

## Government Vocabulary List

**Capitalism:** An economic system characterized by the private ownership of wealth creating assets, free markets, and freedom of contract

**Checks and Balances:** A major principle of the American system of government whereby each branch of the government can check the actions of others

**Communism:** A revolutionary variant of socialism that favors a partisan (and often totalitarian) dictatorship, government control of all enterprises, and the replacement of free markets by central planning

**Concurrent Powers:** Powers held jointly by the national and state governments

**Democracy:** A system of government in which political authority is vested in the people. Derived from the Greek words demos (“the people”) and kratos (“authority”)

**Direct Democracy:** A system of government in which political decisions are made by the people directly, rather than by their elected representatives; probably attained most easily in small political communities

**Elastic Clause, or Necessary and Proper Clause:** The clause in Article I, Section 8, that grants Congress the power to whatever is necessary to execute its specifically delegated powers

**Electoral College:** A group of persons called electors selected by the voters in each state and the District of Columbia; this group officially elects the president and vice president of the United States. The number of electors in each state is equal to the number of each state’s representatives in both chambers of Congress

**Federalist:** The name given to one who was in favor of the adoption of the U.S. Constitution and the creation of a federal union with a strong central government

**Hispanic:** Someone who can claim a heritage from a Spanish-speaking country other than Spain. This is the term most often used by government agencies to describe this group. Citizens of Spanish-speaking countries do not use this term to describe themselves

**Latino:** Preferred term for referring to individuals who claim a heritage from a Spanish speaking country other than Spain

**Legislature:** A governmental body primarily responsible for the making of laws

**Limited Government:** The principle that the powers of government should be limited, usually by institutional checks

**Popular Sovereignty:** The concept that ultimate political authority is based on the will of the people

**Ratification:** Formal approval

**Republic:** A form of government in which sovereignty rests with the people, as opposed to a king or monarch

**Universal Suffrage:** The right of all adults to vote for their representatives