



DISCOVER MORE!

Primary Source & Bonus Media

Why Do We Need Government Anyway?

“Hey, Jackson!”

“Alana, where have you been? I’ve been waiting for you and your camera to take us back in time.”

“I know. I had to finish cleaning my room first. That’s one of my family’s rules. I can’t leave the house until my room is clean. Wouldn’t it be great if there were no rules to follow?”

“Well, Alana, that may sound good right now, but rules actually keep us safe and help give us more freedom. What if you never cleaned your room and it was so dirty that you couldn’t find anything or you got sick from all the germs?”

“I guess you’re right, Jackson, but I still think a world without rules sounds pretty good.”

If you are like most kids, you might agree with Alana that a world without rules would be a lot of fun. Rules do more than just limit our fun, however. They actually preserve (protect) our

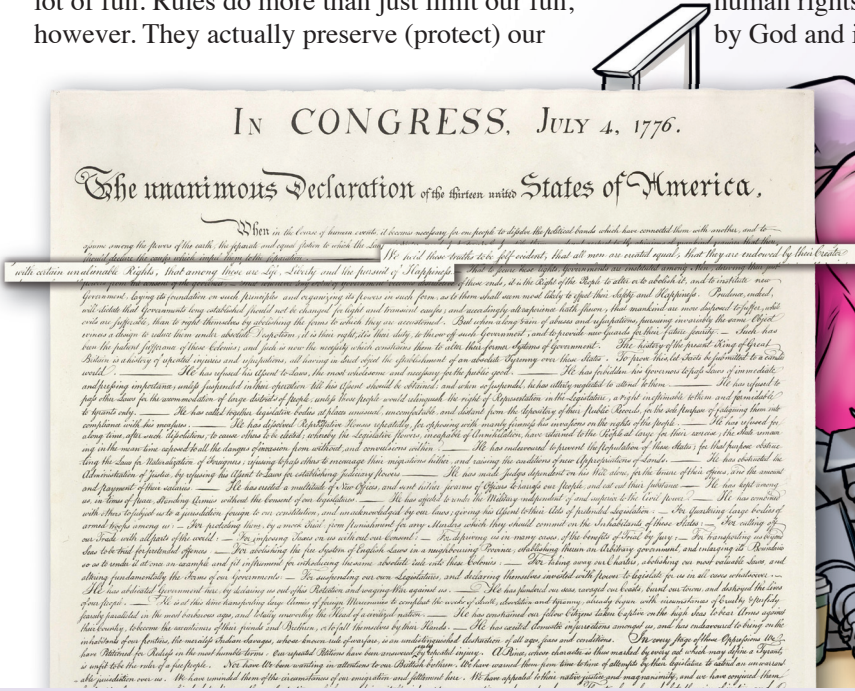
freedoms and make life better for everyone.

Why do you think one of the first things the leaders of our new nation did was to create a government? One reason was to keep the country running smoothly, of course. Our leaders also believed that all people have certain rights that must be protected. So they created a government that would protect these rights.

Where do our rights come from? Thomas Jefferson wrote that, “We are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Most people agree that all human beings are born with certain basic rights. The specific rights vary from culture to culture, but our early American leaders believed that some of these basic human rights were granted by God and included the

right to life, liberty (freedom), property and the pursuit of happiness. Jefferson listed many of these rights in the Declaration of Independence. Our government was created to protect these rights for all citizens of the United States.

We know that the first governing document of our country, the Articles of Confederation, turned out to be too weak to govern our country well. That’s why the Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution to replace it. The Constitution created three branches of government and listed the responsibilities and powers of each branch. This week, we will learn more about these branches and how they protect and preserve our individual rights.



Connections

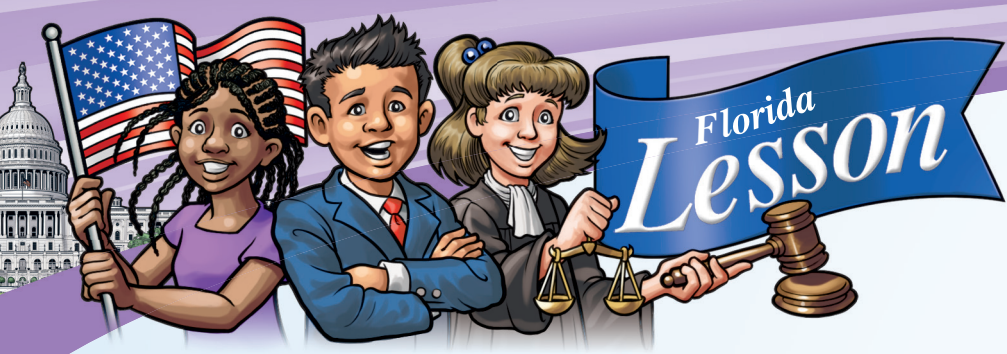
What is the difference between limited and unlimited governments?

Limited government is a form of government that does not grant too much power to any one person or group. Under a limited government, leaders are controlled by a constitution or other written document.

They must also answer to other branches of government for their actions. The United States has a limited government that takes its power from the Constitution. Unlimited governments have complete power to govern as they please.

Under an unlimited government, leaders answer to no one, and those they govern have no power to remove them from office. Unlimited governments are often led by kings, queens or self-appointed dictators.

Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards: **SS.5.C.1.1:** Explain how and why the United States government was created. **SS.5.C.1.3:** Explain the definition and origin of rights. **SS.5.C.2.4:** Evaluate the importance of civic responsibilities in American democracy. **SS.5.C.2.5:** Identify ways good citizens go beyond basic civic and political responsibilities to improve government and society. **SS.5.A.3.1:** Describe technological developments that shaped European exploration. **SS.5.A.3.3:** Describe interactions among American Indians, Africans, English, French, Dutch and Spanish for control of North America. **SS.5.E.1.3:** Trace the development of technology and the impact of major inventions on business productivity during the early development of the United States. **SS.5.G.4.1:** Use geographic knowledge and skills when discussing current events.



Dividing the Power

The Three Branches of Government

We know the Constitution divides the government into three branches, or parts. Each branch has a job to do and each branch checks on, or balances out, the other branches. The first three sections (called Articles) of the Constitution list the branches of government and the responsibilities of each. The three branches of government are the executive branch, the legislative branch and the judicial branch.

Executive Branch

The executive branch of government makes sure that the laws are carried out. It also is in charge of the military. The head of the executive branch of government is the president of the United States. Many other government offices, including the president's Cabinet and departments, such as the Department of Defense and the Social Security Administration, are also part of the executive branch.

Including the men and women of the military, more than four million Americans currently work for the executive branch.

Legislative Branch

The legislative branch makes the laws and establishes taxes. Congress, the legislative branch of our national government, is divided into two parts: the Senate and the House of Representatives. Two senators are elected from each state. The number of representatives for each state depends on how many people live there. The larger states send more representatives and the smaller states send fewer. Today, there are 100 senators serving in the Senate and 435 representatives serving in the House. All of them were elected by the people of their state.

Judicial Branch

The judicial branch interprets the laws, or decides what they mean. It also decides if the laws follow the Constitution. The judicial branch is headed by the Supreme Court and other federal, or national, courts. The Constitution does not state how many justices should sit on the Supreme

Court, but allows Congress to decide this number. Since 1869, there have been nine justices serving on the Supreme Court.

The role of the judicial system is to make sure that the rights of all citizens are protected and that the law is followed. Article III of the Constitution guarantees that anyone who has been accused of a crime has the right to a fair trial before a judge and a jury. The Constitution also guarantees that:

- No one will have their life, liberty or property taken away unless authorities follow the appropriate legal processes.
- No one will be tried for the same crime twice.
- All will have the right to a speedy (quick) trial.
- All will have the right to call witnesses to support their case and to ask questions of other witnesses.
- All will have the right to a lawyer.
- All will have the right to

- choose not to testify if it will incriminate (cause to look guilty) their.
- All will be protected from unreasonably high bail, fines or cruel and unusual punishments.

Federal Powers vs. State Powers

The powers of government are also divided between the federal, or national, government and state governments. Here is a list of some of the responsibilities of each:

The Federal Government has the power to:

- print money
- declare war
- build the military
- make treaties (agreements) with foreign countries
- make rules for doing business between the states and foreign nations
- create post offices and issue postage
- make laws to enforce the Constitution

State Governments have the power to:

- create local governments
- issue licenses (driver's, marriage, hunting, etc.)
- make laws for business within the state
- hold elections
- ratify (approve) Constitutional amendments
- take care of the health and safety of its citizens

Powers Shared by Federal and State Governments

- set up courts
- collect taxes
- build roads
- borrow money
- make and enforce laws
- create banks
- spend money for the benefit of the people
- take private property for government use, with proper payment

The Constitution also says that any powers not specifically given to the federal government are given to the states. These are called reserved powers because they are "reserved," or left, to the states.

Responsibilities of a Good Citizen

As you have learned, the government guarantees U.S. citizens many rights. With these rights come responsibilities. A responsibility is a duty or task that is your job to complete. As U.S. citizens, we all have the responsibility to make this country a better place and to help out wherever we can. Here is a list of some of our important responsibilities:

- obey the laws of the land
- respect the rights of others
- respect property
- serve on a jury when asked
- serve in the military to defend our country
- help police and other law enforcement agencies keep our nation safe
- vote in elections
- pay taxes
- volunteer in the community

The U.S. government was created to protect the rights of all Americans. We citizens share the responsibility to preserve these rights and make our country a better place.

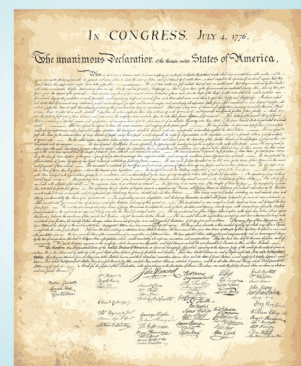


Respect for Human Rights

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote that all people are born with "certain unalienable rights," or rights that can't be taken away. These rights include "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." If all people were born with these rights, didn't that also include the enslaved people? Weren't they born with the same rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as the colonists were?

Many colonists didn't believe that these rights applied to enslaved people. The ideas in the Declaration of Independence gave Americans something to think about when it came to human rights. These are rights that belong to all human beings, regardless of race, age, gender or religion. Not many years would pass before the nation would be caught up in a war over the issue of slavery and human rights.

American Character



Unintended Effects

We know Eli Whitney's cotton gin was a major improvement in technology of the 1790s. It could do the work of 50 people. But it didn't mean plantation owners used fewer enslaved people in the cotton fields. The gin worked fast, so people could produce more cotton. But that meant even more workers were needed to pick even more raw cotton in the fields. This actually increased slavery.

Another unexpected effect of Whitney's invention was that people copied his cotton gin and claimed it as their own. They got lots of the money that should have been Eli's. Whitney fought the copiers in court. That led to changes in U.S. patent laws. Now, inventors can get exclusive (unshared) rights to their ideas and machines. It is illegal for others to "pirate," or steal, them. A great thing for Whitney was that he finally became rich with his 1798 invention of a machine that made interchangeable musket parts. His cotton gin increased slavery, but his musket-parts machine later helped the North win the Civil War. What an interesting turn of events!

History



Eli Whitney's original cotton gin patent drawing

What is the system of checks and balances?

The three branches of government were set up so their powers would be balanced. The branches have the authority to check, or hold back, each other's powers. This keeps any one branch from becoming too powerful. The executive branch, or the president of the United States, can veto (say no to) bills that Congress passes. The legislative branch, or Congress, has the power to override (cancel) the president's veto. Congress can also refuse to appoint judges that the president recommends. The judicial branch can overturn laws that it finds unconstitutional, or against the Constitution. Each branch of government has the power to keep the other branches from taking control of the country. The three branches check each other and keep each other in balance.

This Week's Question



Thomas Jefferson

Biography

Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States, is well known as a government leader, but he is even more famous for the beliefs he held. As the author of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson was one of the first Americans to express the idea that God created people with certain rights that should never be taken away. Jefferson said that among these rights were, "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Jefferson believed the government must protect these rights, but he also believed men were capable of governing themselves. He didn't want the government to become too large or too powerful. Jefferson wrote, "Under the law of nature, all men are born free, everyone comes into the world with a right to his own person, which includes the liberty of moving and using it at his own will."



Name _____



- ACROSS

4. to say no

5. against the Constitution

7. branch of government that makes the law

8. branch of government that interprets the law

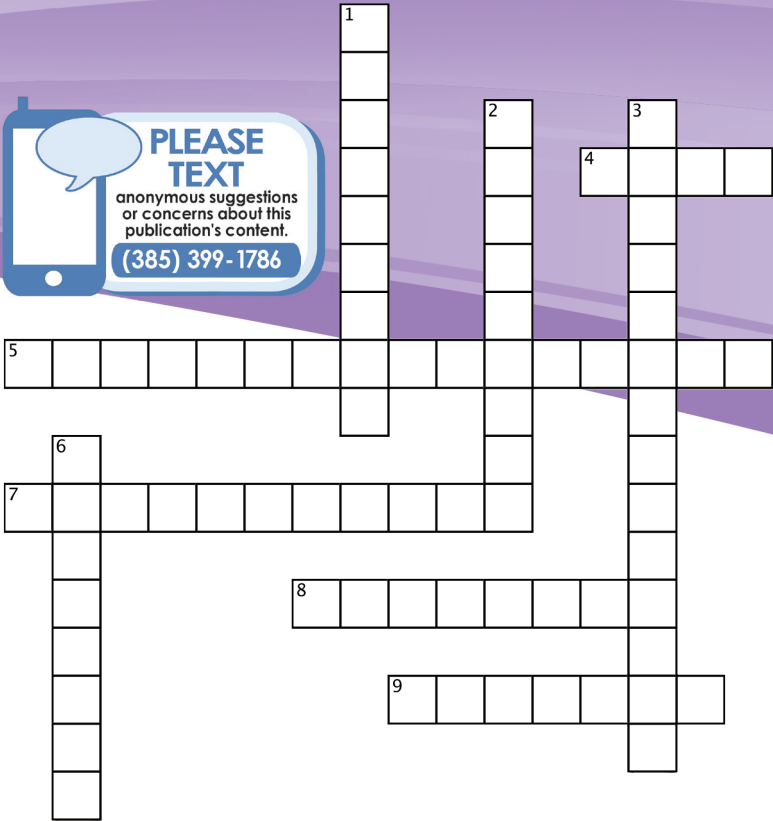
9. another word for freedom
- DOWN

1. a machine that could do the work of 50 people

2. branch of government that makes sure laws are carried out

3. a duty or task to be fulfilled

6. powers not specifically mentioned in the Constitution that belong to states: _____ powers



The Three-Headed Eagle

Activity

The three-headed eagle is sometimes used to represent the three branches of U.S. government. On the drawing to the right, label the three branches of government. Fill in the responsibilities of each branch, along with the leaders and officials that make up each branch. (If you need help, look back at the lesson on Pages 2-3.)

_____ Branch	
Leaders/Officials	Responsibilities
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
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_____	_____

_____ Branch	
Leaders/Officials	Responsibilities
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_____ Branch	
Leaders/Officials	Responsibilities
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Did you know that when young men turn 18 years old, they are required to register with the Selective Service? It's true. All male citizens of the United States are required to register with the Selective Service as soon as they turn 18. The Selective Service keeps a list of all young men 18 to 25 in case our country ever needs to call them to serve in the military during a war. It's just another one of our responsibilities as American citizens.

Did You Know?

Imagine you are all grown up and that you have been called to serve on a jury. Use what you know about courts and trials and do some extra research if you need to. Write a paragraph that describes how you feel about serving on a jury. What are your responsibilities as a juror? What sacrifices must you make to serve? How do you feel about making these sacrifices? Remember to use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation in your paragraph.

Let's Write

1. Where do most people believe our basic rights come from?

2. What is the purpose of government?

3. List the three branches of government.

4. What are the responsibilities of the judicial branch of government?

5. What does the Constitution say about reserved powers?

6. List six responsibilities of a good citizen.

7. What was an unintended negative effect of the cotton gin?

Think&Review

8. What is the system of checks and balances in government? Give at least one specific example.

9. The Declaration of Independence talks about all men being created equal and having certain protected rights. Some colonists believed that this idea didn't apply to whom?

10. Which branch of government is headed by the president of the United States?



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