

**Knowledge is power.**

*Expand your Civic Literacy and share this Individual Learning Module with family and friends to expand their Civic Literacy, too!*

- ✓ **Our Democracy runs on the Active and Informed Participation of its Citizens.**

***Be a Democracy Defender!***

# Democracy DEFENDER

*In Just 10 Slides!*

*No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline.*

*--Kofi Annan  
UN Secretary General*

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***What is this Democracy all about?***

This module will help you answer that question. ***Just click on the links in this Notes section to view the graphics on each slide.***

## Founding Principles



*"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."  
--The Declaration of Independence (1776)*

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### FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

When you build a house, you start with a **"foundation"**— the rock-solid base that you build on. 245 years ago, our democracy began with a set of **ideas** some have called **"Founding Principles"**.

*When you read the words written in the **Declaration of Independence**, the **US Constitution\***, and the **Bill of Rights**, you may hear the echo of these ideas.*

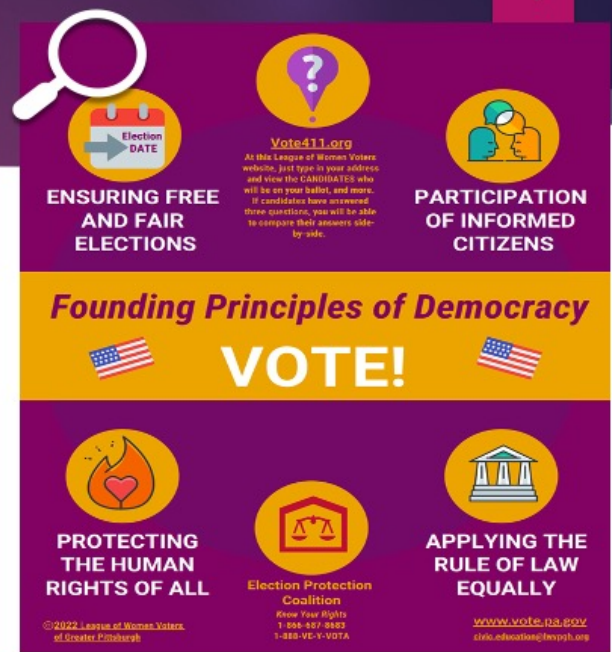
The **Founding Principles** we will present were some of the basic ideas the founders believed in and lived by--and these ideas and others have come to define what a representative democracy like ours looks like.

We will also present why we believe the **active participation of informed citizens** is the *cement* that holds this house together.

*\*Learn more about the US Constitution from the Annenberg Classroom:  
<https://www.annenbergclassroom.org/constitution>*

# Founding Principles of Our Representative DEMOCRACY

We elect officials who will faithfully **represent** us and our interests,



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Really BIG ideas, right? Our Democracy has always been guided by the exceptional ideas presented in the founding documents. As the late Congresswomen from Texas, Barbara Jordan said, “What the people want is very simple— they want an America as good at its promise.”

And this system has continued today--when we vote, we elect officials who we hope will represent us and move our interests forward, WITHIN the framework of our American democracy.

## Thought Experiment:

*Pick one of these principles and think about how you see it in practice. Ask yourself one of these questions and think of a concrete example.*

- ✓ Are citizens around you Actively Participating in our democracy?
- ✓ Do you see the Rule of Law being applied equally to all citizens?
- ✓ Can you find an example when your Human Rights were protected?
- ✓ How do you know if an election is Free and Fair?

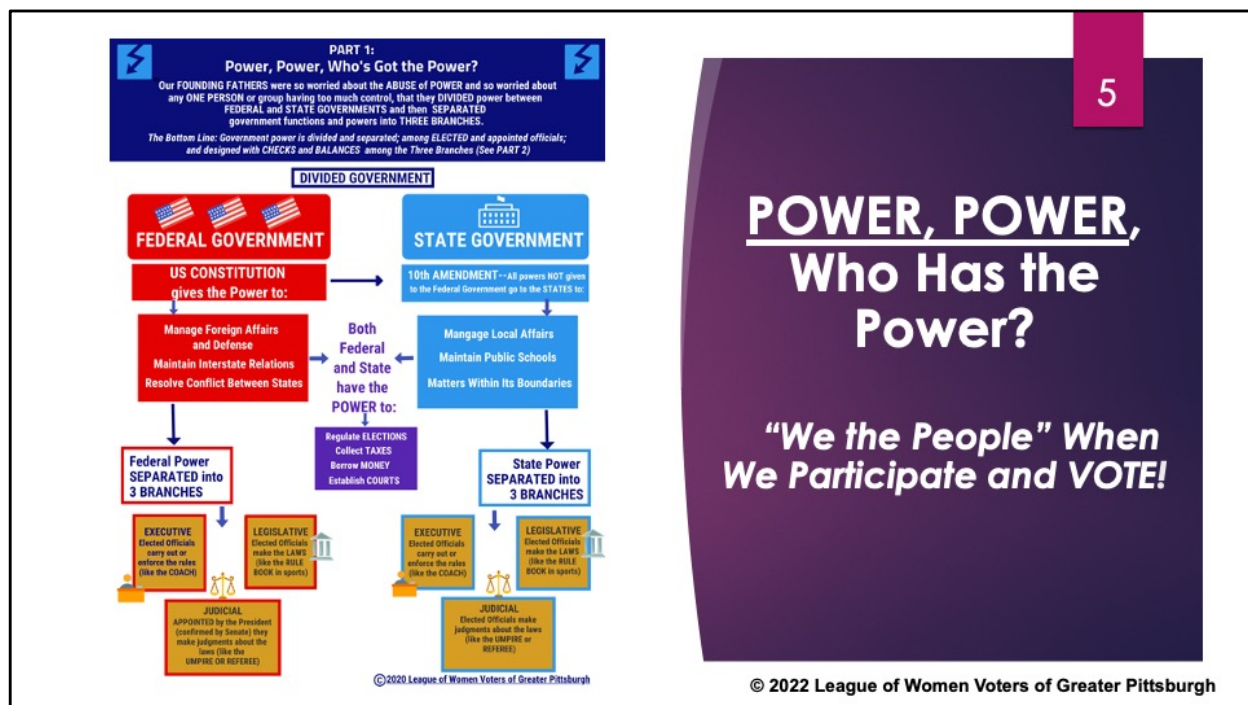
## Real World Examples:

**Active Participation:** Citizens who vote, lobby, contact elected officials, advocate for their issues, run for office.

**Rule of Law:** When you get behind the wheel of a car and obey the “rules of the road” for your own and others’ safety.

**Human Rights:** Child labor is a thing of the past; young people cannot be forced to work, but 16-year-olds may work within the lawful guidelines. The right to a K-12 education.

**Free and Fair Elections:** You are or can remember running for Student Government or to be a captain of a high school team; how would you know if the election was Free and Fair? In the old times, out West, in order to vote for sheriff, you had to stand behind the person you were voting for. Now we have a secret ballot. Who counts the votes fairly? Would a teacher help? How are the ballots kept secure?



## POWER, POWER, Who's Got the Power?

Our Founding Fathers were so worried about the **abuse of power** and so worried about any one person or group having too much control, that they **divided power** between Federal and State Governments and then **separated** government functions and powers into **THREE BRANCHES**.

**The Bottom Line:** Government power is divided and separated among elected and appointed officials and designed with **CHECKS and BALANCES** among the Three Branches (See PART 2).



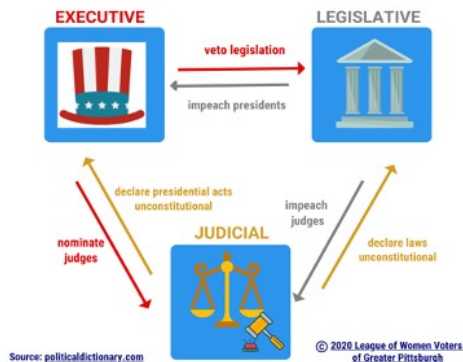
# Who Has the Power? Part 2

## CHECKS and BALANCES In the US Government

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**Part 2:**  
**CHECKS AND BALANCES**  
in the US Government

"CHECKS AND BALANCES" refers to the SEPARATION OF POWERS mandated by the US Constitution that results from DIVIDED BRANCHES of POWER. The US Constitution divides power among three branches of government-- Executive, Legislative and Judicial--to prevent any one from having too much power. Each branch is said to have the power to CHECK the power of the others, in order to maintain a BALANCE in the government.



**CHECKS and BALANCES** in the US Government, refers to the **separation of powers** mandated by the US Constitution that results from **divided branches** of power. The US Constitution divides power among three branches of government-- **Executive, Legislative and Judicial**--to prevent any one from having too much power.

Each branch is said to have the power to CHECK the power of the others, in order to maintain a BALANCE in the government.

**"BILL OF RIGHTS"**  
229th Birthday on 12.15.20!

**10 Amendments to the US Constitution**  
Representative thought that individual rights were already in the US Constitution. Anti-Federalists thought that the Constitution gave the new American government too much power and didn't specifically list citizens' individual rights. So they COMPROMISED!

- 1st Amendment:** Freedom of religion, speech, the press; the right of the people to peacefully assemble and petition to resolve grievances (the right to hold government accountable).
- 2nd Amendment:** People's right for a well-regulated militia for security of a free state; the right of people to keep and bear arms.
- 3rd Amendment:** No military persons, in war or peace, may take possession of a private dwelling without consent of the owner or a law.
- 4th Amendment:** Right to privacy; no unreasonable searches and seizures without probable cause; search and seizure is limited to the description in the warrant.
- 5th Amendment:** No double jeopardy; no self-incrimination; no taking of life, liberty or property without due process of law; no taking of private property without just payment.
- 6th Amendment:** Rights of an accused person to a public trial and an impartial jury, to know the nature of the charges, who the accusers are and the right to a lawyer for the defense.
- 7th Amendment:** In civil cases for more than \$20, gives the right to a trial by jury in federal court; after one trial, can't go back to trial again.
- 8th Amendment:** Excessive bail not required; excessive fines and cruel or unusual punishment are not permitted.
- 9th Amendment:** The rights of the people are not limited only to the rights listed in the Constitution.
- 10th Amendment:** Further defines the balance of power; powers not granted to the federal government go back to the states or to the people.

**Bill of Rights**  
**10 Amendments to the US Constitution**

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## 10 Amendments to the US Constitution– the Bill of Rights.

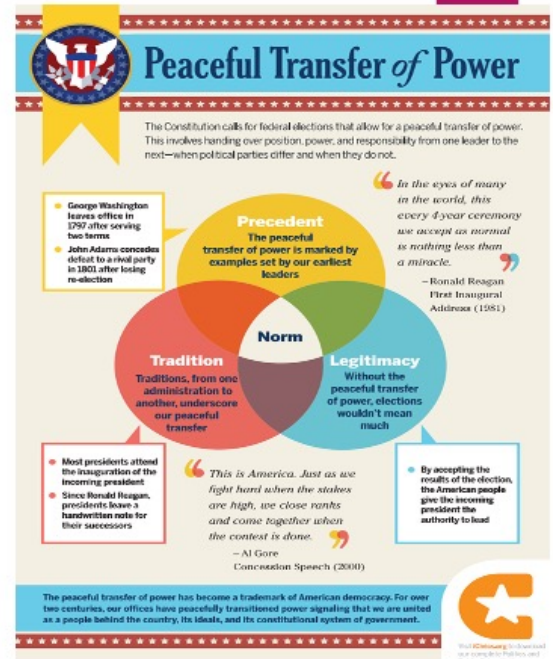
- ✓ FEDERALISTS thought that individual rights were already in the US Constitution; e.g., "no title of nobility", the need for a court order in order to detain an individual, no double jeopardy (prohibits anyone from being prosecuted twice for the same crime).
- ✓ ANTI-FEDERALISTS thought that the Constitution gave the new American government too much power and didn't specifically list citizens' individual rights.
- So, they *COMPROMISED*!

**The 229th Birthday of the Bill of Rights was celebrated on 12.15.20!**

# The PEACEFUL TRANSFER of POWER: Where Foundational Principles SHINE!

- ▶ George Washington was the Role-Model for a President to Peacefully Transfer Power to the Elected Successor:
- ▶ Harry Truman (D) to Dwight Eisenhower (R-34<sup>th</sup>)
- ▶ Lyndon Johnson (D) to Richard Nixon (R-37<sup>th</sup>)
- ▶ Jimmy Carter (D) to Ronald Reagan (R-40<sup>th</sup>)
- ▶ George H. W. Bush (R) to Bill Clinton (D-42<sup>nd</sup>)
- ▶ Bill Clinton (D) to George W Bush (R-43<sup>rd</sup>)
- ▶ George W Bush (R) to Barack Obama (D-44<sup>th</sup>)
- ▶ Barack Obama (D) to Donald Trump (R-45<sup>th</sup>)

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Here is an event that takes place every four years, that *upholds* the Founding Principles and *sustains* our Democracy. See this list of recent Presidential transfers of power from one party's administration to another– Republicans to Democrats and Democrats to Republicans.

The Peaceful Transfer of Power has been a **DEFINING** feature of American Democracy for almost 250 years!

- ✓ **From the iCivics graphic:** "The Constitution calls for Federal elections that allow for a peaceful transfer of power. Following a "Free and Fair Election", this involves handing over positions, power, and responsibility from one leader to the next– *when political parties differ, and when they do not.*"

And in this time of questioning, even the Peaceful Transfer of Power has been met with **challenges**. The good news is that the guardrails of our democracy, including the Rule of Law, held firm.





## Labels

Do you know what these 'Labels' REALLY Mean?

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### What do Labels really mean?

Are you wondering about the "labels" you may see on social media and hear from others? "LABELS" can reduce **complex ideas** to sound bites that are MISLEADING.

*Do some research to understand:*

#### Political Systems:

Set the process for making government decisions (laws) for domestic and foreign policies that protect citizens and benefit the nation.

VS

#### Economic Systems:

What are a country's resources? How should goods/services be produced from those resources? How should goods and services be shared with citizens?

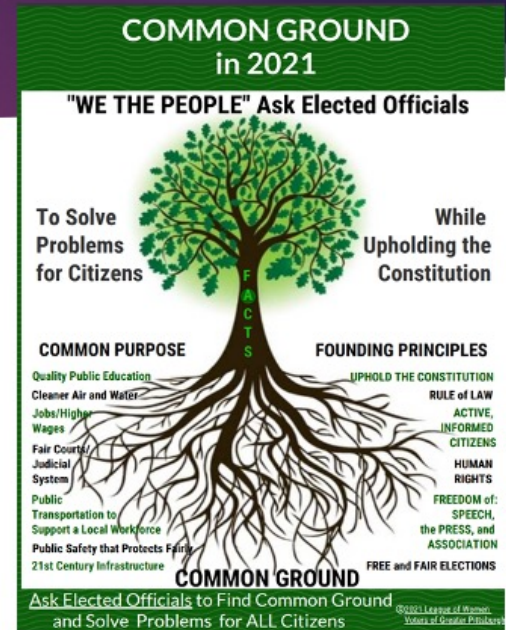
# How Does Our Democracy Thrive?

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- Democracy isn't our institutions. It is a process. It is a national conversation that a lot of people feel left out of. Democracy is a negotiation of how we live together in this country.

► Masha Gessen

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## Finding Common Ground:

No system is perfect, but the foundation of our Democracy has proven strong enough to withstand many challenges. We look to the next generation to stay engaged and to continue to work to solve the nation's problems, while protecting the Founding Principles and the promise of our democratic way of life.

## Thought Experiment:

*If you were an elected official, what would be the first problem you would you take on? What would your solution involve?*

For more, see our Civic Education Websites: a comprehensive list of reliable civic education websites.

For much more, see The League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh website at [www.lwvpgh.org](http://www.lwvpgh.org) and the Voters Resource Library.

For Candidate information, see Vote411.org (<http://www.vote411.org>).

**Democracy is NOT a spectator sport!**  
**Your VOTE is your VOICE**