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Time Line of Constitutional Events



Here is a sampling of the events that led to America's independence and adoption of a new constitution. You will find the years and the significant events that happened during that time. The goal was to establish a framework for a more robust and stable federal government while preserving individual rights and freedoms.



Protests against British rule

1763–1765

England decided on a program of taxation and control of the colonies. The American colonists began 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** angered the colonists, who were forced to pay unjust taxes and provide supplies to British troops.



Uprisings in Boston

1770–1773

Colonists reduced their boycott of British goods when they withdrew all of the **Townshend Acts**, except the tax on tea. The **Boston Massacre** occurs when an angry crowd of citizens surrounds a group of soldiers, causing them to open fire. With the American colonists still angry over British tax policies, the **Boston Tea Party** uprising occurred.



The Declaration of Independence

1776

On July 4th, the **Second Continental Congress** adopted 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, the **Liberty Bell** was rung in Philadelphia to call the people to the first public reading of the Declaration.



Beginning of the Revolution

1775

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 of Lexington**. This started the American Revolution and led to another famous battle, **Bunker Hill**. In May, the **Second Continental Congress** meets in Philadelphia.



First Continental Congress

1774

In response to the Boston Tea Party, the Parliament passed several acts to punish Massachusetts. Twelve of the thirteen colonies were named delegates to the **First Continental Congress**. On September 5th, they met mainly to deal with Britain's actions.



The Articles of Confederation

1777–1781

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



Ratification of the Constitution

1787–1788

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



Our New Government

1789

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

When reading about Congress and politics, you will often find the terms *liberal*, *conservative*, or *extremist*. A liberal 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* believes that the government's role 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 a legislator's official social media contacts is through their websites. Social media, of course, does not replace the traditional methods of constituent communications. However, some – mainly X (formerly known as 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 can influence public policy and lawmaking.

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

- state the purpose of the 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 mailing and email addresses;
- indicate if you are a member of an organization interested in the proposed legislation.

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 writers of the Constitution also were 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 does not mention the term "Electoral College."

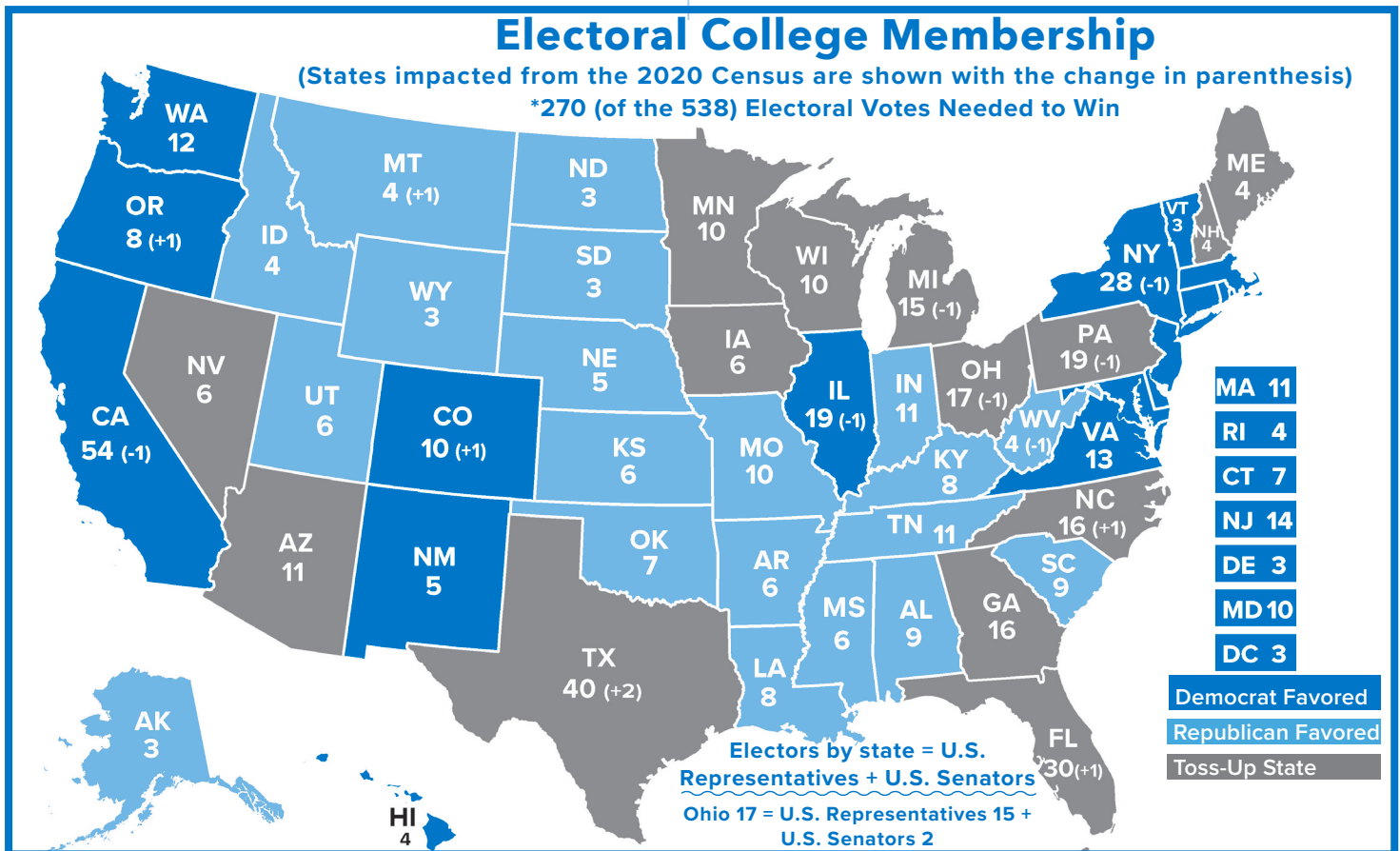
The 12th and 23rd Amendments modified this unique election method. Before 1961, the voters in Washington, D.C., did not get to vote for the president. This restriction was not considered fair in the capital of our country. The 23rd Amendment was added in 1961, giving three electoral votes for Washington, 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 the reapportionment from the 2020 Census.

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 state's winner. 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 yet to win 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. A state's electoral votes go to the candidate who wins the election in that state, whether by a single vote or a million votes. A candidate could be elected president without having the most popular 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 most of the popular votes. Furthermore, because this has happened 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 take time. 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.

continued



The following test will help you prepare for your final Constitution test. It has questions similar to ones you will find on your final. It is suggested you write your answers on a piece of paper so you can take the test multiple times. You will find the correct answers at the bottom of Page 55.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Write the letter of the correct answer in the space provided.

1. _____ The president may serve how many terms? a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4
2. _____ What is NOT a rule of the flag code?
 - a. worn flags should be thrown in trash
 - b. should be in the front of a parade
 - c. should be displayed on national holidays
 - d. exact likeness should not be used in ads
3. _____ How many amendments have been added to the Constitution? a. 10 b. 21 c. 27 d. 41
4. _____ How many years is the president's term of office? a. 2 b. 4 c. 6 d. 9
5. _____ What is the age requirement to become president? a. 18 b. 21 c. 35 d. 45
6. _____ After a bill has gone through both houses of Congress successfully, it is sent to:
 - a. the President
 - b. the States
 - c. the Speaker of the House
 - d. the Supreme Court
7. _____ Which amendment gave women who are citizens the right to vote in all elections?
 - a. 17th
 - b. 19th
 - c. 22nd
 - d. 27th
8. _____ How many U.S. senators come from each state? a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4
9. _____ Each state receives at least _____ representative(s) in the U.S. House of Representatives.
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
10. _____ During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the Great Compromise resolved a conflict over?
 - a. presidential power
 - b. number of free states
 - c. representation in Congress
 - d. taxes on imports
11. _____ The president of the Senate is:
 - a. the President of the United States
 - b. the Speaker of the House
 - c. the Secretary of State
 - d. the Vice President
12. _____ Which of these rights is NOT an unalienable right from the Declaration of Independence?
 - a. liberty
 - b. education
 - c. pursuit of happiness
 - d. life
13. _____ The Declaration of Independence was written largely by:
 - a. Hamilton
 - b. Washington
 - c. Jefferson
 - d. Adams
14. _____ The national budget is presented annually to Congress by the:
 - a. the Vice President
 - b. the Governors
 - c. the Secretary of State
 - d. the President
15. _____ There are how many branches of government? a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4
16. _____ The president takes the oath of office on:
 - a. January 4th
 - b. January 20th
 - c. November 7th
 - d. September 5th
17. _____ In our First Amendment, which is NOT a "freedom"?
 - a. freedom of the press
 - b. freedom of employment
 - c. freedom of speech
 - d. freedom of religion
18. _____ The vote of what group really decides who will be president?
 - a. Electoral College
 - b. popular vote by the people
 - c. United Nations
 - d. House of Representatives
19. _____ What is described in Article 1, Section 8, of the Constitution giving Congress broad powers to write laws about new situations?
 - a. war power
 - b. insight clause
 - c. elastic clause
 - d. inventional clause
20. _____ Which body has the power to borrow money?
 - a. Congress
 - b. Supreme Court
 - c. Executive Branch
 - d. State Legislatures

“The judicial power of the state is vested in a Supreme Court, Courts of Appeals, Courts of Common Pleas...”
 — Ohio Constitution, Article 4

The judicial branch of government in Ohio administers justice and interprets the laws. It is composed of a system of courts. The Ohio Constitution defines the courts’ responsibilities, the qualifications of judges, and the duties of the three-level court system. The *court system* involves local courts, trial courts, courts of appeals, and the Supreme Court.

Criminal and Civil Cases

All courts handle both *criminal* and *civil* cases. A criminal case involves a violation of a law for which there is a fine or other penalty like a prison sentence or probation. Criminal cases range from relatively minor offenses, such as traffic infractions, to serious ones, such as robbery or murder. These typical crimes are classified as *felonies*, *misdemeanors*, or *infractions*.

Felonies – Serious crimes that often are punishable by a state prison sentence or even death in the most extreme cases.

Misdemeanors – A lesser offense than a felony. It is punishable by fine or incarceration for less than a year in a city or county jail rather than in a state penitentiary.

Infractions – These are not punishable by jail or prison time but rather by a fine. The most common infractions are traffic violations.

Civil cases are brought against individuals or organizations by other individuals or organizations. In some civil cases, the plaintiff seeks money damages to be paid by the defendant. In other kinds of civil cases, the parties ask

the court to take a certain action, such as to dissolve a marriage, decide the custody of minor children, review property rights, or stop someone from doing something.

Now that you are familiar with the type of court cases, it is time to learn more about the courts themselves.

Local Courts

Municipal and county courts overlap, so the area served varies from county to county. These courts will often handle the preliminary hearing for felony cases but mainly deal with misdemeanors. They are probably best known for traffic violations. Some significant cases they deal with are domestic violence, driving under the influence, evictions, and claims for less than \$15,000.

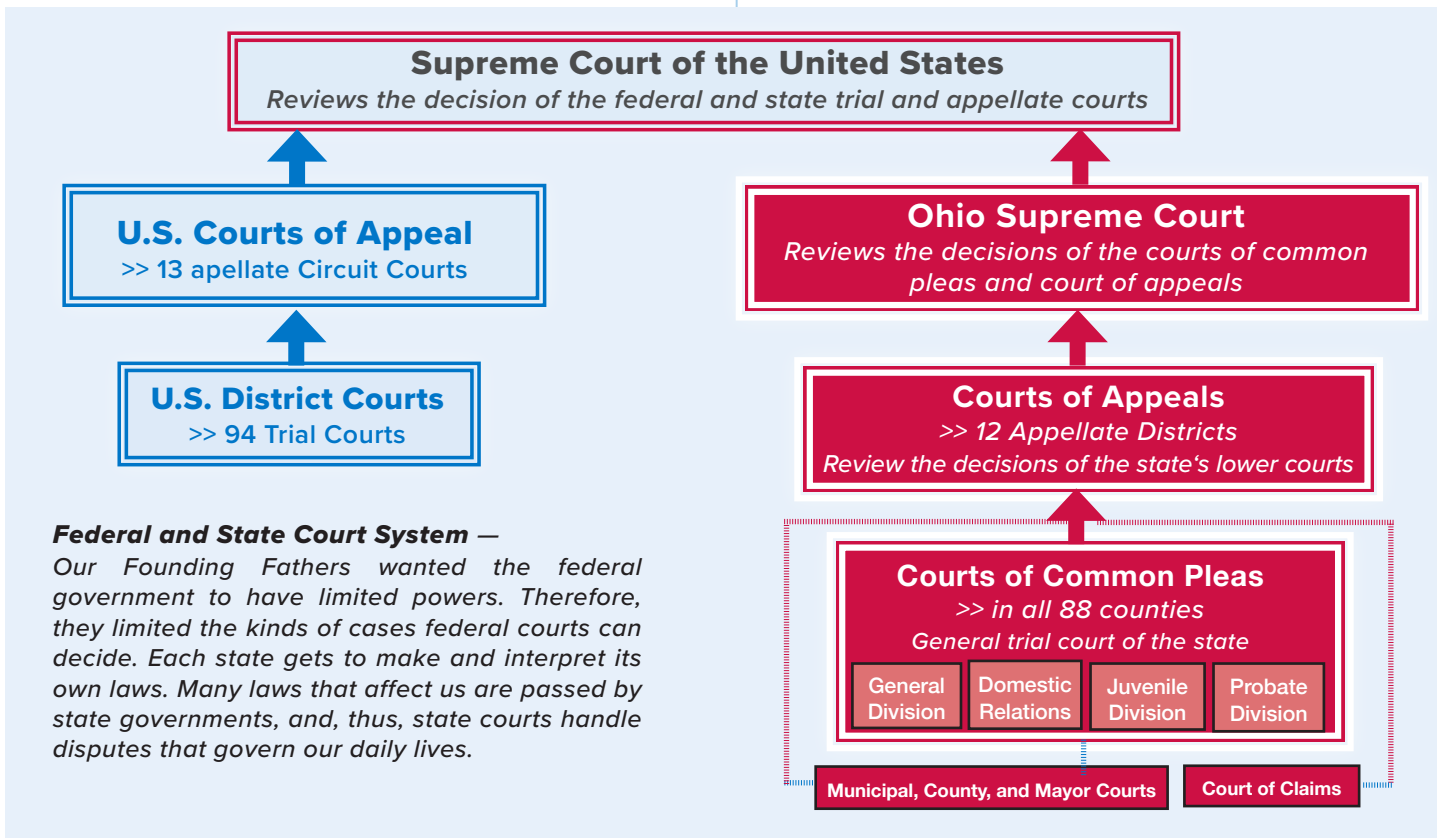
Mayor’s courts are not part of Ohio’s judicial branch. It is the one court where a non-lawyer, the mayor, can act as a judge. They enforce city ordinances and hear traffic cases and some misdemeanors. Someone convicted in this court may appeal to the municipal or county court for that county.

Trial Courts (Court of Common Pleas)

The *court of common pleas*, the only trial court created by the Ohio Constitution, is established by Article 4, Section 1, of the Constitution. Many civil cases begin here. There is a court of common pleas in each of the 88 counties.

Courts of common pleas include four divisions:

continued



Federal and State Court System – Our Founding Fathers wanted the federal government to have limited powers. Therefore, they limited the kinds of cases federal courts can decide. Each state gets to make and interpret its own laws. Many laws that affect us are passed by state governments, and, thus, state courts handle disputes that govern our daily lives.

This glossary contains constitution-related terms to aid in your study. Many, but not all, of these terms are used in the worktext. These terms can be used to expand your knowledge of the Constitution, government, and our democracy.

act – a bill, or proposal for a law, passed by a majority of lawmakers.

adjourn – to terminate a session (of Congress, or of a court) or suspend until a later time.

ambassador – an official who represents his or her government in dealings with another nation.

amendments – changes in a bill, a law, or a constitution.

appeal – to request another trial before a higher court.

appeals court – a federal court that reviews the decision a lower (trial) court.

appoint – to name someone to fill an office.

appropriation – money set aside for a specific use by an act of the legislature.

article – a segment of a written document. The Constitution is divided into articles dealing with different areas of government.

assembly – a public meeting or gathering; also the name commonly given to the larger house in the state legislature.

attorney general – the head of the executive department who is chiefly responsible for enforcing U.S. laws or state laws.

bail – the sum of money that an accused person may deposit with a court as a security to get out of jail while awaiting trial.

bicameral legislature – a lawmaking body with two houses.

bill – a proposal for a law to be considered by Congress or a state legislature.

bill of attainder – a law naming a person guilty of a crime without trial (such are not allowed by the U.S. Constitution).

Bill of Rights – the first ten amendments of the U.S. Constitution; their common purpose is to protect the American people from abuses of government power.

budget – a plan for spending money over a certain period of time.

cabinet – a group of department heads who meet regularly with the president or with a state's governor.

campaign – an organized effort carried out over a period of months or years; specifically, the efforts of a candidate and his or hers supports to win election.

caucus – a meeting of party members to decide policy or nominate candidates.

censorship – a government's practice of stopping certain ideas from being published or expressed.

census – an official count of the U.S. population conducted every ten years.

charter – a document granting powers of self-government to a city or municipality; also a document giving legal status to a business organization.

checks and balances – a system by which each branch of government has the power to block or overrule the decisions of the other branches.

chief executive – the elected official who is chiefly responsible for enforcing the laws of a state (the governor) or a nation (the president).

circuit court – a court in the federal system that has the power to hear appeals from trial courts.

citizen – anyone who is officially counted as a member of a nation or state.

citizenship – the status of being a citizen.

civil case – a dispute brought to court for settlement.

civil rights – rights which are considered to be unquestionable, deserved be all people under all circumstances.

cloture – a means of preventing a filibuster on a bill.

commander-in-chief – the supreme commander of a nation's armed forces; in the U.S. it is the president.

commerce – business transactions, trade, or the buying and selling of goods on a large scale.

commission form – a plan of local government in which legislative and executive powers are shared by a group of elected officials known as "commissioners."

commutations – changing a prison sentence or other penalty to another less severe.

compromise – to give up a part of one's original demands or desires in order to reach agreement on an issue.

conference committee – a group of lawmakers drawn from both houses of Congress (or a state legislature) with the purpose to resolve the differences between two versions of a bill passed by the two houses.

confirmation – the process by which the U.S. Senate approves a president's appointments to office.

Congress – chief legislative body of our nation.

conservative – someone who wants government's role in society and the economy to be strictly limited; may also refer to changes in policy to be gradual, not rapid.

consideration – A proposed bill that is read to each house of the General Assembly.

constituents – the residents of a district or state who are represented by a legislator from that same district or state.

constitution – the set of basic laws and rules defining a nation's or state's system of government.

convention – a large meeting of delegates from different states or districts.

council-manager system – a system of local government in which legislative power belongs to an elected group (the council), which hires a professional manager to conduct city business.

criminal case – a matter involving the violation of a state or federal law.

debate – a formal process for presenting arguments for and against a bill or a public issue.

defendant – the person at a trial who been accused of some offense, injury, or crime.

deficit – the amount of annual debt.

delegated powers – those rights that the federal government is free to exercise because they are specifically mentioned in the Constitution.

delegates – persons to chosen to represent others at a special meeting.

democracy – a system of government in which the people (citizens and voters) have the final power.

department – a major division of the executive branch.

depression – a more serious and long slowdown in the economy.

diplomacy – the means by which nations communicate with one another and try to settle their differences peacefully.

discrimination – the practice of favoring one person or one group over another.

district courts – federal courts that hold trials.

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