



BUILDING BRIDGES FOR AMERICA
presents

Civics 101

Back to the Basics – Focus on What’s at Stake



Welcome

Tonight's Hosts:

Terry Mumford, Jenny Okamoto, and Caz Margenau
Leadership Development, Building Bridges for America

WHERE WE STAND

Democrats believe that the economy should work for everyone, health care is a right, our diversity is our strength, and democracy is worth defending.

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR AMERICA ACTION FUND

Our Mission

Building Bridges mobilizes and empowers networks of relational grassroots organizers to create an equitable and informed electorate.

Our Values

We recognize that the effort adds value, regardless of the result.

We are committed to the development of a broad and inclusive coalition.

We conduct our actions and are informed by the legacy of Pete Buttigieg's 2020 Campaign's Rules of the Road.

Our Vision

A just and equitable democracy, safeguarded by an informed and engaged electorate, where everyone is valued and belongs.

Respect Belonging Truth Teamwork Boldness Responsibility Substance Discipline Excellence Joy



Friendly Norms

- Introduce yourself in the chat – Where are you from? Are you working with any campaigns and organizations?
- Post questions and info in the chat
- There will be a Q & A at the end. Please keep yourself **muted** unless you are speaking.
- Meeting will be 1-hour
- Thank you for joining us!



Terry Mumford

Partner, Law Firm - Lobbyist and Governmental Benefits

Associate University Counsel

Dep. Director, Legislative Services Agency

Legislative Director, Governor's Office

Chief Legal Counsel, House of Representatives



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Civics 101: Back to the Basics- Focus on What's at Stake

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BASICS

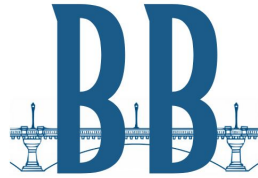
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Civics 101

Back to the Basics - Focus on What's at Stake



Let's talk Civics!

Workshop Goals

- What's At Stake When We Vote?
- What Should We Know?

- US Constitution
- Federal Legislation
- Elections
- State and Local Government



Workshop Goals

- Knowledge that leads to Action!
 - Our vision – safeguard democracy by an informed and engaged electorate

“I said ‘Somebody should do something about that.’
Then I realized I am somebody.”

— Lily Tomlin





Why are we presenting this training on Civics?

- By knowing the system we will know where to focus our efforts
- Knowledge is power
 - But we need to understand the basics first!

How can you use this information?

- Be a “super-volunteer”
- Be a “regular” volunteer
- Be a trusted voice
- Be an engaged citizen



That's Unconstitutional!!



That's Unconstitutional!!

- What can be unconstitutional?
 - A law itself, its interpretation, or its implementation.
- Why would the law be unconstitutional?
 - If it violates express or implied powers & protections granted by the constitution.
- Who determines constitutionality?
 - The courts



What is in the US Constitution?



- 7 Articles–structure and operation
- 27 Amendments



The U.S. Constitution

The Articles (1789)

1, 2, 3 The Structure of the Government



- **Article I Legislative: Lawmaking**
 - The Congress – House of Representatives & Senate – power to tax, borrow money, regulate interstate/foreign commerce, declare war
- **Article II Executive: Execute the Laws**
 - President, Vice-President – power to enforce federal laws, command the armed forces, grant pardons, and make treaties and appointments with Senate confirmation.
- **Article III Judicial: Interpret the Laws**
 - US Supreme Court and other federal Courts – cases arising under the Constitution, federal laws, treaties



The U.S. Constitution

The Articles (1789), cont.

4,5,6,7 The Federal Government and the States



- **Article IV: Full Faith and Credit**
 - States honor other states laws
 - Extradition
 - Creation of a new state
- **Article V Amendments to the Constitution**
- **Article VI “Supremacy Clause”**
 - The Constitution and federal laws take priority over state laws
- **Article VII Approval of the Constitution**



3 branches of government: A system of “checks and balances” and our vote affects each branch. Where do we want to have our impact?

Legislative Authority is checked and balanced by:

Executive branch - veto power and tie-breaker in the Senate.

Judicial branch - interpretation of laws and overturning unconstitutional acts

Executive authority is checked and balanced by:

Legislative branch - oversight, approval of appointments and treaties, veto overrides, and impeachment.

Judicial branch - interpretation of actions and stopping implementation

Judicial authority is checked and balanced by:

Executive branch - the appointment of judges

Legislative branch - the approval of appointments and the power of impeachment of judges.



Ketanji Brown Jackson, Associate Justice

“Presidents are not kings” (2019)

- Our Constitutional scheme – the design of our government – is erected to prevent tyranny
- Split powers vertically – federalism – federal and state government
- Split powers horizontally – legislative, executive, judicial

Separation of powers is crucial to keep government from becoming too powerful and encroaching on our liberty.



Trump: "I can do anything I want, but I can't charge \$1"

Learning Resources, Inc., et al. v. Trump (2026): SCOTUS (6-3) ruled that Trump's tariffs imposed by Executive Order exceed the powers given to the president under International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977 (IEEPA) – providing him the authority to regulate commerce during national emergencies created by foreign threats. The Trump administration argued that IEEPA delegated to it “the core congressional power of the purse”. But the Court relied on the “major questions” doctrine – the idea that if Congress wants to delegate the power to make decisions of vast economic or political significance, it must do so clearly. The Court found that there had not been a clear delegation.

Why We Should Worry!

- **“Project 2025”** – The Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise. The Heritage Foundation (2023). Relies on “the unitary executive theory” to dismiss the concept of three separate branches of government to give authority to the President
- **Article V Convention** – Conservatives are pushing for a national convention to rewrite the Constitution. $\frac{2}{3}$ of State Legislatures (34) must approve – so far 28 have taken action.
- **Trump Immunity – Trump v. US** – SCOTUS (6-3) ruled Trump had absolute immunity from criminal prosecution for actions within his conclusive and preclusive constitutional authority; found him also entitled to at least presumptive immunity from prosecution for all his official acts; there is no immunity for unofficial acts.

The Amendments to the Constitution

Bill of Rights – Amendments 1-10 (1791) – Limits on the federal government

- 1st Protects core freedoms from governmental interference – Freedom of religion, speech, press, and assembly; the right to petition the government.
- 2nd Right to keep and bear arms – protects the right of individuals to possess firearms for lawful purposes, such as self-defense.
- 3rd Troops may not be quartered in homes in peacetime
- 4th No unreasonable government searches or seizures. Police generally need a warrant, based on probable cause, to search a person, home, or belongings. Warrants must be specific.

The Amendments to the Constitution

Bill of Rights – Amendments 1-10 (1791) – Limits on the federal government (cont)

- 5th Procedures for criminal prosecutions:
 - Grand Jury indictment required for felony charges in federal court
 - Double jeopardy clause prevents a person from being tried twice for the same crime
 - A defendant cannot be forced to testify. “Plead the fifth”
- 6th Right to speedy, public, impartial trial by jury with defense counsel and right to cross-examine witnesses.
- 7th Civil jury trials in federal cases
- 8th No excessive bail or fines, no cruel and unusual punishment

The Amendments to the Constitution

Bill of Rights – Amendments 1-10 (1791) – Limits on the federal government (cont)

- 9th Unlisted rights are not necessarily denied: the amendment protects rights that existed before the government was formed. Examples frequently discussed include the right to travel, the right to vote, the right to privacy, and rights regarding one's own body.
- 10th Powers not delegated to the United States or denied to the states are reserved to the states

More Amendments to Know

- 12th (1804) Electoral College
 - Electoral College officially elects President and Vice President
 - Each state's electors equals the number of Senators and Representatives
- 13th (1865) Abolition of slavery
- 14th (1868) Citizenship and protection of rights
 - Section 1: Citizenship Clause, Privileges and Immunities Clause, Due Process Clause, and Equal Protection Clause – **Supreme Court has used the 14th Amendment to extend various amendments in the Bill of Rights to protect individuals from state action**
 - Section 3: Disqualification from office for insurrection
 - Section 4: Validity of the public debt
- 15th (1870) Voting rights
- 25th (1967) Presidential inability to perform duties

Isn't there a 28th Amendment? Equal Rights Amendment

- Article V - Constitution may be amended with ratification of $\frac{3}{4}$ states - currently 38
- ERA adopted in 1972 with 7-year timeline.
 - Only 35 states adopted within the timeline.
 - 3 states have recently adopted (Nevada 2017, Illinois 2018, Virginia 2020) - Does that count?
 - Five states have rescinded their adoption
- January 2025 - President Biden - “The ERA is the Law of the land”
- Federal Archivist has not accepted the ERA
- Resource - <https://www.equalrightsamendment.org/>



14th Amd, Sec. 1: A limit on the states

- All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.
- No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without **due process of law**; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the **equal protection of the laws**.

Importance of the 14th Amd: Marriage Equality

- **Loving v. Virginia (1967)** – The Supreme Court found that Virginia’s laws banning interracial marriage violated the 14th amendment’s guarantee of due process and equal protection. As a result, **all race-based marriage laws in all states** were struck down.
- **Obergefell v. Hodges (2015)** – The Supreme Court found that state same-sex marriage bans are a violation of the 14th Amendment’s Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses. **The ruling required all fifty states to perform and recognize the marriages of same-sex couples on the same terms and conditions as the marriages of opposite-sex couples, with all the accompanying rights and responsibilities.**

NOTE: Although the right to marry is not specifically stated in the Constitution, it is a “fundamental right” protected by the Constitution.

Importance of the 14th Amendment: Contraception and Reproductive Rights

- **Griswold v. Connecticut (1965)** – The Supreme Court struck down a ban on the use or sale of contraceptives to married couples because it violated the constitutional right to privacy.
- **Eisenstadt v. Baird (1972)** – The Court extended this right to contraception to unmarried people – “the right of the individual, married or single, to be free from unwarranted governmental intrusion into matters so fundamentally affecting a person as the decision whether to bear or beget a child.”

NOTE: The right to privacy is a fundamental right under these cases.

The Constitution and Reproductive Rights, cont.

- **Roe v. Wade (1973)** – The Supreme Court ruled that the 14th Amendment's Due Process Clause provides a right to privacy that protects a pregnant woman's right to choose whether or not to have an abortion. But it also ruled that this right is not absolute after viability. Established different standards for each trimester.
- **Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992)** – Moved away from the trimester standards and focussed on viability. States have leeway to regulate abortions so long as no undue burden on women.
- **Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization (2022)** – Mississippi law banned abortion after 15 weeks with narrow exceptions for medical emergencies. The Court overturned Roe v. Wade and Planned Parenthood v. Casey.

The Dobbs Opinion: The 14th Amd does not provide a right to abortion

A majority of the Supreme Court upheld the Mississippi law and overruled Roe and Casey. Alito wrote the opinion. The majority included Coney Barrett, Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Thomas.

- **The Originalism History Test** – Reference to precedent, traditions and conscience have been used to broaden the meaning of the Constitution (esp 14th Amendment). 40+ years ago Conservatives began promoting a limited History Test – “Originalism” – to determine how to interpret the Constitution.



The Dobbs Opinion cont'd

The 14th Amd does not provide a right to abortion

Alito – “The Constitution makes no reference to abortion, and no such right is implicitly protected by any constitutional provision, including ... the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. That provision has been held to guarantee some rights that are not mentioned in the Constitution, but such rights must be ‘deeply rooted in this Nation’s history and tradition’ and ‘implicit in the concept of ordered liberty.’”



Alito's "Solution" – Our vote matters!

“Our decision returns the issue of abortion to those legislative bodies, and it allows women on both sides of the abortion issue to seek to affect the legislative process by influencing public opinion, lobbying legislators, voting, and running for office. **Women are not without electoral or political power.** It is noteworthy that the percentage of women who register to vote and cast ballots is consistently higher than the percentage of men who do so. In the last election in November 2020, women, who make up around 51.5 percent of the population of Mississippi, constituted 55.5 percent of the voters who cast ballots.”

Our votes at the federal, state, and local level matter to protect our freedoms!

- Alito's decision opens the door for federal legislation banning abortion.
- 13 states have total abortion bans, 6 states have early gestational limits - 41 states have some form of restriction on abortion
- The Originalism History Test would clearly put the rights of historically disenfranchised people at risk.
- **The most important election is always the next one.**

The Second Amendment – Another Example of 14th Amd Interpretation

- **District of Columbia v. Heller (2008)**: SCOTUS (5–4) – 2nd Amd guarantees an individual right to possess firearms independent of service in a state militia and to use firearms for traditionally lawful purposes, including self-defense in the home.
 - The court: the right of self-defense is “the central component” of the right to keep and bear arms, the 2nd Amd implicitly protects the right “to use arms in defense of hearth and home.”
- **McDonald v. City of Chicago (2010)** : SCOTUS (5–4) – 2nd Amd applies to state and local governments through the 14th Amd.

The Second Amendment, cont.

- **New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen (2022):** SCOTUS (6-3) – Struck down New York’s proper-cause requirement for obtaining an unrestricted license to carry a concealed firearm. The 2nd Amd protects law-abiding citizens with ordinary self-defense needs. What’s the standard? Any regulation must be “consistent with” a historical tradition.
- **U.S. v. Rahimi (2024):** SCOTUS (8-1) – Upheld a federal law disarming individuals under domestic violence restraining orders. Modern gun restrictions can be upheld if they align with historical principles, not just exact “historical twins,” allowing for disarmament of those deemed credible threats.
- **U.S. v. Hemani (2026):** How will SCOTUS rule in a challenge to federal law making it a felony for an “unlawful user” of a controlled substance to possess a firearm?

Can we “fix” SCOTUS?

- Number of Justices set by Congress – 1789 (9) Justices (1 is chief justice),
- Justices nominated by President and approved by Senate,
- Biden established Presidential Commission – Final Report 12/2021–
 - Congress can enlarge the court.
 - Term limits (18 yrs) require Constitutional Amendment.
 - Endorsed an advisory code of ethics.
 - Suggest changes to management of court’s “shadow” or emergency docket – where unsigned opinions block lower court orders



Code of Conduct for Justices Adopted by SCOTUS Nov. 13, 2023

- A justice should:
 - Uphold the integrity and independence of the Judiciary
 - Avoid impropriety and appearance of impropriety
 - Perform the duties of the office fairly, impartially, and diligently
 - Refrain from political activity
- A justice may engage in extrajudicial activities that are consistent with the obligations of Judicial office.

What Can Congress Do?

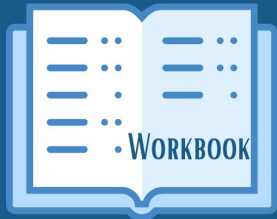
- Pass legislation to change the # of SCOTUS Justices
- Initiate a Constitutional Amendment to change the tenure of Justices
- Pass legislation to change jurisdiction and procedures - Proposals
 - change procedures for emergency motions
 - limit the Court's appellate jurisdiction
 - impose voting rules on the Court, such as requiring the agreement of a supermajority to declare a law unconstitutional
 - allow Congress to override Supreme Court decisions
 - impose new judicial ethics rules
 - implement transparency measures
- Impeachment - a vote of impeachment by the House and a trial and conviction by the Senate

What can we do?

- Voters elect (via the Electoral College) the President who –
 - Nominates the Supreme Court Justices and other federal judges.
 - Can take executive action to respond to Court decisions.
- Voters elect the Senators who approve the nominations
 - Voters determine the Senate Majority that can set the rules for considering nominations.
 - Constituents express their views to their Senators.
- Voters elect US Representatives and Senators who pass legislation to respond to Court decisions.
- Voters elect state and local officials who pass legislation to respond to Court decisions.
- Donors support the organizations that litigate important issues.

There Ought to be a Law!!!





CONGRESS: THERE OUGHT TO BE A LAW!

How a bill becomes a law in five "easy" steps.

Bill to a Law

STEP 1

The bill is drafted and introduced to either the House or Senate



STEP 2

The bill goes to committee

Step 2a: Subcommittee review

Step 2b: Committee mark up of the bill

Step 2c: Committee "votes bill out" to the full "chamber"



STEP 3

Voting by the full chamber on the bill

Step 3a: Bill may be amended

Step 3b: Floor debate, unlimited debate unless Senate votes for "cloture" to vote or filibuster, minimum of 60 votes needed.



STEP 4

Referral of bill to the other chamber,

Repeat steps 2 & 3



STEP 5

Bill is passed

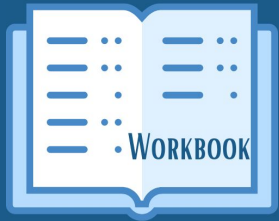
The identical bill is passed by each chamber, then sent to President for their approval.



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RULES TO KNOW



WHAT IS A FILIBUSTER?

Senate rules allow a "filibuster"- a delay of action on legislation. Traditionally a filibuster was intended to open debate on the legislation, Use of the filibuster has evolved to allow Senators to call a filibuster without opening the issue to debate, and the legislation is not considered. A filibuster can be stopped by a "cloture" vote. The filibuster does not apply to reconciliation, appointment of judges and the cabinet. The filibuster rule can be changed or amended by the Senate.

WHAT IS CLOTURE?

Cloture ends debate on a bill and submits it for a vote - requires 60 votes

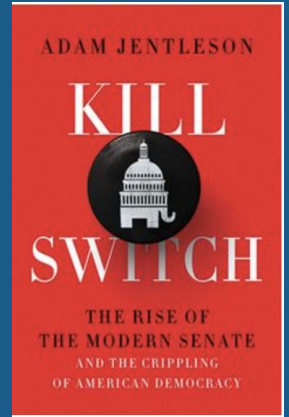
WHAT IS RECONCILIATION?

Reconciliation is any measure (bill, resolution) pertaining to revenue, taxes, and debt limit and can be approved by a simple majority (51 votes in Senate).

WHAT KIND OF GOVERNMENT ARE WE?

"Federal" (3 levels of government), "representative, democratic" (people have means to control government), "republic "(people choose elected delegates)-

Our American Government 2003



WHO'S WHO IN THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE?



Who are the Senators?

100 Senators

- 2 per state, regardless of population,
- Serve 6 year terms

Senate Leadership

- The Vice-President of the United States serves as the President of the Senate and gets a vote in the case of a tie.
- President Pro Tempore - Majority Leader
- Minority Leader - Leader of the Minority Party
- Each party leadership includes
 - Whip
 - Conference Chair

Who are the House of Representatives

435 Representatives or Congresspersons

- Will hear them referred to as "congresspersons" because they represent congressional districts in their respective states.
- Total number is set by federal statute
- Each state has at least 1
- The total per state (greater than 1) is based on population or "apportionment"
- 2-year terms
- State legislatures determine the "districts" represented

House Leadership

- Speaker of the House
- Majority Leader
- Minority Leader
- Each party's leadership includes
 - Whip
 - Conference Chair



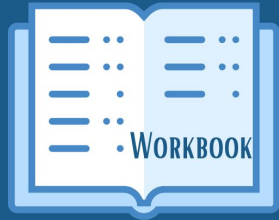
The Speaker of the House
is third in line for the
Presidency

In Congress – Who’s Up for Election in 2026?

- **Every** U.S. Congressperson is up for election November 3, 2026.
- **33** of the U.S. Senators are up for election in 2026 – 13-D, 20-R.
- For ratings on these races, consider the Cook Political Report – <https://www.cookpolitical.com/ratings>
- Have you checked on your Senators’ and Representatives’ (and/or candidates’) views on issues that are important to you? As they say, “Vote Accordingly!”
- Sign up for our course “How to be Politically Active” to get tips on writing your elected officials

Throw the bums out! – Let's Focus on
Elections in 2026





"THROW THE BUMS OUT!" TYPES OF ELECTIONS



Elections

General Election

An election to fill a public office-for federal offices elections happen in even number years.

Primary Election

An election to place a candidate on the ballot for the general election on a political party's "ticket".

Open Primary

Voter selects a party on election day in order to pick which candidates they wish to voter for.

Closed Primary

Only voters who are registered with a party may vote in that party's primary

Top Two Open Primary Systems

All candidates for all parties are listed by office, the top two with the most votes compete in the general election.

Run-Off Primary/Election

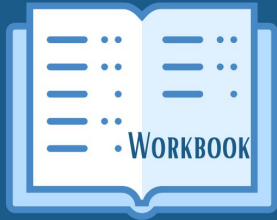
A follow-up primary or election when no candidate wins the majority - typically at least 50%.

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)

Voters rank candidates by preference on their ballots. If a candidate wins a majority of first-preference votes, they are declared the winner. If no candidate wins a majority of first-preference votes, the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes is eliminated. The second choice votes are added to the vote totals until a candidate meets the minimum threshold (i.e. 50%)



Election Jargon - A Baker's dozen



Absentee Ballot

A ballot completed and typically mailed in advance of an election by a voter who is unable to be present at the polls.

Ballot Initiative

A procedure allowed in a number of states under which citizens are able to vote to change a law.

Battleground States

A large state with an electorate split relatively evenly between Democrats and Republicans - so named because candidates spend a disproportionate amount of time and money campaigning there.

Blue State

A state where people tend to vote for the Democratic Party.

Candidate Committee

A committee formed by a candidate to accept contributions and make expenditures under the candidate's authority to support a bid for election.

Congressional District

A territorial division of a state from which a member of the U.S. House of Representatives is elected.

FEC (Federal Election Commission)

The Federal Election Commission enforces federal campaign finance laws, including monitoring donation prohibitions and limits, and oversees public funding for presidential campaigns.

Gerrymandering

The practice of drawing political constituency maps to increase a particular candidate's or party's advantage in a subsequent election.

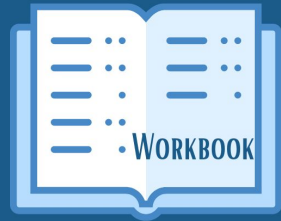
(PAC) Political Action Committee

An organization formed to promote its members' views on selected issues, usually by raising money that is used to fund candidates who support the group's position.

Popular Vote

The votes made directly for a candidate.





ELECTION JARGON - A BAKER'S DOZEN CONT'D

Precinct

A voting district-the smallest unit into which electoral districts are divided. Precinct chairs often elect party officials.

Red State

A state where people tend to vote for the Republican Party.

Registered Voter

A citizen who has registered with election officials in order to become eligible

ADMINISTRATION OF ELECTIONS

While the Federal Government has jurisdiction over federal elections, most elections are decided at the state level.

STATE ROLE

- State law generally governs elections that occur in that state.
- State and local officials are primarily responsible for conducting elections.
- The Secretary of State's Office and/or County Clerks are often good resources.

FEDERAL ROLE

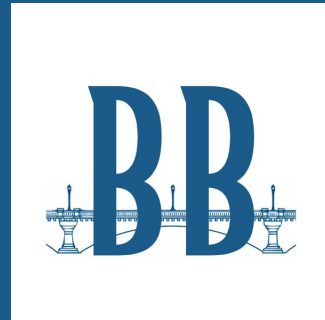
- Remember the 13th Amendment-The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
- The FEC (Federal Election Committee) is responsible for disclosing campaign finance information, enforcing limits, prohibitions on contributions, and overseeing the public funding of presidential elections.

For instance the States responded to the pandemic with changes in election procedures (i.e. vote by mail qualifications, drop boxes, extended voting hours and days).



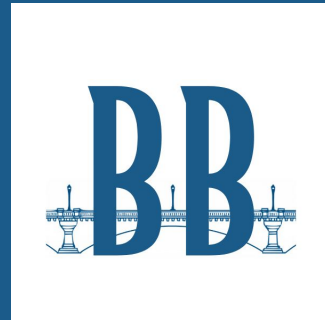
Gerrymandering – Politicians Pick Their Voters

- Gerrymandering is the practice of redrawing electoral district boundaries to unfairly favor one political party or group over another. It involves manipulating map shapes—often creating bizarre, convoluted districts—to "pack" opposition voters into a few districts or "crack" them across many, reducing their overall voting power.
- How do you fix it? – Go to court?



Gerrymandering – SCOTUS

- **Partisan or Political Gerrymandering – Rucho v. Common Cause (2019):** SCOTUS (5-4) held that federal courts cannot hear challenges to partisan or political gerrymandering.
- Based on this decision, SCOTUS allowed mid-decade gerrymandering in Texas and California.



More on Gerrymandering – SCOTUS

- **Racial Gerrymandering.** 14th Amd Equal Protection and VRA SEC. 2. No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.
- **Allen v. Milligan (2023)** – SCOTUS (5-4) – held that Alabama’s congressional map likely violates Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act by diluting the votes of Black residents.
- But **Alexander v. South Carolina (2024)** – SCOTUS (6-3) – Case gave a “path” to treat racial gerrymandering as “political” gerrymandering – there’s a presumption of good faith.



2026 Gerrymandering – SCOTUS

- **Louisiana v. Callais** (April 2026) – SCOTUS (6-3) struck down a Louisiana congressional district map that created a second minority-majority district. The map had been drawn in response to an earlier lower court decision that a 2022 map violated VRA and ordered a new map for 2024. That map was challenged by “non-African Americans”.
- Alito wrote the majority opinion – holding that the intentional drawing of a minority-majority district was unconstitutional. And that VRA Sec. 2 did not protect the map.
- Voting in Louisiana has already begun – there’s litigation on How to apply the decision.



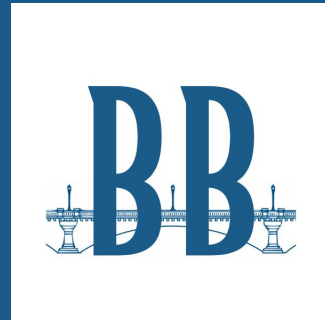
What's the fix?

- Federal Legislation - Freedom to Vote Act (2022) passed the House, died in the Senate - prohibited mid-decade redistricting, banned partisan gerrymandering in congressional map drawing. improved legal protections for voters of color in redistricting, required greater transparency in the map-drawing process, and improved voters' ability to challenge gerrymandered maps in court and win timely relief.



What's the fix?

- What are the mechanisms for redistricting without gerrymandering?
 - Independent Redistricting Commissions
 - Proportional Representation
 - “Neutral” standards for redistricting



More on Gerrymandering – “My Vote Doesn’t Matter”

- Only “relevant” where there are “districts” – Congressional, state legislators, local bodies (county council)
- Voting still matters – avoid a “mandate”
- Statewide races are not subject to gerrymandering
- County-wide, city-wide, etc., races are not subject to gerrymandering



More on PACs, Super PACs, and Citizens United

- **Political Action Committees (PACs)** – Fundraising organizations that can give directly to a candidate’s campaign – subject to limits.
- **Citizens United v. FEC (2010)** – SCOTUS (5-4) – Under the 1st Amd, the court invalidated fundraising and expenditure limits by corporations and labor unions on “independent” political organizations – Super PACS. In the 2024 election, they set a record of at least \$2.7 billion.
- **Dark Money** – Election spending where the source is secret. This type of spending often comes from nonprofits that are not required to disclose their donors.





What can we learn from MAGA election strategy?

- Don't just focus on federal elections, swing states/districts, during the federal election years.
- Pay attention to state elections, state houses, all states, all levels.

David Pepper, [Saving Democracy: A User's Manual For Every American](#)





➤ Become an “expert” on upcoming elections in your state.

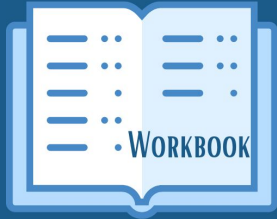
- Who’s on the ballot?
- Last day to register to vote?
- Last day to request mail-in ballot?
- First day of early voting?
- When do polls open & close?

➤ How can you GOTV?



State Government: It is the same but different





"IT'S THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT"

Each State Has a Constitution

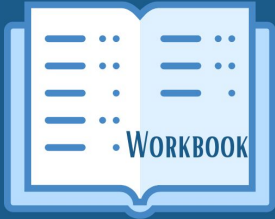
- State constitutions follow federal governmental structure
- 3 branches of government
 - Legislative
 - Executive
 - Judicial
- A state constitution may include areas not covered by the federal constitution and may offer greater protections, but a state constitution cannot conflict with the federal constitution.

Branches of Government (example Indiana)

- Legislative Branch
 - The General Assembly
 - Part-time, Citizen Legislature
 - 100 House Members, elected to two-year terms, each representing a district.
 - 71 Republicans, 29 Democrats
 - Speaker of the House - Todd Huston
 - Minority Leader - Phil GiaQinta
 - 50 Senators, elected for four-year terms, each representing a district.
 - 39 Republicans, 11 Democrats
 - Lieutenant Governor - President of the Senate
 - Pro-tem- Rodric Bray
 - Minority Leader - Greg Taylor
 - Republicans have a supermajority (more than 2/3) in each house. All actions can be taken without Democrat involvement.
 - Session dates
 - Long Sessions- in odd numbered years (must adopt budget)

State Government





"IT'S THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT"

Branches of Government (Indiana cont'd)

- Short Sessions in even numbered years
- Special Sessions- at the call of the Governor
- Redistricting - Legislature "draws" congressional districts and districts for state senators and state representatives
 - Districts are drawn after the decennial (10 year) census by the legislature
 - Finding my legislator www.in.iga.gov

What is Gerrymandering? Drawing districts to achieve an unfair advantage for one party. Check out Common Cause of Indiana about non-partisan proposals for fair redistricting.

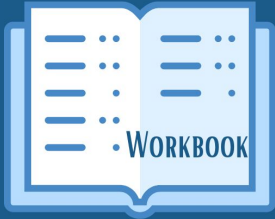
How does a bill become a law

- Drafted by Legislative Services Agency for Representative or Senator
- Introduced by Representative or Senator
- First Reading - assigned to committee
- Heard in Committees - amendment and passed to the Floor-or dies in committee
- Second Reading - Action on the Floor-amendments allowed
- Third Reading -Yes or no by majority vote
- Transmittal to the other chamber for a repeat of the process
- If the identical bill is passed by both chambers, it goes to the Governor for action - signature, veto, or approval without signature after 7 days

The House & Senate are each referred to as "chambers"
A bill is on the "Floor" of the chamber if it is being considered by all members.

State Government





"IT'S THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT"

The Executive Branch

- Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, State Auditor, Attorney General, and Agencies
- Indiana has a "weak Governor" system, which means that a simple majority vote of both chambers can override a veto.
- Implements legislative directives enacted by the legislature

The Judicial Branch

- Supreme Court - highest court in Indiana
- Court of Appeals
- Circuit Courts
- Superior Courts

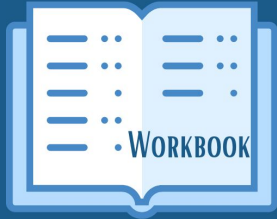
State Government



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WHO IS IN CHARGE? THE STATES OR FEDS?



The States

Don't forget about the 10th Amendment! Any power not specifically given to the federal government by the Constitution belongs to the States and the people.

- Ownership of property
- Education of inhabitants
- Implementation of welfare and other benefits programs
- Protecting people from local threats
- Maintaining a justice system
- Setting up local governments -- counties and municipalities
- Maintaining state highways and administering local roads
- Regulation of Industry
- Raising funds to support their activities
- Elections - Secretary of State
- Insurance

The Feds

But don't forget the Supremacy Clause and the Interstate Commerce Clause

- The federal constitution prohibits states from interfering with federal government's exercise of its constitutional powers, and from assuming any functions that are exclusively entrusted to the federal government.
- The federal constitution gives Congress and not the states the power to regulate interstate commerce.

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Homework

- Prepare a chart of the structure and office holders of your state government.
 - Who is YOUR state representative? YOUR state senator? YOUR councillor?
- What are their positions on issues that are important to you?

Your Policymakers

Step



You can search online and find this information.

U.S. Senator (1)	name, party, contact info.
U.S. Senator (2)	name, party, contact info.
U.S. Representative	name, party, district, contact info.
Governor	name, party, contact info.
State Senator	name, party, district, contact info.
State Representative	name, party, district, contact info.
Mayor	contact information
County Commissioners	contact information
City/Town Council	contact information
School Board Member	contact information



Where Can You Use this Knowledge?

- **Canvassing/Phone Bank?**
 - Share your knowledge
- **Poll worker?**
 - Get firsthand knowledge to share
- **Network resource?**
 - Help friends/family understand the issues and know how to vote

Resources

What's Happening at the Supreme Court?

- SCOTUS Blog - <https://www.scotusblog.com/>

Who and What are on the Ballot?

- League of Women Voters - <https://www.vote411.org/>

Tracking Legislation

- LegiScan - <https://legiscan.com/>

Voting, Elections, & Democracy

- The Brennan Center for Justice - <https://www.brennancenter.org/>



Discussion Time



If you liked this presentation,
Please take a moment before signing off to
share it with others.



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www.buildingbridgesforamerica.com

Thank you for joining us.