

Glossary

 Find something...

14th Amendment

Passed in 1868, the 14th Amendment guaranteed citizenship and due process and equal protection under the law to anyone born or naturalized in the United States (except certain indigenous Americans). One of the three Reconstruction Amendments—the 13th, 14th, and 15th—that give to the federal government the power to protect individual rights in the states.

Amendment

Approved or proposed change (either by addition, subtraction, or substitution) to the United States or state constitution.

Articles of Confederation

Document establishing the first national government of the United States from 1781 to 1789.

Bill of Rights

First ten amendments to the United States Constitution, including the rights of Americans in relation to their government.

Broadside

A strongly worded informational poster that spreads criticisms of people or policies impacting a group or community, usually displayed on single large sheets of paper, one side only, and designed to have an immediate emotional impact on readers.

Censorship

Suppression by governments or political groups of words, images or ideas that are deemed offensive

ChatGPT

An AI (artificial intelligence) writing tool that produces text in response to questions or prompts from users.

Civic Holiday

A day of recognition of individuals or events established by local, state, or national government.

Civics

From the French word "civique," meaning citizen, the study of what people need to know and do (their rights, roles, and responsibilities) as members of a democratic society.

Civil Rights Act of 1964

Landmark legislation prohibiting discrimination in voting, employment or education based on race, religion, sex, or national origin.

Constitution

A document that sets forth the basic principles of a nation or state, the structures and processes of government and the fundamental rights of citizens; the "law of the land."

Critical media literacy

Knowledge, skills, and competencies to access and analyze the content of multiple media (print and digital) while also analyzing who produces media, why they do so, and what impacts that media has on people and society.

Day of Recognition

A day designated at the local, state or national level honoring the historical accomplishments of change makers in history.

Democracy

Government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Democratic Government

System of government where people chose their leaders through free and open elections.

Democratic Schools

Educational organizations where teachers, students, administrators and community members make decisions openly and collectively.

Digital Choice Board

An online visual display that gives students multiple ways to learn about a topic featuring hyperlinks to digital resources and tools as well as higher order, creative learning activities.

Digital Government

Widespread use of technology for government functions.

Discrimination

Unfair or unjust treatment of another person or group based on skin color, age, gender, or ethnicity; also called bias or prejudice.

eBook

An abbreviation for electronic books; refers to material that is delivered digitally to readers using laptops, smartphones, or other mobile devices.

Election

Process by which voters choose individuals to represent them in federal, state, or local government.

Electoral College

System used in U.S. Presidential elections where people vote for a slate of electors who represent a candidate; the candidate receiving 270 or more electoral votes wins the Presidency.

Employee owned business

An organization where the workers, not outside shareholders, own all or most of the business and make decisions about its operation; also known as worker owned business.

Enumerated Powers

Specific powers granted to the Congress by Article 1 Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution.

Executive Branch

Individuals, agencies and organizations in a government that carry out a nation or state's laws and policies.

Executive privilege

Policy that allows a President and his close advisors to refuse to turn over to Congress or the court documents and discussions they had about national and international policies.

Federalism

A system of government in the United States (and most other democracies) that divides and shares power between a national (or federal) government and the various states in the country.

First Amendment

Freedoms of speech, press, petition, religion, and peaceful protest established by the Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution.

Generation Alpha

Term for those born between 2010 and 2024.

Generation Z

The term for those born between the mid 1990s and 2010; also known as “Gen Z”; “post-millennials”; “screeners”; or the “i-Generation”.

Gerontocracy

Government run by older people.

Gerrymandering

Practice of redrawing legislative district lines in order to help one political party win elections and maintain political control.

Heraean Games

Athletic competitions for women and girls in Ancient Greece.

Instant Runoff/Ranked Choice Voting

A election system that allows voters to vote for candidates in order of preference. If no candidate gets a majority of votes, the one with the fewest votes is eliminated and those who ranked that candidate first have their votes transferred to the second preference and so on until one candidate gets more than 50% of the vote.

Inverted Pyramid

Journalism format where the lead, or main points of a news article—the who, what, when, where, why and how of a story—are placed at the top or beginning followed by additional and less important, but still relevant information.

January 6, 2021 Insurrection

Attack on the U.S. Capitol by a mob of supporters of Donald Trump intended to disrupt the counting of electoral votes by members of Congress.

Judicial branch

The part of a government that decides the meaning of laws and administers justice through trials and other court proceedings. The Supreme Court has the power of judicial review of court decisions.

Legislative Branch

The part of a government that makes or changes laws. The U.S. Congress has also the power to declare war, regulate interstate commerce and control taxing and spending.

Local Government

The people and institutions that run cities and towns, including mayors, select boards, city councils and town meetings.

Media Literacy

Knowledge, skills, and competencies to access, analyze, and produce multiple forms of media.

Mixed Gender Sports

Individual and team events that have inclusive, balanced participation gender identities.

Monarchy

Rule by one individual who inherited the position by birth.

News Deserts

Communities where people lack access to reliable news and information due to the closing of local newspapers.

Oligarchy

Rule by a small group or elite.

Pirate Democracy

The idea that 15 to 18th century pirate ships and pirate settlements engaged in early forms of democratic self-government well before European societies ruled by kings and queens.

Political Action Committee (PAC)

Organizations that collect and donate funds to political candidates.

Political Party

Group of people who share ideas about government and seek to elect candidates and enact policies that support those ideas.

Press

The reporters, photographers, commentators, editorial writers and behind-the-scenes workers in media organizations that bring us the news.

Recommendation Algorithms

Computer programs on social media sites that direct content to users based on what they have viewed, bought, or done before.

Regressive Taxation

Regressive taxation (such as a state lottery) happens lower-earning individuals spend a higher percentage of their incomes on games of chance in which they have little opportunity to earn back what they are spending.

Rights

Protections guaranteed to all Americans under the law.

School board

A locally elected group that oversees school policies and spending and makes decisions that impact all students and families in a district; also known as a school committee.

School finance

Means by which public schools pay for their operation from a combination of local and state funding as well as grants and other sources of revenue.

Shadow docket

One of the types of cases decided by the Supreme Court, usually unsigned with one or two sentence opinions and without public access to the arguments or which justices voted one way or the other.

Spectator state

States that consistently award their electoral votes to either the Democratic (e.g., Massachusetts, California, New York) or the Republican (e.g., Texas, Oklahoma, Montana) candidate in Presidential elections.

State government

The institutions that provide government for an entire state - including its governor, legislature, and state court system.

Swing state

A state (also known as a battleground state) that may chose either the Democratic or the Republican Presidential candidate depending on the election.

Tenth Amendment

Part of the Bill of Rights guaranteeing any powers not granted to the federal government “are reserved to the states, or to the people.”

The Press

The people (reporters, photographers, commentators, editorial writers and behind-the-scenes workers) and media organizations (online and in print) that bring us the news.

Transgender

Individuals whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth; also known as nonbinary.

Tyranny

Rule by an authoritarian leader who suppresses dissent, often through violent means. See also dictatorship.

Voting

Method of making decisions and/or electing candidates where each individual freely expresses their preferences.

Whistleblower

A person who exposes illegal or unsafe actions by government, corporations or private individuals.

Worker cooperatives

Organizations where workers make decisions democratically; see also, worker/employee owned businesses.



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