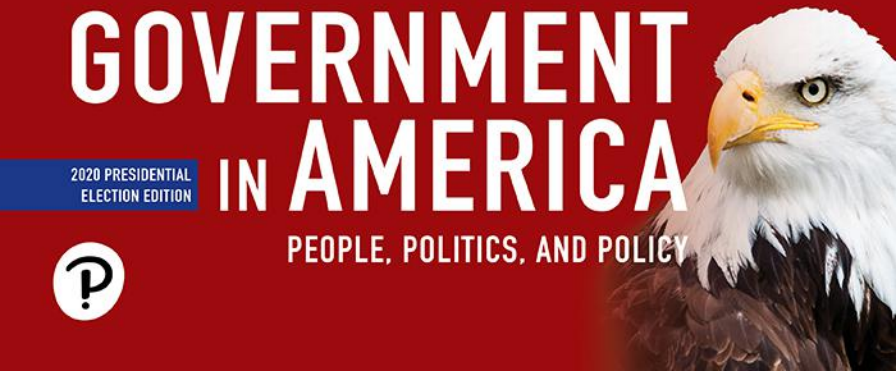
George C. Edwards III Martin P. Wattenberg William G. Howell

GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA

2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION EDITION

PEOPLE, POLITICS, AND POLICY



GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA

People, Politics, and Policy

2020 Presidential Election Edition

Eighteenth Edition

George C. Edwards III
Texas A&M University

Martin P. Wattenberg
University of California–Irvine

William G. Howell
University of Chicago

Pearson

Content Strategy: Pam Chirls
Content Production: Rob DeGeorge, Tina Gagliostro, and Heather Pagano
Product Management: Amy Wetzel
Product Marketing: Rachele Strober
Rights and Permissions: Ben Ferrini

Please contact https://support.pearson.com/getsupport/s/ with any queries on this content.

Cover image by Drew Angerer/Getty Images

Copyright © 2022, 2020, 2018 by Pearson Education, Inc,. or its affiliates, 221 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030. All Rights Reserved. Manufactured in the United States of America. This publication is protected by copyright, and permission should be obtained from the publisher prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise. For information regarding permissions, request forms, and the appropriate contacts within the Pearson Education Global Rights and Permissions department, please visit www.pearsoned.com/permissions/.

Acknowledgments of third-party content appear on the appropriate pages within the text, which constitute an extension of this copyright page.

PEARSON, ALWAYS LEARNING, and REVEL are exclusive trademarks owned by Pearson Education, Inc. or its affiliates in the U.S. and/or other countries.

Unless otherwise indicated herein, any third-party trademarks, logos, or icons that may appear in this work are the property of their respective owners, and any references to third-party trademarks, logos, icons, or other trade dress are for demonstrative or descriptive purposes only. Such references are not intended to imply any sponsorship, endorsement, authorization, or promotion of Pearson's products by the owners of such marks, or any relationship between the owner and Pearson Education, Inc., or its affiliates, authors, licensees, or distributors.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Edwards, George C., author. | Wattenberg, Martin P., author. | Howell, William G., author.
Title: Government in America : people, politics, and policy / George C. Edwards III, Texas A&M University, Martin P. Wattenberg, University of California—Irvine, William G. Howell, University of Chicago.
Description: 2020 presidential election edition, eighteenth edition. | Hoboken, NJ : Pearson, [2020] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020054385 | ISBN 9780136966456 (paperback)
Subjects: LCSH: United States—Politics and government—Textbooks.
Classification: LCC JK276 .E39 2020 | DDC 320.473—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020054385

ScoutAutomatedPrintCode

Pearson

Access Code Card:
ISBN-10: 0-13-696627-6
ISBN-13: 978-0-13-696627-2

Rental:
ISBN-10: 0-13-696645-4
ISBN-13: 978-0-13-696645-6

Brief Contents

PART IV Policies

Contents

Meet the Authors

George C. Edwards III is University Distinguished Professor of Political Science and the Jordan Chair in Presidential Studies Emeritus at Texas A&M University. He is also Distinguished Fellow at the University of Oxford. When he determined that he was unlikely to become shortstop for the New York Yankees, he turned to political science. Today, he is one of the country's leading scholars of the presidency and has written or edited 26 books on American politics and edits *Presidential Studies Quarterly*.

Martin P. Wattenberg teaches courses on American politics at the University of California, Irvine. His first regular paying job was with what is now known as the "Washington Football Team," from which he moved on to receive a PhD at the University of Michigan. He is the author of numerous books on American elections, including *Is Voting for Young People?,* recently issued in its fifth edition. His research also encompasses how elections in the United States compare to those in other established democracies.

William G. Howell is the Sydney Stein Professor of American Politics at the University of Chicago, where he serves as the Director of the Center for Effective Government in the Harris School of Public Policy, the Chair of the Department of Political Science, and co-host of Not Another Politics Podcast. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, William has written widely on American politics and political institutions, especially the presidency. He lives in Chicago with his wife, two children, and dog.

To the Student

In the 2020 presidential election, Joe Biden advocated major changes in public policy, ranging from health care and environmental protection to immigration and relations with U.S. allies around the world. In November, Americans elected Biden and a Democratic Congress, and he set out to carry out his promises. If Donald Trump had been elected instead of Biden, America would be pursuing quite a different set of policies. Politics matters. It affects policies that directly touch our lives.

Of course, Biden has not found it easy to change policies. Republicans opposed most of his major initiatives. We are not going to promise you that American government is easy to understand. However, we do intend to provide you with a clear roadmap to understanding our complex political system.

The Framers of our Constitution could have designed a much simpler system, but they purposely built in complexities as insurance against the concentration of power. Despite these complexities, many of the Founders, such as Thomas Jefferson, were confident that the American people would be able to navigate their constitutional system and effectively govern themselves within it. In writing this book, we are similarly confident that young adults in the twenty-first century can participate effectively in our democracy.

The major message that we convey in this book is that politics and government matter to everyone. *Government in America* explains how policy choices make a difference and shape the kind of country in which we live. We will show you how these choices affect the taxes we pay, the wars we fight, the quality of our environment, and many other critical aspects of our lives.

Students often ask us whether we are trying to convey a liberal or conservative message in this book. The answer is that our goal is to explain the major viewpoints, how they differ, and how such differences matter. We wish to give you the tools to understand American politics and government. Once you have these tools, you can make your own judgment about policy choices and become a well-informed participant in our democratic process. In the twenty-first century, it is often said that "knowledge is power." We sincerely hope that the knowledge conveyed in this book will help you exercise your fair share of political power in the years to come.

To the Instructor

American dissatisfaction with our political system is widespread. The wide gap between the parties, leading to the continual inability of the government to resolve differences over public policy issues, is similarly disconcerting to a sizeable number of Americans. This edition of *Government in America* explains the reasons we have such a difficult time resolving differences over public policy and the stakes we all have in finding solutions to the challenges facing our nation. We frame its content with a public policy approach to government in the United States and continually ask—and answer—the question, "What difference does politics make to the policies that governments produce?" It is one thing to describe the Madisonian system of checks and balances and separation of powers or the elaborate and unusual federal system of government in the United States; it is something else to ask how these features of our constitutional structure affect the policies that governments generate.

The essence of our approach to American government and politics is that *politics matters*. The national government provides important services, ranging from retirement security and health care to recreation facilities and weather forecasts. The government may also send us to war or negotiate peace with our adversaries, expand or restrict our freedom, raise or lower our taxes, and increase or decrease aid for education. In the twenty-first century, decision makers of both political parties are facing difficult questions regarding American democracy and the scope of our government. Students need a framework for understanding these questions.

We do not discuss policy at the expense of politics, however. We provide extensive coverage of four core subject areas: constitutional foundations, patterns of political behavior, political institutions, and public policy outputs, but we try to do so in a more analytically significant—and interesting—manner. We take special pride in introducing students to relevant work from current political scientists: for example, on the role of Twitter in political communication, matters of race and inequality, and the impact of divided party government—something we have found instructors appreciate.

Preface

NEW TO THIS EDITION

Government in America has been revised and updated to reflect recent changes—some, of a historic magnitude—in politics, policy, and participation. We have updated *every* figure and table with the latest data. In addition, this update includes new material on the following topics:

- The 2020 presidential and congressional elections
- The Trump presidency and the transition to the Biden presidency
- Critical Supreme Court decisions of 2019–2020 on issues ranging from freedom of speech and religion to civil rights and abortion
- The coronavirus pandemic
- The role of social media in politics
- The increasing role of ideology and policy views in voting behavior
- Expanded coverage of current policies on health care, budgeting, immigration, environmental protection, the war on terrorism, and North Korea

This edition of *Government in America* also includes:

- Discussion of recent events with significant political implications
- A new Student Guide to Reading Charts and Graphs
- An improved testing and assessment package

Throughout *Government in America*, we have broad coverage of current policies and politics, ranging from budgetary policy and relations with Congress in this era of polarization to foreign policy challenges such as the upheaval in the Middle East. The entire chapter on the core issue of the budget has been thoroughly updated to reflect the central importance of taxing and spending in American government and the core issues of the fiscal and debt crises. We have the latest on all the policies we cover, from health care reform and Medicare to the war in Afghanistan and relations with Iran.

All of the figures and tables reflect the latest available data, and throughout the book we incorporate the latest scholarly studies. We take pride in continuously improving our graphical presentations of data.

THEMES AND FEATURES

Government in America follows two central themes. The first great question central to governing, a question every nation must answer, is *How should we govern?* In the United States, our answer is "by democracy." Yet democracy is an evolving and somewhat ambiguous concept. The first theme, then, is the nature of our democracy. In Chapter 1, we define democracy as a means of selecting policymakers and of organizing government so that policy represents and responds to citizens' preferences. As with previous editions, we incorporate theoretical issues in our discussions of different models of American democracy. We try to encourage students to think analytically about the theories and to develop independent assessments of how well the American system lives up to citizens' expectations of democratic government. To help them do this, in every chapter we raise questions about democracy. For example, does Congress give the American people the policies they want? Is a strong presidency good for democracy? Does our mass media make us more democratic? Are powerful courts that make policy decisions compatible with democracy?

The second theme, the scope of government, focuses on another great question of governing: *What should government do?* Here we discuss alternative views concerning the proper role and size for American government and how the workings of institutions and politics influence this scope. The government's scope is the core question around which politics revolves in contemporary America, pervading many crucial issues: To what degree should Washington impose national standards for health care or speed limits on state policies? How high should taxes be? Do elections encourage politicians to promise more governmental services? Questions about the scope of government are policy questions and thus obviously directly related to our policy approach. Since the scope of government is the pervasive question in American politics today, students will have little problem finding it relevant to their lives and interests.

Each chapter begins with a preview of the relevancy of our two themes to the chapter's subject matter, refers to the themes at points within the chapter, and ends with an "Understanding" section that discusses how the themes illuminate that subject matter.

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Our coverage of American government and politics is comprehensive. First, we present an introductory chapter that lays out the dimensions of our policymaking system and introduces our themes of democracy and the scope of government. Next, we provide four chapters on the constitutional foundations of American government, including the Constitution, federalism, civil liberties, and civil rights. We then offer five chapters focusing on influences on government, including public opinion, the media, interest groups, political parties, and elections and voting behavior.

Our next five chapters focus on the workings of the national government. These chapters include Congress, the president, budgeting (at the core of many issues before policymakers), the federal courts, and the federal bureaucracy. Finally, we present three chapters on the decisions policymakers make and the issues they face. First are economic and social welfare policies, then come health care, environmental protection, and energy policies, and finally, we focus on national security policy.

Our features support our fundamental idea that politics matters and that students should be engaged in thinking about important political and policy issues.

- **Chapter-opening vignettes** make the subject matter of each chapter as relevant as possible to current concerns and pique student interest. From the first chapter, we emphasize the significance of government to young people and the importance of their participation.
- The classic **You Are the Policymaker** asks students to read arguments on both sides of a current issue—such as whether we should prohibit PACs—and then to make a policy decision. In Chapters 4 and 5 (Civil Liberties and Civil Rights), this feature is titled **You Are the Judge** and presents the student with an actual court case.
- Several times in each chapter, **Why It Matters Today** insets encourage students to think critically about an aspect of government, politics, or policy and to consider the repercussions—including for themselves—if things worked differently. Each Why It Matters Today feature extends the book's policy emphasis to situate it directly within the context of students' daily lives.
- Every chapter includes **key terms** to support students' understanding of new and important concepts at first encounter. For easy reference, key terms from the marginal glossary are repeated at the end of each chapter and in the end-of-book glossary. Unique to *Government in America*, we also include a key term glossary in Spanish.

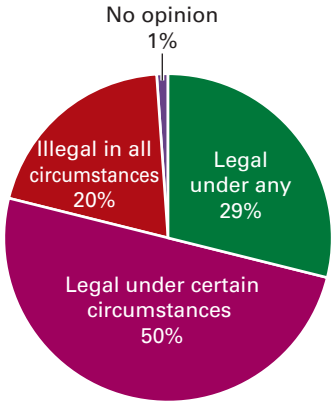
We hope that students—long after reading *Government in America*—will employ these perennial questions about the nature of our democracy and the scope of our government when they examine political events. The specifics of policy issues will change, but questions about whether the government is responsive to the people or whether it should expand or contract its scope will always be with us.

A STUDENT GUIDE TO READING CHARTS AND GRAPHS

Information such as voting turnout in the last election, the president's job approval rating, or expenditures on national defense is often presented in quantitative form—that is, through the use of numbers. To help you understand this information, we employ charts and graphs. These figures provide a straightforward, visual representation of quantitative information. Yet charts and graphs can be confusing if you do not understand how to read them.

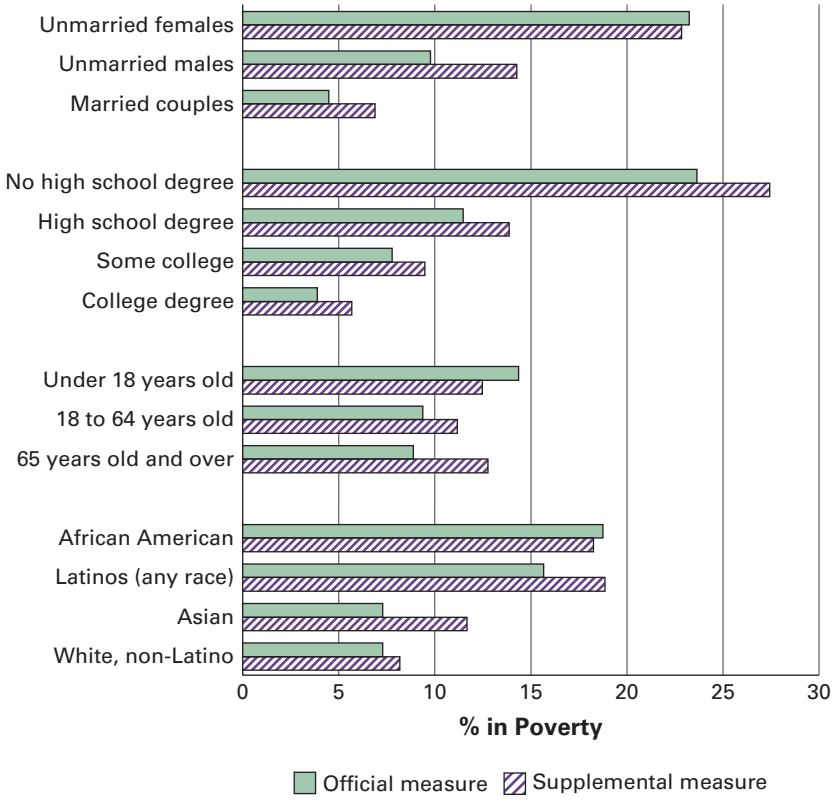
When you come across one of the charts and graphs in this book, you should ask three questions: First: *What is being measured?* This could be money, public opinion, seats in Congress, or a wide range of other subjects. Second: *What is the unit of measurement?* Is it 50 Americans or 50 percent of Americans? Obviously, it makes a difference. Finally: *What is the purpose of the figure?* Does it show changes over time? Does it compare two or more groups of people or countries? In most instances, captions are provided to explain the purpose of a figure.

After answering these general questions, examine the specific type of figure. This text relies on three main types of figures: pie charts, bar graphs, and line graphs. A *pie chart* is a circle divided into wedge-shaped "slices," or segments. Pie charts show the relative sizes of the segments to one another and to the whole. For example, by glancing at the following chart, you can quickly see that only a small percentage of the public (20 percent) supports making abortions illegal in all circumstances while 50 percent want abortions to be legal in some circumstances and another 29 percent want them to be legal in any circumstances. The area of each segment is the same percent of the total circle as the number it represents is of the sum of all the numbers in the chart. Since opposition to abortion in all circumstances accounts for 20 percent of the public, its corresponding segment covers 20 percent of the area of the pie chart. In this and every other table and figure, it is important to note the source of the data to make sure it is one that provides reliable information. In this case the data is from the highly reputable Gallup Poll.



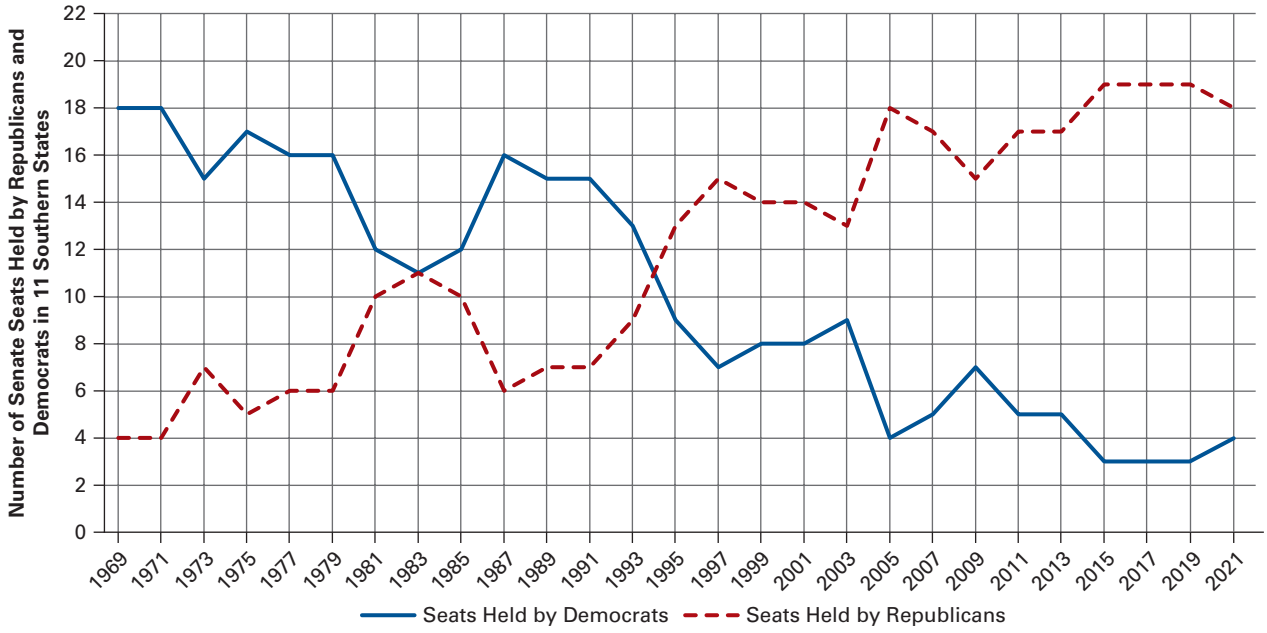
Source: Gallup Poll, May 1–13, 2020.

The second kind of figure, a *bar graph,* displays quantitative information by using rectangles (bars) set within two perpendicular lines, a vertical axis and a horizontal axis. Bar graphs are most frequently used to show and compare the values of multiple entities at a given point in time. Categories (such as groups of people or countries) are set along one axis and a scale (time or numbers, for example) is on the other axis. The length of each bar corresponds to its value on the scale. This makes it easy to visually contrast the values for multiple entities. For example, in the bar graph shown here, which uses a scale measuring poverty rates, you can see that the bars representing African Americans, Latinos, adults without a high school degree, and unmarried females are the longest, indicating that they are the most likely to be living in poverty. The characteristics of people are on the vertical axis and the percentage in poverty is shown on the horizontal axis.



The third type of figure, a *line graph,* illustrates quantitative information by means of lines. Typically, the vertical axis of a line graph represents a quantitative scale (such as percentages) and the horizontal axis represents a category (such as presidents or a sequence of dates). Specific numbers are represented as points on the graph between the two axes and are connected with a line. Sometimes there is more than one line on a graph, as when numbers are shown for two different sets of information—for example, elections for both the House and Senate, state and federal expenditures, or exports and imports. The two lines can be compared to each other, or, in some cases, the distance

between the two lines can be analyzed. In the following line graph, which charts a single set of quantitative information, the number of Senate seats held by each party in the South is shown on the vertical axis and the horizontal axis represents years of presidential elections. The rising line in red indicates that the Republicans have generally gained Southern Senate seats since the early 1990s, although it can also be seen that they lost ground in the 2020 election.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

By remembering these key features of charts and graphs, you can more accurately assess the information presented in *Government in America,* as well as interpret such figures wherever you encounter them—in other textbooks, in newspapers and magazines, or on the web.

REVEL™ FOR *GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA*

Educational technology designed for the way today's students read, think, and learn

Revel is an interactive learning environment that deeply engages students and prepares them for class. Media and assessment integrated directly within the authors' narrative lets students read, explore interactive content, and practice in one continuous learning path. Thanks to the dynamic reading experience in Revel, students come to class prepared to discuss, apply, and learn from instructors and from each other.

Learn more about Revel www.pearson.com/revel.

Revel uses frequent updates of articles and data to illustrate the current state of government and politics in the United States. Students can interact with multiple types of media and assessments integrated directly within the narrative:

- **Data Visualizations**—Embedded data visualizations featuring Social Explorer technology—new to this edition—seamlessly connect users of *Government in America* with the data that underlies policy decisions. With side-by-side mapping, custom annotations, clickable layers, and storytelling progressions that collect and render data, the figures in each chapter of *Government in America,* once static, are now dynamic presentations that make complex issues interesting and understandable.
- **Current Events Bulletins**—Chapters open with current events bulletins (refreshed twice yearly) that keep students informed about in-the-news events and issues that affect American government, their lives, and their communities.
- **Videos**—Dozens of videos offer a mix of historical and contemporary content, doses of humor, useful explanations, and instructive examples of key concepts. Videos include many author-filmed segments that will help students extract insights about how to approach chapter content and become better decision makers. New to the 2020 Presidential Election Edition are the following new video series:
  - **Pearson Originals for Political Science** are compelling stories about contemporary issues. These short-form documentaries contextualize the complex social and political issues impacting the world today. In addition to helping students better understand core concepts, Pearson Originals inspire students to think critically as empowered citizens who can inspire social and political change. Explaining complex political issues in a simplified and entertaining way, Pearson Originals for Political Science help students become informed members of society. Videos include "Marijuana and Federalism: Who's in Charge?" and "What Is the Emoluments Class and Why Should I Care About It?"
  - **Pearson's *Politics Hidden in Plain Sight*** video provides students with concrete examples of how politics influences the activities of their daily lives—from using their smartphones to going to a convenience store—in ways they likely had not previously noticed.
  - **Pearson Originals for Political Science and Politics Hidden in Plain Sight** videos are incorporated into the chapters and can also be easily accessed from the instructor's Resources folder within Revel.
  - **Shared Media activities** allow instructors to assign and grade both pre-written and their own prompts that incorporate video, weblinks, and visuals and ask students to respond in a variety of formats, in writing or by uploading their own video or audio responses. Pre-written assignments around the Pearson Originals for Political Science videos are available.
- **Interactive Maps and Diagrams—**Custom-built interactive maps and diagrams, with chronological layers, panning and zooming, hotspots, and related functionality, provide students with multiple ways of engaging with visual content.
- **Integrated Writing Opportunities—**To help students reason more logically and write more clearly, each chapter of *Government in America* offers two varieties of writing prompts to elicit opinions, feedback, and knowledge:
  - ***Journal Prompts*—**Interspersed throughout chapters, journal prompts are designed to obtain free-form responses from students on topics addressed at the module level. In addition, select Social Explorer visualizations are now followed up with a journal prompt to encourage data literacy and deeper analysis.
  - ***Shared Writing Prompts*—**Found at the close of every chapter, shared writing prompts encourage students to consider multiple sides of issues by sharing their own views and responding to each other's viewpoints.
  - ***Essay Prompts*—**From Pearson's Writing Solutions, instructors can assign both automatically graded and instructor-graded prompts. Writing Solutions is the

best way to develop and assess concept mastery and critical thinking through writing. Writing Solutions provides a single place within Revel to create, track, and grade writing assignments; access writing resources; and exchange meaningful, personalized feedback quickly and easily to improve results. For students, Writing Solutions provides everything they need to keep up with writing assignments, access assignment guides and checklists, write or upload completed assignments, and receive grades and feedback—all in one convenient place. For educators, Writing Solutions makes assigning, receiving, and evaluating writing assignments easier. It's simple to create new assignments and upload relevant materials, see student progress, and receive alerts when students submit work. Writing Solutions makes students' work more focused and effective, with customized grading rubrics they can see and personalized feedback. Writing Solutions can also check students' work for improper citation or plagiarism by comparing it against the world's most accurate text comparison database available from Turnitin.

- **Primary Source Documents—**When deemed useful for students who want access to primary sources relevant to the study of American government, *Government in America* links to primary sources, such as articles and clauses in the Constitution, where transcripts of those sources can be viewed or listened to. Where pertinent, primary sources appear within chapters and can be opened and closed by students as they encounter them.
- **Integrated Assessments—**Multiple-choice quizzes appear at the end of every major section, allowing instructors and students to track progress and get immediate feedback as they progress through chapters. At the end of every chapter, lengthier quizzes measure the extent to which students have achieved desired learning outcomes.
- **Tools for Review—**Every chapter includes an array of useful tools that allow students to check understanding and consolidate knowledge.
  - ***So What? Videos—***Chapter-concluding So What? videos clarify the focus and distinct ideas of each chapter.
  - ***Review the Chapter Summaries—***Chapter reviews encapsulate key chapter content by aligning chapter learning objectives to relevant material covered.
  - ***Browse the Image Galleries—***Images from the chapter, arranged together in one end-of-chapter carousel, form extensive digital collections of the photographic content in *Government in America.* Each gallery reinforces comprehension and serves as an all-in-one reminder of the people, events, topics, and policies visually documented within the chapter.
  - ***Learn the Terms/Aprender el Vocabulario Flashcards—***From "affirmative action" to "writ of habeas corpus," more than 300 key terms central to the study of American government are provided in English and in Spanish, offering a dynamic and innovative way to engage with the lexicon of *Government in America.*

SUPPLEMENTS

Make more time for your students with instructor resources that offer effective learning assessments and classroom engagement. Pearson's partnership with educators does not end with the delivery of course materials; Pearson is there with you on the first day of class and beyond. A dedicated team of local Pearson representatives will work with you to not only choose course materials but also integrate them into your class and assess their effectiveness. Our goal is your goal—to improve instruction with each semester.

Pearson is pleased to offer the following resources to qualified adopters of *Government in America*. Several of these supplements, in addition to other teaching resources, are available to instantly download from the instructor Resources folder

within Revel or from the Instructor Resource Center (IRC); please visit the IRC at **www.pearsonhighered.com/irc** to register for access.

TEST BANK Evaluate learning at every level. Reviewed for clarity and accuracy, the Test Bank measures this material's learning objectives with multiple choice questions. You can easily customize an assessment to work in any major learning management system and to match what is covered in your course. Word, PDF, and Blackboard versions are available on the IRC, and Respondus versions are available upon request from **www.respondus.com**.

MYTEST This powerful assessment generation program includes all of the questions in the Test Bank. Quizzes and exams can be easily authored and saved online and then printed for classroom use, giving you ultimate flexibility to manage assessments anytime and anywhere. To learn more, visit **www.pearsonhighered.com/mytest**.

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL Create a comprehensive roadmap for teaching classroom, online, or hybrid courses. Designed for new and experienced instructors, the Instructor's Manual includes a lecture and discussion suggestions, activities for in or out of class, and essays on teaching American government. Available on the IRC.

LECTURE POWERPOINTS Make lectures more enriching for students. The accessible PowerPoint presentations include full lecture outlines and photos and figures from the book. Available within Revel and on the IRC.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Finally, the authors wish to thank the many professors and researchers who provided detailed feedback on how to improve content and who gave their invaluable input during professional conferences and Pearson-sponsored events. They gave generously of their time and expertise, and we are, as always, in their debt.

Reviewers James Adair, Dyersburg State Community College; Patrizio Amezcua, San Jacinto College–North; David Dulio, Oakland University; Matthew Eshbaugh-Soha, University of North Texas; Chris Farnung, Wake Technical Community College; Jeneen Hobby, Cleveland State University; Heather Mbaye, University of West Georgia; Tamra Ortgies-Young, Georgia State University; William Parent, San Jacinto College North Campus; Dave Price, Santa Fe College–Northwest; Erich Saphir, Pima Community College; Kevin Weekley, Grand Junction High School; Reed Welch, West Texas A&M University.

Spring 2018 Revel Editorial Workshops Christopher Hallenbrook, Bloomsburg University; Ben Christ, Harrisburg Area Community College; Laci Hubbard–Mattix, Spokane Falls Community College Pullman; Shobana Jaya-raman, Savannah State University; Jeneen Hobby, Cleveland State University; John Arnold, Midland College; Reed Welch, West Texas A&M; Amanda Friesen, IUPUI; Thomas Ambrosio, North Dakota State; Ted Vaggalis, Drury University; Coyle Neal, Southwest Baptist University; Hanna Samir Kassab, Northern Michigan University; Julie Keil, Saginaw Valley State University; Henry Esparza, University of Texas at San Antonio; Sierra Powell, Mount San Antonio College; Edgar Bravo, Broward College; Alicia Andreatta, Angelina College; Robert Sterken, The University of Texas at Tyler; Jessica Anderson, University of Louisiana Monroe; Pat Frost, San Diego Miramar College; Scott Robinson, Houston Baptist University; Cessna Winslow, Tarleton State; Carrie Currier, Texas Christian University; Paul Jorgensen, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley; Steve Lem, Kutztown University; Meng Lu, Sinclair Community College; James Pearn, Southern State Community College; Blake Farrar, Texas State University; Carlin Barmada, NVCC; Michael Chan, California State University, Long Beach; Mehwish Sarwari, SUNY Buffalo State; Daniel Tirone, Louisiana State University; Richard

Haesly, California State University, Long Beach; Hyung Park, El Paso Community College; Jesse Kapenga, UTEP; Stephanie A. Slocum–Schaffer, Shepherd University; Augustine Hammond, Augusta University; Shawn Easley, Cuyahoga Community College; Darius Smith, Community College of Aurora; Robert Glover, University of Maine; Carolyn Cocca, State University of NY, College at Old Westbury; Benjamin Arah, Bowie State University; Ahmet Turker, Pima Community College; Eric Loepp, UW–Whitewater; Holly Lindamod, University of North Georgia; Denise Robles, San Antonio College; Asslan Khaligh, Alamo–San Antonio College; Brandy Martinez, San Antonio College; Andrew Sanders, Texas A&M University, San Antonio; Mohsen Omar, Northeast Lakeview College; Heather Frederick, Slippery Rock University; Heather Rice, Slippery Rock University; Leslie Baker, Mississippi State University; Jamie Warner, Marshall University; Will Jennings, University of Tennessee; Arjun Banerjee, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Jonathan Honig, University of Tennessee; Rachel Fuentes, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Andrew Straight, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Margaret Choka, Pellissippi State Community College; Christopher Lawrence, Middle Georgia State University; LaTasha Chaffin, College of Charleston; Jeff Worsham, West Virginia University; Cigdem Sirin–Villalobos, University of Texas at El Paso; Lyle Wind, Suffolk Community College; Marcus Holmes, College of William & Mary; Kurt Guenther, Palm Beach State College; Kevin Wagner, Florida Atlantic University; Eric Sands, Berry College; Shari MacLachlan, Palm Beach State College; Sharon Manna, North Lake College; Tamir Sukkary, American River College; Willie Hamilton, Mt. San Jacinto College; Linda Trautman, Ohio University–Lancaster; Dr. William H. Kraus, Motlow State Community College; Kim Winford, Blinn College; Lana Obradovic, University of Nebraska at Omaha; Doug Schorling, College of the Sequoias; Sarah Lischer, Wake Forest University; Ted Clayton, Central Michigan University; Steven Greene, North Carolina State University; Sharon Navarro, University of Texas at San Antonio; Curtis Ogland, San Antonio College; Henry Esparza, UT San Antonio; Mario Salas, UTSA; Robert Porter, Ventura College; Will Jennings, University of Tennessee; Haroon Khan, Henderson State University; Brenda Riddick, Houston Community College; Julie Lantrip, Tarrant County College; Kyle C. Kopko, Elizabethtown College; Kristine Mohajer, Austin Community College (ACC); Dovie D. Dawson, Central Texas College; Joycelyn Caesar, Cedar Valley College; Daniel Ponder, Drury University

APSA TLC 2018 Mujahid Nyahuma, Community College of Philadelphia; Tahiya Nyahuma, NCAT; Christopher Lawrence, Middle Georgia State University; Jason Robles, University of Colorado; Tim Reynolds, Alvin Community College; Marilyn C. Buresh, Lake Region State College; Frances Marquez, Gallaudet University; Natasha Washington, Liberal Arts and Communications; Jonathan Honig, University of Tennessee–Knoxville; Ayesha Ahsanuddin, University of Tennessee–Knoxville; Arjun Banerjee, The University of Tennessee Knoxville; Jesse R. Cragwall, Tusculum College and Pellissippi State Community College; Amnah H. Ibraheem, University of Tennessee–Knoxville; Karl Smith, Delaware Technical Community College; Richard Waterman, University of Kentucky; Peggy R. Wright, ASU–Jonesboro; Christopher Hallenbrook, Bloomsburg University; Eric Loepp, UW–Whitewater; Robert Glover, University of Maine; Heather Rice, Slippery Rock University; Shawn Easley, Cuyahoga Community College; Benjamin Arah, Bowie State University; Andrew Straight, University of Tennessee; Rachel Fuentes, University of Tennessee at Knoxville; Stephanie A. Slocum–Schaffer, Shepherd University; Will Jennings, University of Tennessee

APSA 2017 Jooeun Kim, Georgetown; Leonard L. Lira, San José State University; Abigail Post, University of Virginia; Jamilya Ukudeeva, Chabot College; Shannon Jenkins, University of Massachusetts–Dartmouth; Matthew Platt, Morehouse College; Sara Angevine, Whittier College; Andy Aoki, Augsburg University; Stephen Meinhold,

University of North Carolina–Wilmington; Manoutchehr Eskandari–Qajar, Santa Barbara City College; Clayton Thyne, University of Kentucky; Alice Jackson, Morgan State University; Mark Rom, Georgetown University; Krista Wiegand, University of Tennessee; Geoffrey Wallace, University of Washington; Precious Hall, Truckee Meadows Community College; Patrick Larue, University of Texas at Dallas; Margot Morgan, Indiana University Southeast; Patrick Wohlfarth, University of Maryland; Christian Grose, University of Southern California; Clinton Jenkins, George Washington University; Jeffrey W. Koch, U.S. Air Force Academy and SUNY Geneseo; Albert Ponce, Diablo Valley College; Justin Vaughn, Boise State University; Joe Weinberg, University of Southern Mississippi; Cindy Stavrianos, Gonzaga University; Kevan M. Yenerall, Clarion University; Katherine Barbieri, University of South Carolina; Elsa Dias, Metropolitan State University of Denver; Maria Gabryszewska, Florida International University; Erich Saphir, Pima Community College; Mzilikazi Kone, College of the Desert; Mary McHugh, Merrimack College; Joel Lieske, Cleveland State University; Joseph W. Roberts, Roger Williams University; Eugen L. Nagy, Central Washington University; Henry B. Sirgo, McNeese State University; Brian Newman, Pepperdine University; Bruce Stinebrickner, DePauw University; Amanda Friesen, IUPUI; LaTasha Chaffin, College of Charleston; Richard Waterman, University of Kentucky

MPSA 2018 Adam Bilinski, Pittsburg State University; Daniel Chand, Kent State University; Agber Dimah, Chicago State University; Yu Ouyang, Purdue University Northwest; Steven Sylvester, Utah Valley University; Ben Bierly, Joliet Junior College; Mahalley Allen, California State University, Chico; Christian Goergen, College of DuPage; Patrick Stewart, University of Arkansas, Fayettville; Richard Barrett, Mount Mercy University; Daniel Hawes, Kent State University; Niki Kalaf–Hughes, Bowling Green State University; Gregg R. Murray, Augusta University; Ryan Reed, Bradley University; Kimberly Turner, College of DuPage; Peter Wielhouwer, Western Michigan University; Leena Thacker Kumar, University of Houston–DTN; Debra Leiter, University of Missouri Kansas City; Michael Makara, University of Central Missouri; Ola Adeoye, University of Illinois–Chicago; Russell Brooker, Alverno College; Dr. Royal G. Cravens, Bowling Green State University; Vincent T. Gawronski, Birmingham–Southern College; Benjamin I. Gross, Jacksonville State University; Matthew Hitt, University of Northern Colorado; Megan Osterbur, New England College; Pamela Schaal, Ball State University; Edward Clayton, Central Michigan University; Ali Masood, California State University, Fresno; Joel Lieske, Cleveland State University; Patrick Wohlfarth, University of Maryland; Steven Greene, North Carolina State University; Will Jennings, University of Tennessee; Haroon Khan, Henderson State University; Kyle Kopko, Elizabethtown College; Hyung Lae Park, El Paso Community College; Linda Trautman, Ohio University–Lancaster.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA

CHAPTER OUTLINE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

GOVERNMENT

1.1 Identify the key functions of government and explain why they matter.

POLITICS

1.2 Define politics in the context of democratic government.

THE POLICYMAKING SYSTEM

1.3 Assess how citizens can have an impact on public policy and how policies can impact people.

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

1.4 Identify the key principles of democracy and outline theories regarding how it works in practice and the challenges democracy faces today.

THE SCOPE OF GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA

1.5 Outline the central arguments of the debate in America over the proper scope of government.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT MATTER—that is the single most important message of this book. Consider, for example, the following list of ways that government and politics may have already impacted your life:

- During the coronavirus pandemic of 2020, your state and local authorities established guidelines for when people in your area could leave their homes and what businesses could remain in operation.
- Chances are pretty good that you or someone in your family has recently been the recipient of one of the 80 million payments made to individuals by the federal government every month. In 2019, nearly 20 percent of the money that went into Americans' wallets was from government payments like jobless benefits, food stamps, Social Security payments, veterans' benefits, and so on.
- Any public schools you attended were prohibited by the federal government from discriminating against women and minorities and from holding prayer sessions led by school officials. Municipal school boards regulated your education, and the state certified and paid your teachers.
- The ages at which you could get your driver's license, drink alcohol, purchase a gun, and vote were all determined by state and federal governments.

- Before you could get a job, the federal government had to issue you a Social Security number, and you have been paying Social Security taxes every month that you have been employed. If you worked at a low-paying job, your starting wages were likely determined by state and federal minimum-wage laws.
- If you are in college, you may be drawing student loans financed by the government. The government even dictates certain school holidays.
- Even when gasoline prices have risen substantially in the United States, federal policy has continued to make it possible for Americans to drive long distances relatively cheaply compared to citizens in most other democracies. In many other advanced industrialized nations, such as England and Japan, gasoline is twice as expensive as in the United States because of the high taxes their governments impose on fuel.
- If you apply to rent an apartment, by federal law landlords cannot discriminate against you because of your race or religion.

This list could, of course, be greatly extended. And it helps explain the importance of politics and government. As Barack Obama said when he first ran for public office, "Politics does matter. It can make the difference in terms of a benefits check. It can make the difference in terms of school funding. Citizens can't just remove themselves from that process. They actually have to engage themselves and not just leave it to the professionals."[1]

More than any other recent presidential campaign, Obama's 2008 run for the White House was widely viewed as having turned many young Americans on to politics. *Time* magazine even labeled 2008 as the "Year of the Youth Vote," noting that Obama was "tapping into a broad audience of energized young voters hungry for change."[2] And young people did more than display enthusiasm at massive rallies for Obama. By supporting Obama by a two-to-one margin, they provided him with a key edge in the 2008 election. Many observers proclaimed that the stereotype of politically apathetic American youth should finally be put to rest.

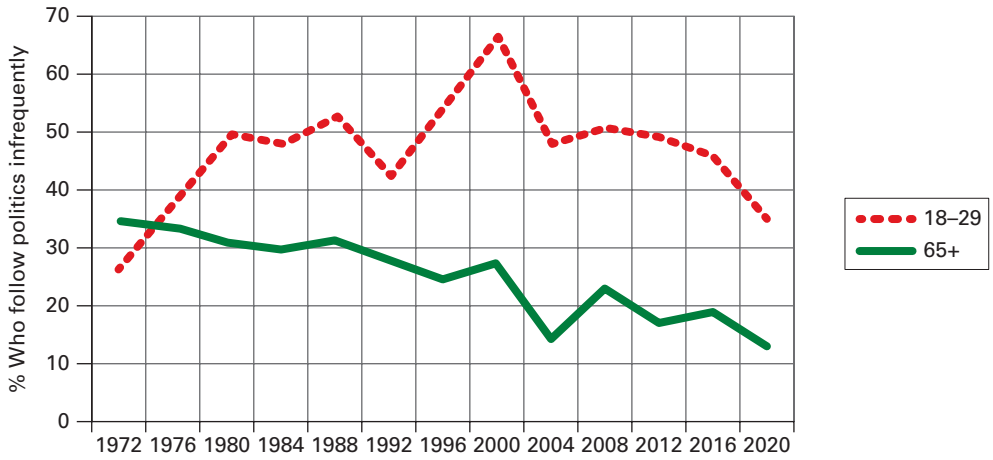
Stereotypes can be outdated or even off the mark; unfortunately, the perception that young Americans are less engaged in politics than older people has been and continues to be supported by solid evidence. Whether because they think that politicians don't listen to them, that they can't make a difference, or that the political system is corrupt, or they just don't care, many young Americans are clearly apathetic about public affairs. And while political apathy isn't restricted to young people, a tremendous gap has opened up between young adults and the elderly on measures of political interest, knowledge, and participation.

We will consider some data from the American National Election Studies (ANES), which conducts a nationally representative survey in each presidential election year. In 2020, when ANES asked a nationwide sample of people about their general level of interest in politics, 35 percent of Americans under the age of 30 said they paid little attention to politics compared to just 13 percent among those over the age of 65. One might think that this is a normal pattern, with young people always expressing less interest in politics than older people. But notice, in Figure 1.1, that there was no generation gap in political interest in the 1970s. Something has happened in the years since that has resulted in young adults being substantially less interested in politics than the elderly.

Lack of interest often leads to lack of information. The ANES always asks a substantial battery of questions about participants' knowledge of politics. As you can see in Figure 1.2, which shows the average percentage of correct answers for various age groups in 1972 and 2016, in 2016 young people were correct only 47 percent of the time, whereas people over 65 were correct 62 percent of the time. Whether the question concerned identifying partisan control of the House and Senate or accurately estimating the unemployment rate or identifying prominent politicians, the result was the same in 2016: young people were clearly less knowledgeable than the elderly. This pattern of age differences in political knowledge has been found time and time again in surveys in recent years.[3] By contrast, Figure 1.2 shows that in 1972

FIGURE 1.1 POLITICAL APATHY AMONG YOUNG AND OLD AMERICANS, 1972–2020

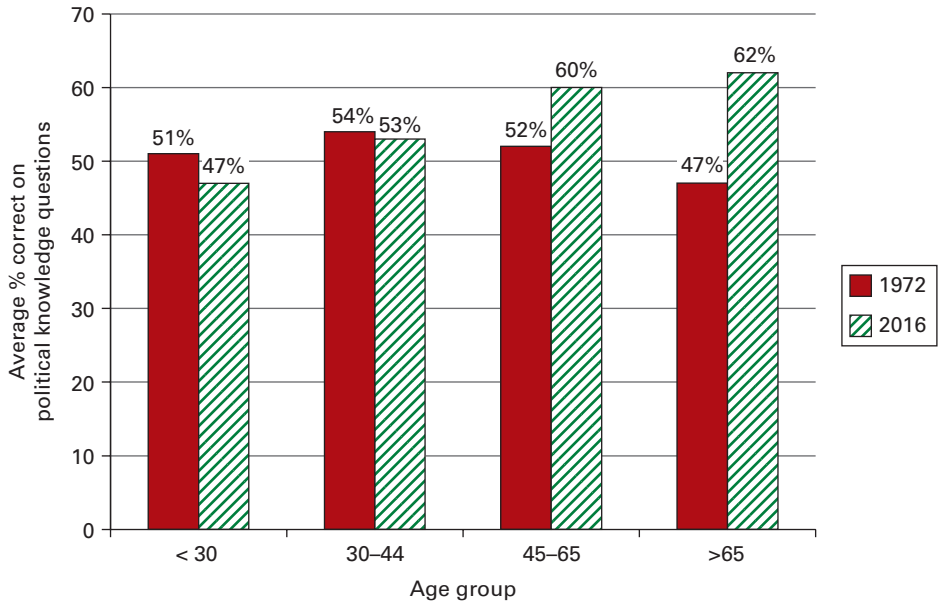
In every presidential election from 1972 to 2020, the American National Election Studies has asked a cross-section of the public how often they follow what's going on in government and public affairs. Below we have graphed the percentage who said they followed politics on an infrequent basis. Lack of political interest among young people hit a record high during the 2000 campaign between Bush and Gore, when over two-thirds said they rarely followed public affairs. Since then, political interest among young people has recovered somewhat; however, compared to senior citizens, they are still much more likely to report low political interest.



SOURCE: Authors' analysis of 1972–2020 American National Election Studies data.

FIGURE 1.2 AGE AND POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE, 1972 AND 2016

This figure shows the percentage of correct answers to five questions in 1972 and 10 questions in 2016 by age group. In 1972, the relationship between age and political knowledge was basically flat: each age group displayed roughly the same level of information about basic political facts, such as which party currently had more seats in the House of Representatives. By 2016, the picture had changed quite dramatically, with young people being substantially less likely to know the answer to such questions than older people.



SOURCE: Authors' analysis of 1972 and 2016 American National Election Studies data.

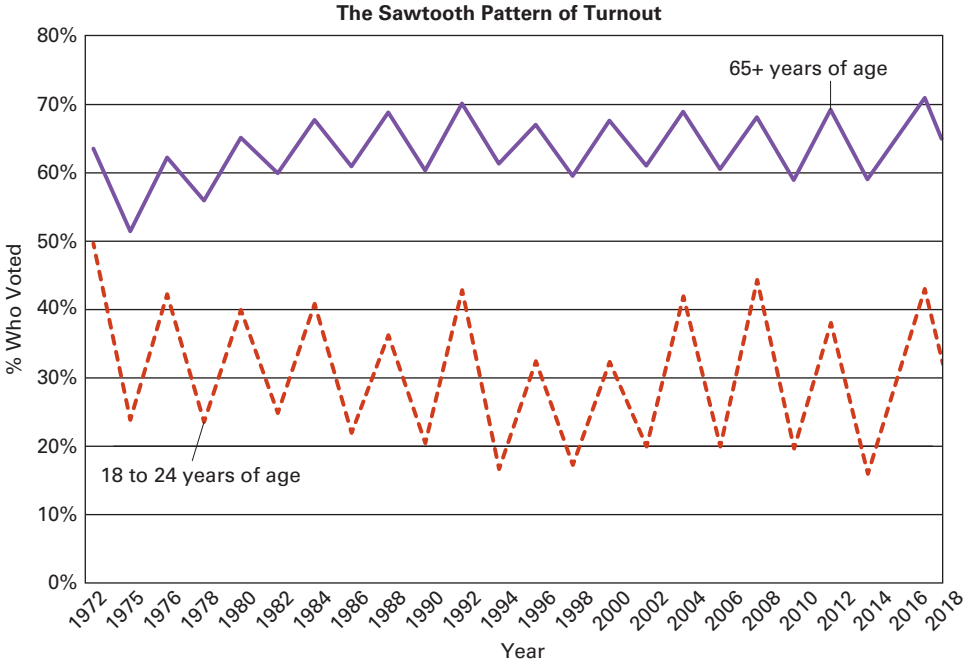
there was virtually no pattern by age, with those under 30 actually scoring 4 percent higher than those over 65.[4]

Thomas Jefferson once said that there has never been, nor ever will be, a people who are politically ignorant and free. If this is indeed the case, write Stephen Bennett and Eric Rademacher, then "we can legitimately wonder what the future holds" if young people "remain as uninformed as they are about government and public affairs."[5] While Bennett and Rademacher may well be overreacting, there definitely are important consequences when citizens lack political information. In *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters,* Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter make a strong case for the importance of staying informed about public affairs. Political knowledge, they argue, (1) fosters civic virtues, such as political tolerance; (2) helps citizens to identify what policies would truly benefit them and then incorporate this information in their voting behavior; and (3) promotes active participation in politics.[6] If you've been reading about the debate on immigration reform, for example, you'll be able to understand the proposed legislation, and that knowledge will then help you identify and vote for candidates whose views agree with yours.

As you will see throughout this book, those who participate in the political process are more likely to benefit from government programs and policies. Young people often complain that the elderly have far more political clout than they do—turnout statistics make clear why this is the case. As shown in Figure 1.3, in recent decades the voter turnout rate for people under 25 has consistently been much lower than that for senior citizens, particularly for midterm elections. Whereas turnout rates for the young have generally been going down, turnout among people over 65 has actually gone up slightly since 1972. Political scientists used to write that the frailties of old age led to

FIGURE 1.3 ELECTION TURNOUT RATES OF YOUNG AND OLD AMERICANS, 1972–2018

This graph shows the turnout gap between young and old Americans in all presidential and midterm elections from 1972 through 2018. The sawtooth pattern of both lines illustrates how turnout always drops off between a presidential election and a midterm congressional election (e.g., from 2016 to 2018). The ups and downs in the graph are much more evident among young people because they are less interested in politics and hence less likely to be regular voters.



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Surveys.

a decline in turnout after age 60; now such a decline occurs only after age 80. Greater access to medical care because of the passage of Medicare in 1965 must surely be given some of the credit for this change. Who says politics doesn't make a difference?

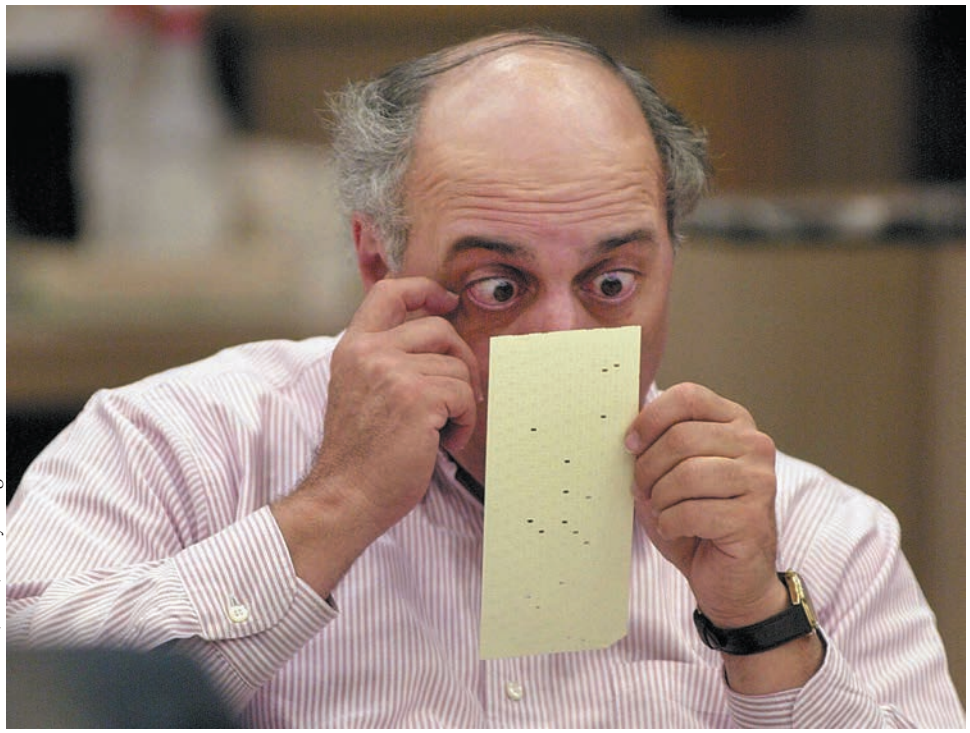
More than any other age group, the elderly know that they have much at stake in every election, with much of the federal budget now devoted to programs that help them, such as Medicare and Social Security. In recent decades these programs have consumed more and more of the federal domestic (non-military) budget as the population has aged and the costs of medical care have skyrocketed. Furthermore, these costs are projected to continue to grow as the baby boom generation retires. In contrast, the share of domestic federal spending that benefits children, though substantial, has generally declined. Julia Isaacs et al. estimate that in 2029 spending on Social Security benefits and health care for the elderly will make up 51 percent of domestic federal spending, as compared to just 7.5 percent for programs that benefit children.[7]

Of course, today's youth have not been affected by any policy in the way that previous generations were affected by, say, the introduction of Medicare or the military draft and the Vietnam War. However, the causes of young people's political apathy probably run deeper. Today's young adults have grown up in an environment in which news about political events has been much easier to avoid than in the past. When CBS, NBC, and ABC dominated the airwaves, from the 1950s to the mid-1980s, their extensive coverage of presidential speeches, political conventions, and presidential debates frequently left little else to watch on TV. As channels proliferated over subsequent decades, it became much easier to avoid exposure to politics by switching the channel—and of course, the Internet has exponentially broadened the choices. Major political events were once shared national experiences; now such shared national experiences are relatively rare, such as the events of September 11, 2001 or the killing of Osama Bin Laden 10 years later.

Consider some contrasting statistics about audiences for presidential speeches. Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter all got an average Nielsen rating of 50 for their televised addresses, meaning that half the population was watching. In contrast, President Obama averaged only about 23 for his nationally televised appearances from 2009 to 2016.[8] Political conventions, which once received more TV coverage than the Summer Olympics, have been relegated to an hour per night and draw abysmal ratings. The Trump-Clinton presidential debates drew the biggest debate audiences of the twenty-first century, but they were still far below the normal audiences for when there were just three television networks.

In sum, young people today have never known a time when most citizens paid attention to major political events. As a result, most of them have yet to get into the habit of following and participating in politics. For example, in the December 2019 American National Election Study Pilot Survey, 32 percent of young adults said they followed politics most of the time compared to 70 percent of senior citizens. Young people have grown up in an environment in which hundreds of TV channels and millions of Internet sites have, on the one hand, provided them with a rich and varied socialization experience; on the other hand, those channels and sites have also enabled young people to easily avoid political events. It has become particularly difficult to convince a generation that has channel- and Internet-surfed all their lives that politics really does matter.

How will further expansion of channels and, especially, blogs and other websites affect youth interest in and knowledge of politics? Political scientists see both opportunities and challenges. Some optimistic observers see these developments as offering "the prospect of a revitalized democracy characterized by a more active and informed citizenry."[9] Political junkies will certainly find more political information available than ever before, and electronic communications will make it easier for people to express their political views in various forums and directly to public officials. However, with so many media choices for so many specific interests, it will also be easy to avoid the subject of public affairs. It may also be easier to avoid a range of opinions. Political scientist Jeremy Mayer argues that "if we all get to select exactly how much



Rhona Wise/AFP/Getty Images

The narrow 537-vote margin by which George W. Bush carried the state of Florida in 2000 proved the old adage that "every vote counts." Here, an election official strains to figure out how to interpret a voter's punch in the tedious process of recounting ballots by hand.

campaign news we will receive, and the depth of that coverage, it may be that too many Americans will choose shallow, biased sources of news on the Internet."[10]

Groups that are concerned about low youth turnout are focusing on innovative ways of reaching out to young people via newer technologies, such as social networking sites like Facebook, to make them more aware of politics. In doing so, they are encouraged and spurred by the fact that young people are far from inactive in American society and in recent years have been doing volunteer community service at record rates. As two college students who wrote a book on this subject rightly pointed out, "Young people are some of the most active members of their communities and are devoting increasing amounts of their time to direct service work and volunteerism."[11] It is only when it comes to politics that young people seem to express indifference about getting involved.

It is our hope that after reading this book, you will be persuaded that paying attention to politics and government is important. Government has a substantial impact on all our lives. But it is also true that we have the opportunity to have a substantial impact on government. Involvement in public affairs can take many forms, ranging from simply becoming better informed by browsing through political websites to running for elected office. In between are countless opportunities for *everyone* to make a difference.

GOVERNMENT

1.1 Identify the key functions of government and explain why they matter.

government
The institutions through which public policies are made for a society.

The institutions that make public policy decisions for a society are collectively known as **government**. In the case of our own national government, these institutions are Congress, the president, the courts, and federal administrative agencies ("the bureaucracy"). Fifty state governments and over 87,000 local governing bodies also decide on policies that influence our lives. There are about 520,000 elected officials in the United States.[12] Thus, policies that affect you are being made almost constantly.

Because government shapes how we live, it is important to understand the process by which decisions are made as well as what is actually decided. Two fundamental questions about governing serve as themes throughout this book:

- *How should we govern?* Americans take great pride in calling their government democratic. This chapter examines the workings of democratic government; the chapters that follow will evaluate the way American government actually works compared to the standards of an "ideal" democracy. We will continually ask, "Who holds power, and who influences the policies adopted by government?"
- *What should government do?* This book explores the relationship between *how* American government works and *what* it does. It addresses the question, "Does our government do what we want it to do?" Debates over the scope of governmental power are among the most important in American political life today. Some people would like to see the government take on more responsibilities; others believe it already takes on too much.

While citizens often disagree about what their government should do for them, all governments have certain functions in common. National governments throughout the world perform the following functions:

- *Maintain a national defense.* A government protects its national sovereignty, usually by maintaining armed forces. In the nuclear age, some governments possess awesome power to make war through highly sophisticated weapons. The United States currently spends over $700 billion a year on national defense.
- *Provide public goods and services.* Governments in this country spend billions of dollars on schools, libraries, hospitals, highways, and many other public goods and services. These goods and services are of two types. Some are what is called **collective goods**; if they exist, by their very nature they cannot be denied to anyone and therefore must be shared by everyone. Clean air or clean water or access to highways, for example, cannot be denied to anyone. Since the private sector has no incentive to provide goods and services that everyone automatically has access to, these can be provided only by government. Other public goods and services, such as college or medical care, can be provided to some individuals without being provided to all; these are widely provided by the private sector as well as by government.
- *Preserve order and protect public safety.* Every government has some means of maintaining order. When people protest in large numbers, governments may resort to extreme measures to restore order. For example, the National Guard was called in to stop looting and arson after rioting broke out in some cities following the death of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis police in 2020.
- *Socialize the young.* Governments politically socialize the young—that is, instill in children knowledge of and pride in the nation and its political system and values. Most modern governments pay for education, and school curricula typically include a course on the theory and practice of the country's government. Rituals like the daily Pledge of Allegiance seek to foster patriotism and love of country.
- *Collect taxes.* Approximately $1 out of every $3 earned by American citizens goes to national, state, and local taxes—money that pays for the public goods and services the government provides.

All these governmental tasks add up to weighty decisions that our political leaders must make. For example, how much should we spend on national defense as opposed to education? How high should taxes for Medicare and Social Security be? We answer such questions through politics.

collective goods
Goods and services, such as clean air and clean water, that by their nature cannot be denied to anyone.

For over two centuries, power was transferred peacefully in the United States via elections. The riot at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 tarnished this legacy, as the Capitol building was invaded by violent protestors who challenged the election results. The Vice President and the members of both Houses of Congress were forced to shelter in place until the mob was removed by the National Guard.

dpa/Alamy Live News

Alex Wong/Getty Images News/Getty Images

One of the basic functions of any government is maintaining order. In 2020, after the tragic death of George Floyd, protests against police brutality sprung up all over the country. When some of these protests tuned violent, the National Guard was called in to help keep the peace.

POLITICS

1.2 Define politics in the context of democratic government.

Politics determines whom we select as our governmental leaders and what policies these leaders pursue. Political scientists often cite Harold D. Lasswell's famous definition of politics: "Who gets what, when, and how."[13] It is one of the briefest and most useful definitions of politics ever penned. Admittedly, this broad definition covers a lot of ground (office politics, sorority politics, and so on) in which political scientists are generally not interested. They are interested primarily in politics related to governmental decision making.

politics
The process of determining the leaders we select and the policies they pursue. Politics produces authoritative decisions about public issues.

The media usually focus on the *who* of politics. At a minimum, this includes voters, candidates, groups, and parties. *What* refers to the substance of politics and government—benefits, such as medical care for the elderly, and burdens, such as new taxes. *How* refers to the ways in which people participate in politics. People get what they want through voting, supporting, compromising, lobbying, and so forth. In this sense, government and politics involve winners and losers. Behind every arcane tax provision or item in an appropriations bill, there are real people getting something or getting something taken away.

political participation
All the activities by which citizens attempt to influence the selection of political leaders and the policies they pursue. Voting is the most common means of political participation in a democracy. Other means include contacting public officials, protest, and civil disobedience.

The ways in which people get involved in politics make up their **political participation**. Many people judge the health of a government by how widespread political participation is. America does quite poorly when judged by its voter turnout, which is one of the lowest in the world. Low voter turnout has an effect on who holds political power. Because so many people do not show up at the polls, voters are a distorted sample of the public as a whole. Groups with a high turnout rate, such as the elderly, benefit, whereas those with a low turnout rate, such as young people, lack political clout.

Voting is only one form of political participation. For a few Americans, politics is a vocation: they run for office, and some even earn their livelihood from holding

Alex Wong/Getty Images News/Getty Images

Pro-life and pro-choice groups are single-minded and usually uncompromising. Few issues stir up as much passion as whether abortion should be permitted and, if so, under what conditions.

political office. In addition, many Americans treat politics as critical to their interests. Many of these people are members of **single-issue groups**—groups so concerned with one issue that members often cast their votes on the basis of that issue only, ignoring a politician's stand on everything else. Groups of activists dedicated either to outlawing abortion or to preserving abortion rights are good examples of single-issue groups.

single-issue groups
Groups that have a narrow interest on which their members tend to take an uncompromising stance.

Individual citizens and organized groups get involved in politics because they understand that public policy choices made by governments affect them in significant ways. Will all those who need student loans receive them? Will everyone have access to medical care? Will people be taken care of in their old age? Is the water safe to drink? These and other questions tie politics to policymaking.

THE POLICYMAKING SYSTEM

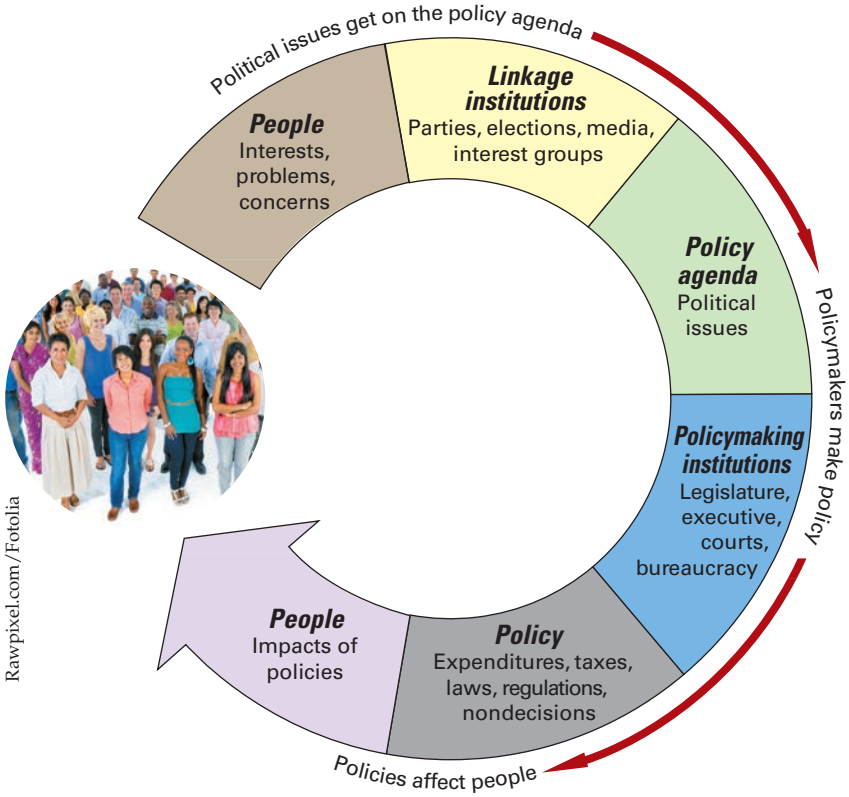
1.3 Assess how citizens can have an impact on public policy and how policies can impact people.

Americans frequently expect the government to do something about their problems. For example, the president and members of Congress are expected to keep the economy humming along; voters will penalize them at the polls if they do not. It is through the **policymaking system** that our government responds to the priorities of its people. Figure 1.4 shows a skeletal model of this system, in which people shape policies and in turn are affected by them. The rest of this book will flesh out this model, but for now it will help you understand how government policy comes into being and evolves over time.

policymaking system
The process by which policy comes into being and evolves. People's interests, problems, and concerns create political issues for government policymakers. These issues shape policy, which in turn impacts people, generating more interests, problems, and concerns.

FIGURE 1.4 THE POLICYMAKING SYSTEM

In the policymaking system, people's concerns get transmitted to linkage institutions. The issues that they choose to address form the policy agenda. Political institutions then make decisions in the form of policies. Policies, in turn, affect people.



People Shape Policy

The policymaking system begins with people. All Americans have interests, problems, and concerns that are touched on by public policy. Some people think the government should spend more to train people for jobs in today's increasingly technology-oriented economy; others think that the government is already spending too much, resulting in high taxes that discourage business investments. Some citizens expect government to do something to curb domestic violence; others are concerned about prospects that the government may make it much harder to buy a handgun for self-defense.

What do people do to express their opinions in a democracy? As previously mentioned, people have numerous avenues for participation; for example, they may vote for candidates who represent their opinions, join political parties, post messages to Internet chat groups, and form *interest groups*—organized groups of people with a common interest. In this way, people's concerns enter the linkage institutions of the policymaking system. **Linkage institutions**—political parties, elections, interest groups, and the media—transmit Americans' preferences to the policymakers in government. Parties and interest groups strive to ensure that their members' concerns receive appropriate political attention. The media investigate social problems and inform people about them. Elections provide citizens with the chance to make their opinions heard by choosing their public officials.

linkage institutions
The political channels through which people's concerns become political issues on the policy agenda. In the United States, linkage institutions include elections, political parties, interest groups, and the media.

All these institutions help to shape the government's **policy agenda**, the issues that attract the serious attention of public officials and other people actively involved in politics at a given time. Some issues will be considered, and others will not. If politicians want to get elected, they must pay attention to the problems that concern voters. When you vote, you are partly looking at whether a candidate shares your agenda. If you are most worried about rising economic inequality, and a certain candidate talks mostly about protecting U.S. borders and stopping illegal immigration, you will probably support another candidate.

policy agenda
The issues that attract the serious attention of public officials and other people involved in politics at a point in time.

A government's policy agenda changes regularly. When jobs are scarce and business productivity is falling, economic problems occupy a high position on the government's agenda. If the economy is doing well and trouble spots around the world occupy the headlines, foreign policy questions are bound to dominate the agenda. In general, bad news—particularly about a crisis situation—is more likely than good news to draw sufficient media attention to put a subject on the policy agenda. As the old saying goes, "Good news is no news." When unemployment rises sharply, it leads the news; when jobs are plentiful, the latest unemployment report is much less of a news story. Thus, the policy agenda responds more to societal failures than successes. People, of course, do not always agree on what government should do. Indeed, one group's positions and interests are often at odds with those of another group. A **political issue** emerges when people disagree about a problem or about the public policy needed to fix it. There is never a shortage of political issues; government, however, will not act on any issue until it is high on the policy agenda.

political issue
An issue that arises when people disagree about a problem and how to fix it.

Policymakers stand at the core of the system, working within the three **policymaking institutions** established by the U.S. Constitution: Congress, the presidency, and the courts. Policymakers scan the issues on the policy agenda, select those they consider important, and make policies to address them. Today, the power of the bureaucracy is so great that many political scientists consider it a fourth policymaking institution.

policymaking institutions
The branches of government charged with taking action on political issues. The U.S. Constitution established three policymaking institutions—Congress, the presidency, and the courts. Today, the power of the bureaucracy is so great that many political scientists consider it a fourth policymaking institution.

Very few policies are made by a single policymaking institution. Environmental policy is a good example. Some presidents have used their influence with Congress to urge clean air and clean water policies. When Congress responds by passing legislation to clean up the environment, bureaucracies have to implement the new policies. The bureaucracies, in turn, create extensive volumes of rules and regulations that define how policies are to be implemented. In addition, every law passed and every rule made can be challenged in the courts. Courts make decisions about what policies mean and whether they conflict with the Constitution.

TABLE 1.1 TYPES OF PUBLIC POLICIES

Type	Definition	Example
Congressional statute	Law passed by Congress	The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 is passed, substantially reshaping the tax code and cutting taxes by $1.5 trillion.
Presidential action	Decision by president	American jets bomb ISIS targets in Syria.
Court decision	Opinion by Supreme Court or other court	Supreme Court rules that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry.
Budgetary choices	Legislative enactment of taxes and expenditures	The federal budget resolution is enacted.
Regulation	Agency adoption of regulation	The Environmental Protection Agency issues new emission control guidelines for automobiles.

Policies Impact People

Every decision that government makes—every law it passes, budget it establishes, and ruling it hands down—is **public policy**. Public policies are of various types, depending in part on which policymaking institution they originated with, as you can see in Table 1.1. Statutes are laws that are passed by Congress, such as the $2 trillion emergency bill to prop up the economy during the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic that President Trump signed into law in March 2020. Presidential actions, including executive orders, such as President Obama's action to allow gay soldiers to serve openly in the armed forces, are the result of decisions made by the president. Court decisions are legal opinions by the Supreme Court or a lower court; one example is the Supreme Court's 2010 ruling that individuals have a constitutional right to own a gun. Budgetary choices involve the legislative enactment of taxes and expenditures. And regulation occurs when a federal agency issues guidelines regarding the implementation of laws, such as when the Department of Education specifies the requirements for qualifying for the federal student loan forgiveness program.

public policy
A choice that government makes in response to a political issue. A policy is a course of action taken with regard to some problem.

Having a policy implies having a goal. Whether we want to reduce poverty, cut crime, clean the water, or hold down inflation, we have a goal in mind. Policy impact analysts ask how well a policy achieves its goal—and at what cost. The analysis of **policy impacts** carries the policymaking system back to its point of origin: the interests, problems, and concerns of the people. Translating people's desires into effective public policy is crucial to the workings of democracy.

policy impacts
The effects a policy has on people and problems. Impacts are analyzed to see how well a policy has met its goal and at what cost.

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

1.4 Identify the key principles of democracy and outline theories regarding how it works in practice and the challenges democracy faces today.

Democracy is a system of selecting policymakers and of organizing government so that policy reflects citizens' preferences. Today, the term *democracy* takes its place among terms like *freedom, justice,* and *peace* as a word that seemingly has only positive connotations; surveys around the world routinely show that most people in most democracies believe that democracy is the best form of government. Yet the writers of the U.S. Constitution had no fondness for democracy, as many of them doubted the ability of ordinary Americans to make informed judgments about what government should do. Roger Sherman, a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, said, "The people should have as little to do as may be about the government. They lack information and are constantly liable to be misled."[14] Only much later did Americans come to cherish democracy and believe that all citizens should actively participate in choosing their leaders.

democracy
A system of selecting policymakers and of organizing government so that policy represents and responds to the public's preferences.

Most Americans would probably say that democracy is "government by the people." These words are, of course, part of the famous phrase by which Abraham Lincoln defined democracy in his 1863 Gettysburg Address: "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." Certainly, our government has always been "of the people," for in the United States there have only ever been (common) people: the Constitution forbids the granting of titles of nobility, which typically establish, for

those who hold those titles, hereditary positions of power and privilege. On the other hand, in a nation of over 300 million people, it is a practical impossibility for government to be "by the people"—not by *all* the people, anyway. Our democracy involves choosing representatives of the people to govern. Where the serious debate begins is with the question of whether political leaders do, in fact, govern "for the people," since there always are significant biases in how our political system works. Democratic theorists have elaborated a set of standards to use in evaluating this crucial question.

Traditional Democratic Theory

Traditional democratic theory rests on a number of key principles that specify how governmental decisions are made in a democracy. Robert Dahl, one of America's leading theorists, suggests that an ideal democratic process should satisfy the following five criteria:

- *Equality in voting.* The principle of "one person, one vote" is basic to democracy. No one's vote should count more than anyone else's.
- *Effective participation.* Citizens must have adequate and equal opportunities to express their preferences throughout the decision-making process.
- *Enlightened understanding.* A democratic society must be a marketplace of ideas. A free press and free speech are essential to civic understanding. If one group monopolizes and distorts information, citizens cannot truly understand issues.
- *Citizen control of the agenda.* Citizens should have the collective right to control the government's policy agenda. If particular groups, such as the wealthy, have influence far exceeding what would be expected based on their numbers, then the agenda will be distorted—the government will not be addressing the issues that the public as a whole feels are most important.
- *Inclusion.* The government must include, and extend rights to, all those subject to its laws. Citizenship must be open to all within a nation if the nation is to call itself democratic.[15]

majority rule
A fundamental principle of traditional democratic theory. In a democracy, choosing among alternatives requires that the majority's desire be respected.

minority rights
A principle of traditional democratic theory that guarantees rights to those who do not belong to majorities.

Ideally, only if it satisfies these criteria can a political system be called democratic. Furthermore, democracies must practice **majority rule**, meaning that policies should reflect the will of over half the voters. At the same time, most Americans would not want to give the majority free rein to do anything they can agree on. Restraints on the majority are built into the American system of government in order to protect the minority, or minorities. Thus the majority cannot infringe on **minority rights**. Freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and so on, are freedoms for those in a minority as well as the majority.

representation
A basic principle of traditional democratic theory that describes the relationship between the few leaders and the many followers.

In a society too large for all citizens to participate directly in the process of governing, a few must look after the concerns of the many. The relationship between elected leaders and citizens is one of **representation**. The literal meaning of *representation* is to "make present once again." In politics, representation means that the desires of the people should be replicated in government through the choices of elected officials. The closer the correspondence between the decisions representatives make and the wishes of their constituents, the closer the approximation to an ideal democracy. As might be expected for such a crucial question, theorists disagree widely about the extent to which this ideal is actually realized in the United States.

Three Contemporary Theories of American Democracy

Theories of American democracy are essentially theories about who has power and influence. All, in one way or another, ask the question, "Who really governs in our nation?" Each focuses on a key aspect of politics and government, and each reaches a somewhat different conclusion about the state of American democracy.

pluralism
A theory of American democracy emphasizing that the policymaking process is open to the participation of all groups with shared interests, with no single group usually dominating. Pluralists tend to believe that as a result, public interest generally prevails.

PLURALISM One important theory of American democracy, **pluralism**, states that groups with shared interests influence public policy by pressing their concerns through organized efforts. The National Rifle Association (NRA), the National Organization

for Women (NOW), and the American Council on Education (ACE) are contemporary examples of such interest groups.

According to pluralist theory, because of open access to various institutions of government and public officials, organized groups can compete with one another for control over policy, and no one group or set of groups dominates. Given that power is dispersed in the American form of government, groups that lose in one arena can take their case to another. For example, civil rights groups faced congressional roadblocks in the 1950s but were able to win the action they were seeking from the courts.

Pluralists are generally optimistic that the public interest will eventually prevail in the making of public policy through a complex process of bargaining and compromise. They believe that, rather than speaking of majority rule, we should speak of groups of minorities working together. Robert Dahl expresses this view well when he writes that in America "all active and legitimate groups in the population can make themselves heard at some crucial stage in the process."[16]

Group politics is certainly as American as apple pie. Writing in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville called us a "nation of joiners" and pointed to the high level of associational activities as one of the crucial reasons for the success of American democracy. The recent explosion of interest group activity can therefore be seen as a very positive development from the perspective of pluralist theory. Interest groups and their lobbyists—the groups' representatives in Washington—have become masters of the technology of politics. Social media, mass mailing lists, sophisticated media advertising, and hard-sell techniques are their stock-in-trade. As a result, some observers believe that Dahl's pluralist vision—his argument that all groups may be heard through the American political process—is true, more now than ever before.

Robert Putnam, on the other hand, argues that many of the problems of American democracy today stem from a decline in group-based participation.[17] Putnam theorizes that advanced technology has served to increasingly isolate Americans from one another. He shows that membership in a variety of civic associations, such as parent–teacher associations, the League of Women Voters, and the Elks, Shriners, and Jaycees, has been declining for decades. Interestingly, Putnam does not interpret the decline of participation in civic groups as meaning that people have become "couch potatoes." Rather, he argues that Americans' activities are becoming more self-defined and less tied to institutions. The most famous example he gives to illustrate this trend is the fact that membership in bowling leagues has dropped sharply at the same time that more people are bowling—indicating that more and more people must be bowling alone. Putnam believes that participation in interest groups today is often like bowling alone. Groups that have mushroomed, such as the AARP (a group for retired Americans), typically just ask their members to participate by writing a check from the comfort of their own home. If people are indeed participating in politics alone rather than in groups, then pluralist theory is becoming less descriptive of American politics today.

ELITISM Critics of pluralism believe that it paints too rosy a picture of American political life. By arguing that almost every group can get a piece of the pie, they say, pluralists miss the larger question of how the pie is distributed. Poor people may get their food stamps, but businesses get massive tax deductions worth far more. Some governmental programs may help minorities, but the income gap between White and Black Americans remains wide.

Elitism contends that our society, like all societies, is divided along class lines and that an upper-class elite pulls the strings of government. Wealth—the holding of assets such as property, stocks, and bonds—is the basis of this power. Over a third of the nation's wealth is currently held by just 1 percent of the population. Elite theorists believe that this 1 percent of Americans controls most policy decisions because they can afford to finance election campaigns and control key institutions, such as large corporations. According to elite theory, a few powerful Americans do not merely influence policymakers—they *are*, in effect, the policymakers, even when they are not elected to public office.

elitism
A theory of American democracy contending that an upper-class elite holds the power and makes policy, regardless of the formal governmental organization.

At the center of all theories of elite dominance is big business, whose dominance many believe has increased substantially in recent decades. As economists Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman show, the share of U.S. national income earned by the top 1 percent has increased from 10 percent in 1980 to about 20 percent in 2020.[18] In addition, according to elite theorists, the wealthiest Americans are exercising outsize influence on the political process. Political scientists Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page find that when the policy stands of rich people differ from those of middle-class citizens, rich people get their way far more often.[19] And with the loopholes that have opened up in the campaign finance system since the Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010), wealthy people now account for a larger percentage of campaign spending than at any time since federal campaigns were first regulated by law in the early 1970s.

The most extreme proponents of elite theory maintain that who holds office in Washington is of marginal consequence; the corporate giants always have the power. Clearly, most people in politics would disagree with this view, noting that, for example, the tax plans offered by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in 2016 were starkly different. Trump proposed and later signed into law a cut in income tax rates for everyone, including people making over $1 million a year. In contrast, Clinton called for a substantial tax increase on wealthy Americans, and would have likely sought to put this into law had she been elected.

hyperpluralism
A theory of American democracy contending that interest groups are so strong that government, which gives in to the many different groups, is thereby weakened.

HYPERPLURALISM A third theory, **hyperpluralism**, offers a different critique of pluralism. Hyperpluralism is pluralism gone sour. In this view, the many competing interest groups are so strong that government is weakened, as the influence of so many groups cripples government's ability to make policy. The problem is not that a few groups excessively influence government action but that many groups together render government unable to act.

Whereas pluralism maintains that input from groups is a good thing for the political decision-making process, hyperpluralist theory asserts that there are *too* many ways for groups to control policy. Our fragmented political system made up of governments with overlapping jurisdictions is one major factor that contributes to hyperpluralism. This fragmentation of policymaking can make it hard to coordinate policy implementation. Any policy requiring the cooperation of the national, state, and local levels of government can be hampered by the reluctance of any one of them. Furthermore, groups use the fragmented system to their advantage. Groups that have lost policymaking battles in Congress increasingly have carried their battles to the courts: the number of policy-related cases brought to state and federal courts has soared. Ecologists have

Charles Pertwee/Alamy Stock Photov

The influence of wealthy people on politics has drawn increasing public attention in recent years, as billionaires like Sheldon and Miriam Adelson (shown here) have made multimillion-dollar contributions to super PACs that supported particular presidential candidates. With their net worth of about $40 billion, a $10 million contribution from the Adelsons was equivalent to the average family with a net worth of $97,000 contributing $25.

used legal procedures to delay construction projects they feel will damage the environment, businesses have taken federal agencies to court to fight the implementation of regulations that will cost them money, labor unions have gone to court to secure injunctions against policies they fear will cost their members jobs, and civil liberties groups have gone to court to defend the rights of people who are under investigation for possible terrorist activities. The courts have become one more battleground in which governmental policies can sometimes be opposed quite effectively.

Hyperpluralist theory holds that government gives in to every conceivable interest and single-issue group. Groups have become sovereign, and government is merely their servant. When politicians try to placate every group, the result is confusing, contradictory, and muddled policy—if the politicians manage to make policy at all. Like elite theorists, hyperpluralist theorists suggest that the public interest is rarely translated into public policy.

Challenges to Democracy

Regardless of which theory is most convincing to you, there are a number of continuing challenges to democracy. Many of these challenges apply to American democracy as well as to other democracies around the world.

WEAKENING OF DEMOCRATIC NORMS In 2018, political scientists Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt published a provocative book, which argued that American democracy was showing some of the same troubling signs that had been seen in other countries where democracy had been extinguished.[20] Based on historical research, they assert that democracies collapse when accepted norms of political behavior are violated with impunity. They list these key indicators as: (1) a rejection of some established rules of the game; (2) a denial of the legitimacy of political opponents; (3) tolerating or encouraging political violence; and (4) a willingness to curtail civil liberties. In the view of Levitsky and Ziblatt, the United States has seen some violations of each of these norms in recent years. Although not all political observers agree that these norms have indeed been violated, most agree that upholding them is crucial to maintaining a healthy democracy.

INCREASED COMPLEXITY OF ISSUES Traditional democratic theory holds that ordinary citizens have the good sense to reach political judgments and that government has the capacity to act on those judgments. Today, however, we live in a society with complex issues and experts whose technical knowledge of those issues vastly exceeds the knowledge of the general public. What, after all, does the average citizen—however conscientious—know about eligibility criteria for welfare, agricultural price supports, foreign competition, and the hundreds of other issues that confront government each year? Even the most rigorous democratic theory does not demand that citizens be experts on everything, but as human knowledge has expanded, it has become increasingly difficult for individual citizens to make well-informed decisions. And, as James Curry argues in *Legislating in the Dark*, the problem of information is often acute for policymakers as well, what with major bills in Congress often exceeding 1,000 pages of complex details.[21]

LIMITED PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT When citizens do not seem to take their citizenship seriously, democracy's defenders worry. Plenty of evidence suggests that Americans know relatively little about who their leaders are, much less about their policy decisions. Furthermore, Americans do not take full advantage of their opportunities to shape government or select their leaders. Limited participation in government challenges the foundation of democracy. In particular, because young people represent the country's future, their low voting turnout rates point to an even more serious challenge to democracy on the horizon.

ESCALATING CAMPAIGN COSTS Many political observers worry about the close connection between money and politics, especially in congressional elections. Winning a House seat these days usually requires a campaign war chest of *at least* $1 million,

and Senate races are even more costly. Congressional candidates have become increasingly dependent on political action committees (PACs) to fund their campaigns because of the escalation of campaign costs. These PACs often represent specific economic interests, and they care little about how members of Congress vote on most issues—just the issues that particularly affect them. Critics charge that when it comes to the issues PACs care about, the members of Congress listen, lest they be denied the money they need for their reelection. When democracy confronts the might of money, the gap between democratic theory and reality widens further.

DIVERSE POLITICAL INTERESTS The diversity of the American people is reflected in the diversity of interests represented in the political system. As you will see, this system is so open that interests find it easy to gain access to policymakers. When interests conflict, which they often do, no coalition may be strong enough to form a majority and establish policy. But each interest may use its influence to thwart those whose policy proposals they oppose. In effect, they have a veto over policy, creating what is often referred to as **policy gridlock**. In a big city, gridlock occurs when there are so many cars on the road that no one can move; in politics, it occurs when each policy coalition finds its way blocked by others. Marc Hetherington and Thomas Rudolph argue that policy gridlock has become more common due to the rising distrust that Democrats and Republicans express for each other.[22] As few major policy changes can be accomplished without some bipartisan cooperation, government often takes no action, leaving the status quo intact.

policy gridlock
A condition that occurs when interests conflict and no coalition is strong enough to form a majority and establish policy, so nothing gets done.

American Political Culture and Democracy

The key factor that holds American democracy together, in the view of many scholars, is its **political culture**—the overall set of values widely shared within American society. As Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel argue in their book on cultural change and democracy, "Democracy is not simply the result of clever elite bargaining and constitutional engineering. It depends on deep-rooted orientations among the people themselves. These orientations motivate them to demand freedom and responsive government. . . . Genuine democracy is not simply a machine that, once set up, functions by itself. It depends on the people."[23]

political culture
An overall set of values widely shared within a society.

Because Americans are so diverse in terms of ancestry, religion, and heritage, the political culture of the United States is crucial: what unites Americans more than anything else is a set of shared political beliefs and values. As G. K. Chesterton, the noted British observer of American politics, wrote in 1922, "America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed. That creed is set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence."[24] Arguing along the same lines, Seymour Martin Lipset writes that "the United States is a country organized around an ideology which includes a set of dogmas about the nature of good society."[25] Lipset argues that the American creed can be summarized by five elements: liberty, individualism, laissez-faire, populism, and egalitarianism.[26]

LIBERTY One of the most famous statements of the American Revolution is Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death." During the Cold War, a popular bumper sticker read "Better Dead Than Red"; it reflected many Americans' preference for fighting to the bitter end rather than submitting to the oppression of communist rule. To this day, New Hampshire's official state motto is "Live Free or Die." When immigrants are asked why they came to America, by far the most common response is to live in freedom.

Freedom of speech and religion are fundamental to the American way of life. In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson placed liberty right along with life and the pursuit of happiness as an "unalienable right"; that is, a right not awarded by human power, not transferable to another power, and not revocable.

INDIVIDUALISM One of the aspects of American political culture that has shaped the development of American democracy has been individualism—the belief that

One of the fundamental values that most Americans cherish is that of liberty. The state of New Hampshire has even gone so far to place a slogan to this effect on all the automobile license plates in the state.

Alamy stock photo

people can and should get ahead on their own. The immigrants who founded American society may have been diverse, but many shared a common dream of America as a place where one could make it on one's own without interference from government. Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America* is a classic analysis of the dominant political beliefs during America's formative years. Hartz argues that the major force behind limited government in America is that it was settled by people who fled from the feudal and clerical oppressions of the Old World. Once in the New World, they wanted little from government other than for it to leave them alone.[27]

Another explanation for American individualism is the existence of a bountiful frontier, at least up until the start of the twentieth century. Not only did many people come to America to escape from governmental interference, but the frontier allowed them to get away from government almost entirely once they arrived. Frederick Jackson Turner's famous work on the significance of the frontier in American history argues that "the frontier is productive of individualism."[28] According to Turner, being in the wilderness and having to survive on one's own left settlers with an aversion to any control from the outside world—particularly from the government.

LAISSEZ-FAIRE An important result of American individualism has been a clear tendency to prefer laissez-faire economic policies, which promote free markets and limited government. As John Kingdon writes in his book *America the Unusual*, "Government in the United States is much more limited and much smaller than government in virtually every other advanced industrialized country on earth."[29] Compared to most other economically developed nations, the United States devotes a smaller percentage of its resources to government. Americans have a lighter tax burden than citizens of other democratic nations.

All of the other advanced industrial democracies have long had a system of national health insurance that guarantees care to all their citizens, but even with the strides taken under Obamacare, 12 percent of Americans still lacked access to health insurance as of 2018. In many countries, national governments have started up airline, telephone, and communications companies; not in the United States. Most Western governments have built a substantial percentage of the housing in their nations; by contrast, only a small fraction of the housing in America has been built by government. In sum, in terms of its impact on citizens' everyday lives, government in the United States actually does much less than the governments of these other democracies.

POPULISM Abraham Lincoln summarized American democracy as "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." Such an emphasis on *the people* is at the heart of populism, which can best be defined as a political philosophy supporting the rights

of average citizens in their struggle against privileged elites. As Lipset writes, American populist thought holds that the people at large "are possessed of some kind of sacred mystique, and proximity to them endows the politician with esteem—and with legitimacy."[30]

In America, being on the side of the ordinary people against big interests is so valued that liberal and conservative politicians alike frequently claim this mantle. Liberals are inclined to argue that they will stand up to big multinational corporations and protect the interests of ordinary Americans. Conservatives, on the other hand, are likely to repeat Ronald Reagan's famous promise to get big government off the backs of the American people. A populist pledge to "put the people first" is always a safe strategy in the American political culture.

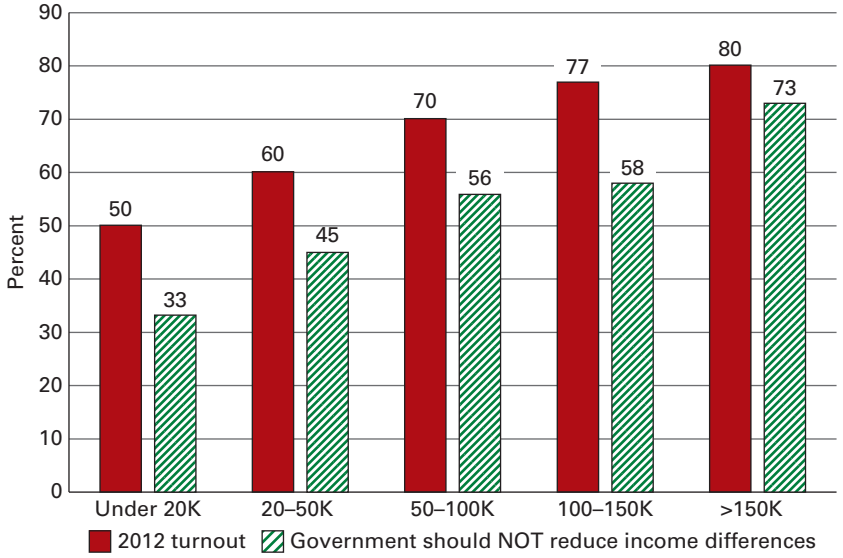
EGALITARIANISM The most famous phrase in the history of democracy is the Declaration of Independence's statement "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." As the French observer Alexis de Tocqueville noted long ago, egalitarianism in the United States involves equality of opportunity and respect in the absence of a monarchy and aristocracy. Americans have never been equal in terms of condition. What is most critical to this part of the American creed is that everyone have a chance to succeed in life.

Today, there is much concern that equality of opportunity is being eroded in America, since economic data have shown that those with the highest income levels are obtaining an increasing share of the nation's wealth. In a highly publicized 2013 speech, President Obama called the rising level of economic inequality in America "the defining challenge of our time."

Left unmentioned in Obama's speech on income inequality was that economic inequality is paralleled by inequality in political participation. As can be seen in Figure 1.5, high-income Americans take part in politics much more often than those with low incomes, and therefore have more clout at the ballot box.

FIGURE 1.5 HOW POLICYMAKING ON ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IS SHAPED BY PATTERNS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The green bars in the graph below show that as family income rises, people are much more likely to think that the government should NOT reduce income differences. The red bars show that turnout in presidential elections also rises along with family income. Thus, policymakers are bound to pay more attention to the views of people who oppose taking government action to reduce income differences. This pattern is probably further reinforced by the fact that a disproportionate percentage of campaign contributions come from high-income Americans.



SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau Data on voter turnout and authors' analysis of the 2012 American National Election Study.

THE SCOPE OF GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA

1.5 Outline the central arguments of the debate in America over the proper scope of government.

When President Obama proposed a massive $787 billion economic stimulus package in 2009 to deal with the nation's economic woes he argued as follows: "It is true that we cannot depend on government alone to create jobs or long-term growth, but at this particular moment, only government can provide the short-term boost necessary to lift us from a recession this deep and severe." In response, Republican House Leader John Boehner countered, "This bill makes clear that the era of Big Government is back, and the Democrats expect you to pay for it." He and other conservatives opposed the stimulus bill, arguing that such increases in the scope of the federal government would result in less freedom and prosperity. Instead, they proposed tax cuts that would have had the effect of reducing the scope of government.

Those who are inclined to support an active role for government argue that its intervention is sometimes the only means of achieving important goals in American

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program is just one of many federal programs that provides support for individuals with low income. Supporters of such programs argue that they provide a much-needed safety net, enabling people to get by during hard times. Critics see these programs as expanding the scope of government too much and as often encouraging a dependency that actually perpetuates poverty.

Nature and Science/Alamy Stock Photo

society. How else, they ask, can we ensure that people have enough to eat, clean air and water, and affordable health care? How else can we ensure that the disadvantaged are given opportunities for education and jobs and are not discriminated against? Opponents of widening the scope of government agree that these are worthwhile goals but challenge whether involving the federal government is an effective way to pursue them. Dick Armey, who was one of the key figures in the establishment of the conservative Tea Party movement, expressed this view well when he wrote, "There is more wisdom in millions of individuals making decisions in their own self-interest than there is in even the most enlightened bureaucrat (or congressman) making decisions on their behalf."[31] Or, as Ronald Reagan argued in his farewell presidential address, "As government expands, liberty contracts."

To understand the dimensions of this debate, it is important first to get some sense of the current scope of the federal government's activities.

How Active Is American Government?

gross domestic product (GDP)
The sum total of the value of all the goods and services produced in a year in a nation.

In terms of dollars spent, government in America is vast. Altogether, our governments—national, state, and local—spend about a third of our **gross domestic product (GDP)**, the total value of all goods and services produced annually by the United States. Government not only spends large sums of money but also employs large numbers of people. About 24 million Americans work for our government, mostly at the state and local level as teachers, police officers, university professors, and so on. Consider some facts about the size of our national government:

- It spends about $4.8 trillion annually (printed as a number, that's $4,800,000,000,000 a year).
- It employs about 2.7 million civilians, as well as 1.4 million in the military.
- It owns about one-third of the land in the United States.
- It occupies over 3.2 billion square feet of office space.

How does the American national government spend $4.8 trillion a year? Social Security consumes more than one-fifth of the budget, slightly more than does national defense. Medicare is another big-ticket item, requiring over one-tenth of the budget. State and local governments also get important parts of the federal government's budget, totaling over $600 billion in recent years. The federal government helps fund highway construction, police departments, school districts, and other state and local functions.

When expenditures grow, tax revenues must grow to pay the additional costs. When taxes do not grow as fast as spending, a budget deficit results. Since 1969, the federal government has run a budget deficit in all but a few years. For fiscal year 2020, the Trump administration originally planned to run up an annual deficit of about $1 trillion, leaving the country with a national debt of over $23 trillion. The economic crisis created by the coronavirus pandemic led to more than $2 trillion in additional spending to stabilize the economy, as well as a sharp downturn in government revenues. These changes inflated the national debt even more and left future generations the burden of paying for it.

The sheer size of federal government expenditures should hardly be surprising in light of the many issues that Americans have come to expect their government to deal with. Whatever the national problem—unemployment, terrorism, illegal immigration, energy, education, lack of access to health care—many people expect Congress and the president to work to solve it through legislation. In short, the American government is vast on any measure—including dollars spent, persons employed, or laws and regulations enacted. Our concern, however, is not so much about the absolute size of government as about whether the level of government activity is what we want it to be.

REVIEW THE CHAPTER

GOVERNMENT

1.1 Identify the key functions of government and explain why they matter.

The functions that all governments perform include maintaining a national defense, providing public services, preserving order, socializing the young, and collecting taxes. By performing these functions, governments regularly shape the way in which we live.

POLITICS

1.2 Define politics in the context of democratic government.

Politics determines what leaders we select and what policies they pursue. The *who* of politics is the voters, candidates, parties, and groups; the *what* is the benefits and burdens of government; the *how* is the various ways in which people participate in politics.

THE POLICYMAKING SYSTEM

1.3 Assess how citizens can have an impact on public policy and how policies can impact people.

The policymaking system is in effect a cycle. Citizens' interests and concerns are transmitted through linkage institutions (parties and elections, interest groups, the media). These concerns shape the government's policy agenda, from which those in policymaking institutions (Congress, the presidency, the courts) choose issues to address. The policies that are made (laws, executive orders, regulations, and court judgments) then influence people's lives.

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

1.4 Identify the key principles of democracy and outline theories regarding how it works in practice and the challenges democracy faces today.

According to traditional democratic theory, the ideal democracy is characterized by "one person, one vote," equal opportunities to participate, freedom of speech and the press, citizen control of the policy agenda, and inclusion. Pluralist theory holds that American democracy works well, as competition among many organized groups means that the public interest becomes public policy. This view is disputed by elitist theory, which claims that the powerful few dominate, and by hyperpluralist theory, which sees the excessive influence of many competing groups as leading to muddled policy or inaction. Contemporary challenges to American and other democracies include the complexity of issues, citizens' limited participation, escalating campaign costs, and the policy gridlock resulting from diverse political interests.

THE SCOPE OF GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA

1.5 Outline the central arguments of the debate in America over the proper scope of government.

One of the most important issues facing modern American democracy is the proper scope of government. Politicians constantly debate whether the scope of government responsibilities is too vast, just about right, or not comprehensive enough. This debate concerns whether the goals that are agreed to be important are best achieved through government action or rather through means other than government.

LEARN THE TERMS

government, p. 6
collective goods, p. 7
politics, p. 8
political participation, p. 8
single-issue groups, p. 9
policymaking system, p. 9
linkage institutions, p. 10
policy agenda, p. 10
political issue, p. 10
policymaking institutions, p. 10
public policy, p. 11
policy impacts, p. 11
democracy, p. 11
majority rule, p. 12
minority rights, p. 12
representation, p. 12
pluralism, p. 12
elitism, p. 13
hyperpluralism, p. 14
policy gridlock, p. 16
political culture, p. 16
gross domestic product (GDP), p. 20

EXPLORE FURTHER

FURTHER READING

Alesina, Alberto, and Edward L. Glaeser. ***Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference.*** New York: Oxford, 2004. A comprehensive analysis of how and why the scope of government is smaller in the United States than in Europe.

Dahl, Robert A. ***Democracy and Its Critics.*** New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982. A very thoughtful work by one of the world's most articulate advocates of pluralist theory.

de Tocqueville, Alexis. ***Democracy in America.*** New York: Mentor Books, 1956. This classic by a nineteenth-century French aristocrat remains one of the most insightful works on the nature of American society and government.

Hartz, Louis. ***The Liberal Tradition in America.*** New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955. A classic analysis of why the scope of American government has been more limited than in other democracies.

Hetherington, Marc J., and Thomas J. Rudolph. ***Why Washington Won't Work: Polarization, Political Trust, and the Governing Crisis.*** Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015. The authors show how gridlock in Washington is due to how deeply partisans dislike and distrust their opponents, thereby making cooperation and compromise extremely difficult.

Kingdon, John W. ***Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies.*** 2nd ed. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. One of the best efforts by a political scientist to examine the political agenda.

Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. ***How Democracies Die.*** New York: Crown, 2018. A best-selling book about how democracy has been extinguished in some countries and how these problems may be developing in the United States.

Macedo, Stephen, et al. ***Democracy at Risk: How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation, and What We Can Do About It.*** Washington, DC: Brookings, 2005. An insightful review of many aspects of political participation in America.

Page, Benjamin I., and Martin Gilens. ***Democracy in America? What Has Gone Wrong and What We Can Do About It.*** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017). An analysis of how big moneyed interests often win out over ordinary citizens, replete with suggestions for reforms.

Putnam, Robert. ***Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis.*** New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015. Putnam's highly influential work shows how inequality has risen dramatically since the early 1960s.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONSTITUTION

CHAPTER OUTLINE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

THE ORIGINS OF THE CONSTITUTION

2.1 Describe the ideas behind the American Revolution and their role in shaping the Constitution.

THE GOVERNMENT THAT FAILED: 1776–1787

2.2 Analyze how the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation led to its failure.

WRITING A CONSTITUTION: THE PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION

2.3 Describe the delegates to the Constitutional Convention and the core ideas they shared.

CRITICAL ISSUES AT THE CONVENTION

2.4 Categorize the issues at the Constitutional Convention and outline the resolutions reached on each type of issue.

THE MADISONIAN SYSTEM

2.5 Analyze how the components of the Madisonian system addressed the dilemma of reconciling majority rule with the protection of minority interests.

RATIFYING THE CONSTITUTION

2.6 Compare and contrast the Federalists and Anti-Federalists in terms of their backgrounds and their positions regarding government.

CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION

2.7 Explain how the Constitution can be formally amended and how it changes informally.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONSTITUTION

2.8 Assess whether the Constitution establishes a majoritarian democracy and how it limits the scope of government.

Politics in Action

AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

Gregory Lee Johnson felt that the buildup of nuclear weapons in the world threatened the planet's survival. He wanted to protest presidential and corporate policies concerning nuclear weapons, yet he had no money to hire a lobbyist or to purchase an ad in a newspaper. So he and some other demonstrators marched through the streets of Dallas, chanting political slogans and stopping at several corporate locations to stage "die-ins" intended to dramatize the consequences of nuclear war. The demonstration ended in front of Dallas City Hall, where Gregory doused an American flag with kerosene and set it on fire.

Burning the flag violated the law, and Gregory was convicted of "desecration of a venerated object," sentenced to one year in prison, and fined $2,000. He appealed his conviction, claiming that the law that prohibited burning the flag violated his freedom of speech. In the case of *Texas v. Gregory Lee Johnson*, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed with Gregory Johnson.

Gregory was pleased with the Court's decision, but he was nearly alone. The public howled its opposition to the decision, and the president called for a constitutional amendment authorizing punishment of flag desecraters. Many public officials vowed to support the amendment, and organized opposition to it was scarce. However, an amendment to prohibit burning the American flag did not obtain the two-thirds vote in each house of Congress necessary to send it to the states for ratification.

Instead, Congress passed a law—the Flag Protection Act—that outlawed the desecration of the American flag. The next year, however, in *United States v. Eichman*, the Supreme Court found the act an impermissible infringement on free speech.

After years of political posturing, legislation, and litigation, little has changed. Burning the flag remains a legally protected form of political expression despite the objections of the overwhelming majority of the American public. Gregory Johnson did not prevail because he was especially articulate, nor did he win because he had access to political resources, such as money or powerful supporters. He won because of the nature of the Constitution.

Understanding how an unpopular protestor like Gregory Lee Johnson could triumph over the combined forces of the public and its elected officials is central to understanding the American system of government. The Constitution supersedes statutory law, even when the law represents the wishes of a majority of citizens. The Constitution not only guarantees individual rights but also decentralizes power. Even the president cannot force Congress to start the process of amending the Constitution. Power is not concentrated efficiently in the hands of one person, such as the president. Instead, there are numerous checks on the exercise of power and many obstacles to change. Some complain that this system is inefficient and too often produces stalemate, while others praise the way in which it protects minority views. Both positions are correct.

Gregory Johnson's case raises some important questions about government in America. What does democracy mean if the majority does not always get its way? Is this how we should be governed? And is it appropriate that the many limits on the scope of government action, both direct and indirect, sometimes prevent action most citizens desire?

Our theme of the scope of government runs throughout this chapter, which focuses on what the national government can and cannot do. A nation that prides itself on being "democratic" must evaluate the Constitution according to democratic standards, the core of our other theme. To understand government and to answer questions about how we are governed and what government does, we must first understand the Constitution.

* * * * *

A **constitution** is a nation's basic law. It creates political institutions, assigns the powers of government, and often provides guarantees to citizens. A constitution is also an unwritten accumulation of traditions and precedents that have established acceptable means of governing. As the body of rules that govern our nation, the U.S. Constitution has an impact on many aspects of our everyday lives, such as the rights we enjoy, the health care we receive, and the taxes we pay.

constitution
A nation's basic law. It creates political institutions, assigns or divides powers in government, and often provides certain guarantees to citizens. Constitutions can be either written or unwritten.

THE ORIGINS OF THE CONSTITUTION

2.1 Describe the ideas behind the American Revolution and their role in shaping the Constitution.

In the summer of 1776, a small group of men met in Philadelphia and passed a resolution that began an armed rebellion against the government of what was then the most powerful nation on Earth. The resolution was, of course, the Declaration of Independence, and the armed rebellion was the American Revolution.

The attempt to overthrow a government forcibly is a serious and unusual act. All countries, including the United States, consider it treasonous and levy serious punishments for it. A set of compelling ideas drove our forefathers to take such drastic and risky action. Understanding the Constitution requires an understanding of these ideas.

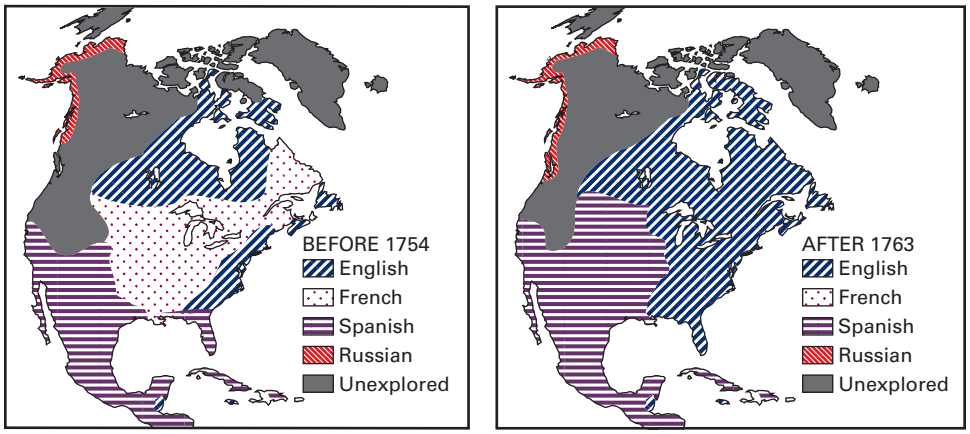
The Road to Revolution

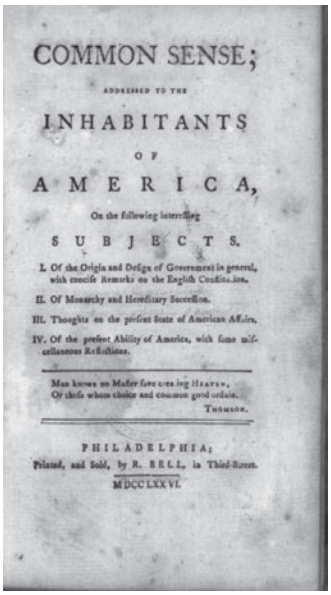
By eighteenth-century standards, life was not bad for most people in America—enslaved people and indentured servants being major exceptions—at the time of the Revolution. In fact, White colonists "were freer, more equal, more prosperous, and less burdened with cumbersome feudal and monarchical restraints than any other part of mankind."[1] Although the colonies were part of the British Empire, the king and Parliament generally confined themselves to governing America's foreign policy and trade. They left almost everything else to the discretion of individual colonial governments. Although commercial regulations irritated colonial shippers, planters, land speculators, and merchants, these rules had little influence on the bulk of the population, who were self-employed farmers or artisans.

As you can see in Figure 2.1, Britain obtained an enormous new territory in North America after the French and Indian War (also known as the Seven Years' War) ended in 1763. The cost of defending this territory against foreign adversaries was

FIGURE 2.1 EUROPEAN CLAIMS IN NORTH AMERICA

Following its victory in the French and Indian War in 1763, Britain obtained from the French an enormous new territory to govern. (Britain also gained Florida from Spain.) To raise revenues to defend and administer the new territory, it raised taxes on the colonists and tightened enforcement of trade regulations.




COMMON SENSE;

ADDRESSED TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF

AMERICA,

On the following interesting

SUBJECTS.

I. Of the Origin and Design of Government in general, with concise Remarks on the English Constitution.

II. Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succession.

III. Thoughts on the present State of American Affairs.

IV. Of the present Ability of America, with some miscellaneous Reflections.

Man knows no Master save creating HEAVEN,
Or those whom choice and common good ordain.
THOMSON.

PHILADELPHIA:

Printed, and Sold, by R. BELL, in Third-Street.

MDCCLXXVI.

Thomas Paine. Library of Congress American Imprint Collection [LC-USZ62-10658]

Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776) encouraged the colonists to declare independence from Britain.

high, and Parliament reasoned that it was only fair that those who were the primary beneficiaries—the colonists—should contribute to their own defense. In order to raise revenue to defend the new territory, the British Parliament passed a series of taxes on official documents, publications like newspapers, and imported paper, glass, paint, and tea. Britain also began tightening enforcement of its trade regulations, which were designed to benefit the mother country, not the colonists.

The colonists lacked direct representation in Parliament and resented its imposing taxes on them without their consent. They protested, boycotted the taxed goods, and, as a symbolic act of disobedience, even threw 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor. Britain reacted by applying economic pressure through a naval blockade of the harbor, further fueling the colonists' anger. The colonists responded by establishing the First Continental Congress in September 1774, sending delegates from each colony to Philadelphia to discuss the future of relations with Britain.

Declaring Independence

Talk of independence was common among the delegates. Thomas Paine's fiery tract *Common Sense* appeared in January 1776 and fanned the already hot flames of revolution. In May and June 1776, the Continental Congress began debating resolutions about independence. On June 7, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia moved "that these United States are and of right ought to be free and independent states." A committee composed of Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, John Adams of Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, and Robert Livingston of New York was formed to draft a document to justify the inevitable declaration. On July 2, Congress formally approved Lee's motion to declare independence from England. Congress adopted the **Declaration of Independence** two days later, on July 4.

Declaration of Independence
The document approved by representatives of the American colonies in 1776 that stated their grievances against the British monarch and declared their independence.

The primary author of the Declaration of Independence was Thomas Jefferson, a 33-year-old, well-educated Virginia lawmaker who was a talented author steeped in the philosophical writings of European moral philosophers.[2] The Declaration quickly became one of the most widely quoted and revered documents in America. Filled with fine principles and bold language, it can be read as both a political tract and a philosophical treatise.

Much of the Declaration was a polemic, a political argument, announcing the Revolution to the citizens of the colonies and justifying it. Most of the document—27 of its 32 paragraphs—listed the ways in which the king had abused the colonies. The delegates accused George III of all sorts of evil deeds, including inciting the "merciless

World History Archive/Newscom

(From left) John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert R. Livingston, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin submit the Declaration of Independence to Continental Congress President John Hancock. Legend has it that Hancock remarked, "We must be unanimous; there must be no pulling different ways; we must hang together," to which Franklin replied, "We must indeed all hang together, or, most assuredly, we shall hang separately."

Indian savages" to make war on the colonists. The delegates focused blame on the king because they held that only he, not Parliament, had authority over the colonies.

The Declaration's polemical aspects were also important because the colonists needed foreign assistance to take on Britain, the most powerful nation in the world. France, which was engaged in a war with Britain, was a prime target for the delegates' diplomacy and eventually provided aid that was critical to the success of the Revolution.

Today, we study the Declaration of Independence more as a statement of philosophy than as a political call to arms. In just a few sentences, Jefferson set forth the American democratic creed, the most important and succinct statement of the philosophy underlying American government—as applicable today as it was in 1776.

The English Heritage: The Power of Ideas

The Declaration articulates ideas that were by then common knowledge on both sides of the Atlantic, especially among those people who wished to challenge the power of kings. Franklin, Jefferson, James Madison of Virginia, Robert Morris of Pennsylvania, Alexander Hamilton of New York, and other intellectual leaders in the colonies were learned and widely read men, familiar with the works of English, French, and Scottish political philosophers. These leaders corresponded about the ideas they encountered in their reading, quoted philosophers in their debates over the Revolution, and applied the philosophers' ideas to the new government they would form with the Constitution.

John Locke was one of the most influential philosophers the Founders read. His writings, especially *The Second Treatise of Civil Government* (1689), profoundly influenced American political leaders. His work was "the dominant political faith of the American colonies in the second quarter of the eighteenth century."[3]

The foundation on which Locke built his powerful philosophy was a belief in **natural rights**—rights inherent in human beings, not dependent on governments. Before governments arose, Locke held, people existed in a state of nature, in which they were governed not by formal laws but by the laws of nature—laws determined by people's innate moral sense. This natural law provided natural rights, including life, liberty, and property.

natural rights
Rights inherent in human beings, not dependent on governments, which include life, liberty, and property. The concept of natural rights was central to English philosopher John Locke's theories about government and was widely accepted among America's Founders.

Because it was superior to human law, natural law could even justify a challenge to the rule of a tyrannical king. Government, Locke argued, must be built on the **consent of the governed**; in other words, the people must agree on who their rulers will be. It should also be a **limited government**; that is, there must be clear restrictions on what rulers can do. Indeed, the sole purpose of government, according to Locke, was to protect natural rights. The idea that certain things were beyond the realm of government contrasted sharply with the traditional notion that kings possessed divinely granted, absolute rights over their subjects.

consent of the governed
The idea that government derives its authority from the people.

limited government
The idea that certain restrictions should be placed on government to protect the natural rights of citizens.

Two limits on government were particularly important to Locke. First, governments must provide standing laws so that people know in advance whether their acts will be acceptable. Second, and Locke was very forceful on this point, "The supreme power cannot take from any man any part of his property without his consent." To Locke, the preservation of property was the principal purpose of government. The sanctity of property was one of the few ideas absent from Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence, which altered Locke's phrase "life, liberty, and property" to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." We shall soon see, however, how the Lockean idea of the sanctity of property figured prominently at the Constitutional Convention. James Madison, the most influential member of that body, directly echoed Locke's view that the preservation of property is the purpose of government.

Locke argued that in an extreme case people have a right to revolt against a government that no longer has their consent. Anticipating critics' charges that this right would lead to constant civil disturbances, he emphasized that people should not revolt until injustices become deeply felt. The Declaration of Independence accented the same point, declaring that "governments long established should not be changed for

light and transient causes." But when matters went beyond "patient sufferance," severing the ties between the people and their government was necessary.[4]

Locke represented only one element of revolutionary thought from which Jefferson and his colleagues borrowed. Another was a tradition well established in the English countryside of opposition to the executive power of the Crown; it emphasized the rights of the people. The Levellers was a political movement during the English Civil War (1642–1651) that championed popular sovereignty, extended suffrage, equality before the law, and religious tolerance, all of which were expressed in the manifesto *Agreement of the People*. The American colonists themselves had developed a set of political ideas that stressed moral virtue, patriotism, relations based on merit, and the equality of independent citizens. These American ideas intensified the radicalism of the British "country" ideology and linked it with older currents of European thought, stretching back to antiquity, regarding the rights of citizens and the role of government.

The American Creed

There are some remarkable parallels between Locke's thought and the language in the Declaration of Independence (see Table 2.1). Finessing the issue of how the rebels knew that men had rights, Jefferson simply declared that it was "self-evident" that men were equally "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights," including "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Because the purpose of government was to "secure" these rights, the people could form a new government if the existing one failed to do so.

It was in the American colonies that the powerful ideas of European political thinkers took root and grew into what Seymour Martin Lipset termed the "first new nation."[5] With these revolutionary ideas in mind, Jefferson claimed in the Declaration

TABLE 2.1 LOCKE AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: SOME PARALLELS

Locke	Declaration of Independence
Natural Rights	
"The state of nature has a law to govern it"	"Laws of Nature and Nature's God"
"life, liberty, and property"	"life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"
Purpose of Government	
"to preserve himself, his liberty, and property"	"to secure these rights"
Equality	
"men being by nature all free, equal and independent"	"all men are created equal"
Consent of the Governed	
"for when any number of men have, by the consent of every individual, made a community, with a power to act as one body, which is only by the will and determination of the majority"	"Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."
Limited Government	
"Absolute arbitrary power, or governing without settled laws, can neither of them consist with the ends of society and government."	"The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations."
"As usurpation is the exercise of power which another has a right to, so tyranny is the exercise of power beyond right, which nobody can have a right to."	
Right to Revolt	
"The people shall be the judge. . . . Oppression raises ferments and makes men struggle to cast off an uneasy and tyrannical yoke."	"Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes. . . . But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government."

of Independence that people should have primacy over governments, that they should rule instead of being ruled. Moreover, each person was important as an individual, "created equal," and endowed with "unalienable rights." Consent of the governed, not divine rights or tradition, made the exercise of political power legitimate.

No government had ever been based on these principles. Ever since 1776, Americans have been concerned about fulfilling the high aspirations of the Declaration of Independence.

Winning Independence

Declaring independence did not win the Revolution—it merely announced its beginning. John Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail, "You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil, blood, and treasure that it will cost us to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these states."[6] Adams was right. The colonists seemed little match for the finest army in the world, whose size was nearly quadrupled by hired guns from the German state of Hesse and elsewhere. In 1775, the British had 8,500 men stationed in the colonies and had hired nearly 30,000 mercenaries. Initially, the colonists had only 5,000 men in uniform in the Continental Army, and their number waxed and waned as the war progressed. Nevertheless, in 1783, the American colonies won their war of independence. How they won is a story best left to history books.[7] In the following sections we will explore how they formed a new government.

The "Conservative" Revolution

Revolutions such as the 1789 French Revolution, the 1917 Russian Revolution, and the 1978–1979 Iranian Revolution produced great societal change—as well as plenty of bloodshed. The American Revolution was different. Despite the revolutionary ideas behind it, the Revolution was essentially a conservative movement that did not drastically alter the colonists' way of life. Its primary goal was to restore rights that the colonists felt were theirs as British subjects and to enable them to live as they had before Britain tightened its regulations following the Seven Years' War.

American colonists did not feel the need for great social, economic, or political upheavals. Despite their opposition to British rule, they "were not oppressed people; they had no crushing imperial shackles to throw off."[8] As a result, the Revolution did not create class conflicts that would split society for generations to come. The colonial leaders' belief that they needed the consent of the governed blessed the new nation with a crucial element of stability—a stability the nation would need.

THE GOVERNMENT THAT FAILED: 1776–1787

2.2 Analyze how the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation led to its failure.

The Continental Congress that adopted the Declaration of Independence was only a voluntary association of the states. In 1776, Congress appointed a committee to draw up a plan for a permanent union of the states. That plan, our first constitution, was the **Articles of Confederation**.[9]

Articles of Confederation
The first constitution of the United States, adopted by Congress in 1777 and ratified in 1781. The Articles established the Continental Congress as the national legislature, but left most authority with the state legislatures.

The Articles of Confederation

The Articles of Confederation established a government dominated by the states. The United States, according to the Articles, was a confederation, a "league of friendship and perpetual union" among 13 states. The Articles established a national legislature with one house; states could send as many as seven delegates or as few as two, but each state had only one vote. There was no president and no national court, and the powers of the national legislature were strictly limited. Most authority rested with the state legislatures because many leaders feared that a strong central government would become as tyrannical as British rule. Table 2.2 summarizes the key provisions of the Articles.

TABLE 2.2 KEY PROVISIONS OF THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

Feature of National Government	Provision
Central government	Weak
Executive	None
Legislature	One chamber with one vote per state
Courts	None
Regulation of commerce	None
Taxation	No power of direct taxation
Amendment of Articles	Required unanimous consent
National defense	Could raise and maintain an army and navy
Power over states	None

Because unanimous consent of the states was needed to put the Articles into operation, the Articles adopted by the Continental Congress in 1777 did not go into effect until 1781, when laggard Maryland finally ratified them. In the meantime, the Continental Congress barely survived, lurching from crisis to crisis. At one point during the war, some of Washington's troops threatened to create a monarchy and make him king unless Congress paid their overdue wages.

Even after the states ratified the Articles of Confederation, many logistical and political problems plagued Congress. State delegations attended haphazardly. Congress had few powers outside maintaining an army and navy—and little money to do even that. It had to request money from the states because it had no power to tax. If states refused to send money (which they often did), Congress did without. In desperation, Congress sold off western lands (land east of the Mississippi and west of the states) to speculators, issued securities that sold for less than their face value, or used its own presses to print money that was virtually worthless. Congress also voted to disband the army despite continued threats from Britain and Spain.

Under the Articles, Congress lacked the power to regulate commerce, which inhibited foreign trade and the development of a strong national economy. It did, however, manage to develop sound policies for the management of the western frontiers, passing the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which encouraged the development of the Great Lakes region.

In general, the weak and ineffective national government could take little independent action. Most governing power rested in the states. The national government could not compel the states to do anything, and it had no power to deal directly with individual citizens. The weakness of the national government prevented it from dealing with the hard times that faced the new nation. There was one benefit of the Articles, however: when the nation's leaders began to write a new constitution, they could look at the provisions of the Articles of Confederation and know some of the features they should avoid.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

A Strong National Government

One of the most important features of the Constitution is the creation of a strong national government. If the Framers had retained a weak national government, as under the Articles of Confederation, Congress could not create a great national economic market through regulating interstate commerce, no president could conduct a vigorous foreign policy, federal courts could not issue orders to protect civil rights, and the federal government could not raise the funds to pay for Social Security benefits or grants and loans for college students.