.

executive power – the ability of an official or group of officials to enforce and carry out the laws.

export – to ship (commodities) to other countries or places for sale, exchange, etc.

ex post facto law – a law that would punish acts committed in the past, though they had been legal at the time (prohibited by the Constitution).

expressed powers – powers actually mentioned or expressed in the Constitution (also called enumerated powers).

extradition – the process by which a criminal is returned to the state where the crime was committed.

federal government – the United States government.

federalism – a political system that gives significant powers to both national and state governments.

felony – a serious crime usually punished by a jail sentence.

filibuster – a tactic of making long speeches on the Senate floor as a means of defeating a bill.

fiscal policy – the government's taxing and spending policies.

fiscal year – the U.S. federal government's fiscal year is the 12-month period beginning on October 1st and ending on September 30th.

foreign policy – one government's goals and methods in dealing with foreign governments.

full faith and credit clause – a clause in the U.S. Constitution which says that every state must recognize and respect the laws and judgments of other states.

general assembly – the name of a state legislature comprising of the state House of Representatives and the state Senate.

general election – an election usually held at regular intervals in which candidates are elected in all or most constituencies of a nation or state.

gerrymandering – drawing the boundaries of a voting district so that the political party in power has an advantage over rival parties.

government – a system for managing a community or nation and the leaders or lawmakers who control that system.

grand jury – a group of citizens who decide where there is enough evidence to indict (accuse) a person of a crime.

grievance – a cause of complaint.

habeas corpus – an arrested person's right to appear before a judge. If the judge finds no legal reason to detain the person, he or she must be released.

home rule – the privilege granted to some communities to decide how their local governments will be organized.

immigration – the movement of people of foreign birth from their own country to an adopted country.

impeachment – to accuse an official of wrong doing. This step precedes trial and removal from office.

implied powers – powers that are not actually expressed but believed to be a power of the Congress.

inauguration – a ceremony for beginning the term of office of a president, a vice president, or some other official.

income tax – a tax collected on wages, salaries, tips, and other forms of personal earnings.

incorporate – to form legally a business or community that has received a special charter from the state.

indict – to formally accuse a person suspected of committing a crime.

initiative – a procedure by which voters may propose a law without going through the legislature.

interest group – people with a common political goal who try to persuade government to pass laws implementing their ideas.

interstate commerce – trade or business transactions carried out across state lines.

judicial branch – the part of government made up of courts, with its function to interpret laws in specific cases.

judicial power – the ability of judges to decide court cases based upon the interpretation of the laws and the Constitution.

judicial review – the power of a federal court, especially the Supreme Court, to determine whether the acts of Congress and the president are allowed by the Constitution.

judiciary – the court system.

jurisdiction – a court's authority to decide certain kinds of cases and not others.

justice – the ideal of settling disputes and determining responsibility for crime in a fair manner.

left – a reference to people who have liberal ideas.

legislative branch – the part of government that has responsibility for making the laws.

legislative power – the ability of certain officials to make laws for a city, a state, or a nation.

legislator – a member of a lawmaking body.

legislature – a group of elected officials who make the laws.

liberal – someone who thinks government should take an active role in promoting social and economic progress. Also, someone who favors rapid change.

liberty – the right to make free choices and to express opinions without fear of being arrested and punished.

libel – any spoken or written statement which defames a person or exposes him or her to public contempt or ridicule.

lobbies – organized efforts by interest groups to influence the opinion and votes of lawmakers.

lobbyist – a person hired by an interest group to speak to legislators about bills that concern the group.

logrolling – an informal agreement between lawmakers that they will vote for the bill that each is most interested in.

lower house – the chamber in a two-house legislature that has more members than the other.

majority – part of a group that is more than half the total.

majority leader – someone chosen by members of the majority party to lead their lawmaking efforts. The majority party is the one holding the most seats in the legislature.

mayor-and-council form – a plan of city government in which the executive is an elected mayor and the legislature is an elected body of councilors or aldermen/women.