

# GLOSSARY

## 527 group

A tax-exempt organization, named after a section of the U.S. tax code, that can engage in election activities on behalf of causes or issues. Many interest groups have formed both PACs and 527 groups on behalf of their causes.

## advice and consent

The power of Congress to confirm or deny presidential nominations for executive and judicial posts and approve of international treaties.

## affirmative action

A policy aimed at helping those previously discriminated against to receive extra advantages and opportunities, such as economic, educational, and political positions. The first presidential use came during Lyndon Johnson's administration in 1965. Recent challenges have been based on the idea that affirmative action creates reverse discrimination against majority-group citizens.

## ~~Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)~~

~~The main form of individual welfare payments until the mid-1990s. More recent programs come in the form of grants to states, where the state distributes the family assistance as needed.~~

## American Bar Association (ABA)

The organization that ranks judicial nominees as well qualified, qualified, or not qualified. These rankings are used to assess nominees prior to their hearings in the Senate.

## amicus curiae brief

Summary case arguments given by interested parties who may be affected by the outcome of a case. This "friend of the court" summary is supposed to give judges more information about the arguments and the possible outcomes.

## Anti-Federalists

Members of the opposition to the new Constitution; they lost the vote but forced the promise that a set of rights would be added as amendments by the new government. This became the Bill of Rights.

## apportionment

The division of representative seats according to population.

## appropriation

Legislation that concerns the raising of revenues by the government.

## appropriation bill

A bill that provides funding for a program that has been authorized, usually for one year at a time.

## approval rating

A measurement of how popular, or unpopular, a leader or program is among the public.

**back-bencher**

A nickname given to newer members of Congress who have few important positions or those more senior members who tend to avoid positions of power or controversy.

~~**balanced budget**~~

~~The goal of the federal government to spend only the amount of money collected from tax revenues. Previous efforts to legislate such spending limits or to create an amendment for this goal have failed.~~

\* **ballot initiative**

A form of direct democracy that allows citizens to petition for issues that will be decided by a direct ballot and not by the legislative branch. This system is popular in California, where it reduced and reorganized taxes. However, at the same time, California has experienced major problems when such initiatives stop an agency from functioning or when opposing initiatives are passed in the same election.

**beltway ("inside the beltway")**

A critical term referencing to the highway loop that surrounds the greater Washington, D.C. area and seems to isolate the leaders of the country. If leaders concern themselves only with lobby groups and the hallways of power and are not concerned with the general interests of the nation at large, they are said to be thinking "inside the beltway."

\* **bicameral**

The "two chambers" of Congress: the House of Representatives and the Senate.

~~**bilateral agreement**~~

~~The resulting agreement when two nations create a joint policy.~~

**bill**

A proposed law being debated in Congress.

**bipartisan**

A label given if support for something comes from members of both parties.

**bloc**

A voting group that tends to include those with common interests and views.

\* **block grants**

Monies given to communities and states for general programs, such as social services and development projects.

~~**blog**~~

~~A media outlet (most often on the Internet) that presents rumors, opinions, and some news. Blogs tend to be highly partisan. Criticisms include their lack of filtering and editing and their lack of responsibility toward facts. Blogs do have the power to investigate where mainstream media outlets might hesitate.~~

\* **blue states**

The label given to states where the Democratic Party wins the electoral votes.

~~**Bell Wether**~~

~~Southern Democratic members of Congress who openly voted for conservative issues and with the Republican Party in the 1980s. Many have now officially switched over to the GOP.~~

\* **brief**

A summary of case arguments given to the judges and justices before a hearing to outline the parameters of the case.

~~**budget resolution**~~

~~A congressional resolution binding the legislature to a specific total budget amount for the fiscal year.~~

\* **bully pulpit**

The idea, named for Teddy Roosevelt's use of the term *bully*, that presidents can gather national public support more easily than the numerous members of Congress. With this national support, Congress is pushed to follow the priorities of the president. Modern popularity polls seem to show that presidents with support of at least 60 percent of the public have a powerful forum for political pressure with Congress.

**capitation**

~~A head count for tax purposes as part of a census.~~

**categorical grants**

Grants given to communities and states for very specific programs that require certain conditions or rules to be applied by the agencies spending the federal monies. If the federal rules are not followed, the monies can be withdrawn.

**caucus**

The arena in which some states select delegates as party candidate representatives through meetings where only party members are allowed to participate.

**caucuses**

Informal meetings in the Congress of groups with similar interests or constituencies.

**~~charter school programs~~**

~~A conservative reform where struggling public schools are replaced by more privately run academies with the hopes that these charter campuses will be more efficient and hold higher standards than publicly run systems.~~

**checks and balances**

The policy allowing each of the three branches of government to "check" the power of the other two and limit that power, if necessary, to maintain balance.

**civil liberties**

The limits of governmental powers over citizens, or the level of freedom citizens have from government.

**~~class action suits~~**

~~A lawsuit involving numerous defendants afflicted by the same law or action who are represented as a group.~~

**clear and present danger test**

The policy limiting the rights of free speech if the government deems certain forms of speech as a clear and present danger to the public. These limits were first defined in the case *Schenk v. U.S.*, 1919.

**client politics**

Policies developed to help specific, smaller groups, where the costs of the actions will be borne by the nation as a whole.

**closed primary system**

The regulation that voters must preregister with a party to cast ballots on primary day, or the system where voters can only vote in one party's primary.

**closed rule**

A procedure used by the House of Representatives to prohibit amendments from being offered in order to speed consideration of the bill.

**cloture**

Procedure developed in the Senate to end filibuster through votes. The current rules for cloture are based on approval of 60 senators. If cloture passes against a filibuster, those delaying must end their actions within a set amount of time and allow business to move forward.

**coattail**

A concept allowing congressional and other candidates to ride the popularity of a leader, such as the president, especially at election time.

**~~Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)~~**

~~A series of volumes comprising a list of rules for the various departments and bureaucracies.~~

**commerce clause**

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3 gives Congress the power to "regulate Commerce with Foreign Nations, and among the several States...."

**commercial speech**

A form of speech regulated and restricted to uphold "truth in advertising." Deception for the sake of money gains is not legal. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is in charge of such regulations.

**community standards**

The ability of communities to ban certain language, art, or actions based on what they deem obscene or appropriate for their citizens.

**comparable worth**

~~A guide for decisions concerning the pay scales of employees of different sexes.~~

**concurrent opinion**

A document drafted by court justices who voted with the majority to explain how they differ in their beliefs about the meaning of the majority vote.

**"consent of the governed"**

Describes a government that derives its power from the governed and does not force its power on the citizens.

**constant campaign**

~~The manner in which presidential candidates and members of the House, who must face re-election every other year, continually campaign to the public to uphold their positions.~~

**constituent**

Voters from the district or state that elected that leader. House members' constituents are from their districts. Senators' constituents are from the entire state.

**containment**

~~The effort to control the spread of opposing groups or influences, as in attempts to limit the spread of communism.~~

**continuing resolution**

~~An action allowing the government to continue to be funded temporarily if Congress is unable to complete the new federal budget by the October 1 deadline.~~

**continuous body**

The Senate is a continuous body in that only one-third of the Senate is up for re-election at a time. All of the House is up for re-election every other year and all seats could be changed. Therefore, the House is not "continuous."

**"Contract with America"**

A list and book used during the congressional elections of 1994 by conservatives led by Newt Gingrich. The effort was to define the basic goals of a new Republican majority if, and when, Republicans gained control of the House of Representatives. The contract was a list of items that Republicans promised to bring to discussion, such as pushing for a balanced budget amendment, limited welfare programs, and other reforms.

**convention**

A summer gathering where the parties elect their nominees, establish the party issue platforms, and approve the vice-presidential nominees.

**cooperative federalism**

The act of federal and state governmental units working together to shape, fund, and enforce policy.

**cost-benefit analysis**

~~A financial guide used by many agencies to compare the cost of a project with the potential benefits.~~

**C-SPAN**

~~The development of cable television in the late 20th century created several news-only television outlets. This network shows congressional activities and debates on several different stations and has been used by members to gain immediate "face time" with the public.~~

**de-alignment**

~~The trend for fewer citizens to claim they loyally support of the major parties.~~

**debt/public debt**

The combined deficits of the federal government owed in the form of bonds sold to U.S. citizens, foreign investors, countries, and parts of government. The largest part of the debt of the United States is currently held by governmental agencies. In mid-2009, the total debt came to about \$11.4 trillion.

**de facto segregation**

The segregation and discrimination perpetuated by factions of society through patterns of residence and economic conditions. The segregation is private and difficult to correct with legislation.

**deficit**

The amount of money created and loaned to the federal government in a given year if it spends more than it collects in revenues.

~~**de jure segregation**~~

~~A form of discrimination that occurs when laws segregate citizens based on religion, ethnicity, or other grounds.~~

**delegates**

Members of a political party selected by party caucuses, primary votes, or other party rules. The party nominee is the candidate who receives the majority of the delegates' votes at the convention.

**democracy**

A form of government where rule is established by all citizens through votes. Usually, majority votes create policy.

~~**demography**~~

~~The study of population patterns for polling.~~

~~**détente**~~

~~The policy of working with opposing nations in an attempt to avoid open conflicts.~~

**devolution**

The late-20th-century movement to reduce the influence of the federal government and other governments to return to a simpler form of governmental controls.

**discharge**

A petition rule in the House that can allow some bills to be released from committee without committee approval.

**discretionary spending**

The programs that Congress can choose to fund. Even though spending to run the government and keeping up the military are seen as given needs, such funding is considered discretionary due to possible changes in the level of funding.

**divided government**

One party controls the majority of one or both chambers of Congress, and the other party controls the executive. It is a by-product of the separate election of presidents. *Gridlock* is also used to describe such a condition.

~~**domino theory**~~

~~The idea that allowing countries to fall under the influence of communism would topple nearby democracies. This was a leading cause of U.S. reaction in Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam.~~

**dual federalism**

Federal and state governments are relatively equal and separate in areas of authority.

**earmarks**

The official term used in Congress for bills that contain pork legislation.

~~**Earned Income Tax Credit**~~

~~Credits calculated by the Internal Revenue Service to provide financial assistance to the poor that can be paid at tax time in April, or eligibility guidelines for items like food stamps.~~

**elastic clause**

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18: Congress's power "To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper..." continues to be a basis of Congress adapting to the needs of the times.

**Electoral College**

The process by which electors are selected by states and are "directed" by the popular vote to select the president.

**elitist theory of government**

The general belief that governments will come to be ruled by those with elite status, usually determined by wealth, educational level, or other methods.

~~**Emails List**~~

~~A recent campaign movement to give soft money to improve women's voter turnouts and support women's issues.~~

**eminent domain**

The power of the government to seize private property for the public good. The property owner must be given "just compensation" for the loss.

**emolument**

~~A gift given to a government official, which must be limited to avoid committing bribery.~~

**entitlements**

Spending that Congress has promised for the future and, in cases such as Social Security, is obligated to fund.

~~**environmental impact statement**~~

~~A statement showing the possible adverse effects of work by government agencies or private industry receiving government assistance on the air, land, or water. The statement is then given public review, and decisions are made whether or not the damage can be avoided, repaired, or ignored.~~

~~**espionage**~~

~~The practice of using spies or secret agents to receive secret information from foreign countries or other companies in a similar industry.~~

**establishment clause**

A law based on the 1st Amendment's section about the status of religion. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion...." Government cannot lead citizens in the practices of certain religions, thus giving preference to those religions or sects.

**exclusionary rule**

The idea that evidence obtained in some illegal manner cannot be used in court against the defendant.

**exclusive jurisdiction**

Powers given solely to the federal government.

**exit poll**

Polls taken directly after voters are finished to develop an early prediction of the outcome.

**ex post facto**

A law barring government agencies from inflicting punishment for events that occurred when something was legal but has since been made illegal.

**fast-track authority**

Pieces of legislation that must be voted on "as is" without amendment attempts. Presidents are sometimes given this authority when beginning talks concerning treaties so that the Senate must take or leave them.

**federalism**

The distribution of governmental power among federal, state, and local groups.

**Federalist**

One who supported the new Constitution and the ultimate name of the party in power under Washington, Adams, and Hamilton.

**Federalist Number 10**

Madison's essay on "factions" or the influence of political parties and interest groups is used today to discuss access and control.

**Federalist Number 51**

Madison's essay on the proper structure of power within the Constitution is used to understand the balance of powers.

**~~Federalist Number 70~~**

~~Hamilton's discussion of the federal judiciary and the powers of such courts is used to debate the role of the courts.~~

***Federalist Papers (The Federalist)***

A book of essays by the Federalists that explain the hows and whys of the federal system of the Constitution.

**~~Federal Register~~**

~~The official publication of executive orders and the rules and regulations of the various executive agencies. These are codified in the "Code of Federal Regulations" (CFR) volumes.~~

**filibuster**

A strategy used in the Senate to speak a bill to death by delaying votes, stopping other legislation, etc., until the bill sponsors give up.

**fiscal**

Refers to the budget and the budget year (October 1 to September 30).

**flat tax**

A national tax level that would be the same for all income groups or would replace the IRS system with a national sales tax system.

**floor**

Open, full debates by either the House members or the Senate members that can occur after a committee has referred a bill to the full chamber.

**"fourth branch"**

An informal name given to the U.S. bureaucracy because many agencies have powers of creating rules, administering rules, and judging those who must follow those rules. This label is also sometimes applied to the media in describing its power to influence public opinions.

**franking**

A traditional privilege allowing members of Congress to send mail to constituents for free.

**Freedom of Information Act, 1966**

A law created by Congress to help ensure that agencies were acting in the most open manner available. Citizens can petition to see files of agencies through this act.

**~~frontloading~~**

~~The process of determining candidates earlier in the presidential campaign because of more key primaries and caucuses in January-March.~~

**\* full faith and credit**

The practice of states giving the different laws of other states credit. An example is how marriage laws are different in various states but states usually recognize marriages from one state to another.

**gender gap**

A trend in U.S. voting where women have given a slight edge to Democrats and men to Republicans.

**~~general jurisdiction~~**

~~A label for the law allowing states the right to decide which cases will be heard in their courts.~~

**~~General Schedule Rating (GS Rating)~~**

~~The salaries of members of the civil service are set in levels, ranging from GS1 to GS18, thus eliminating pay disparities in different parts of government.~~

**\* gerrymandering**

The division of voting districts with the goal of guaranteeing seats for one party stronger.

**~~glass ceiling~~**

~~The difficulty women have had in gaining positions of high authority, power, and pay in industry and government.~~

**good faith exception**

The concept that evidence collected by police can still be used in court, even if it is based on incorrect procedures, false testimony, or has other possible flaws, if it was collected by the police in "good faith." The key is often whether or not the police knew of the evidence's problems or were themselves misled by someone lying.

~~graduate business school~~

~~The progressive ideal that people with higher levels of education should pay higher percentages of taxes.~~

**grassroots**

Local efforts to raise money, raise awareness of certain issues, or influence political leaders.

**Great Compromise (Connecticut Plan, Sherman Plan)**

The plan that created the modern Congress, where the House is dominated by populated states and the Senate is divided equally for all states.

**gridlock**

A collapse of cooperation between the House and Senate or between Congress and the president. It is also used to describe the condition that arises under "divided" government.

**government corporations**

The U.S. Postal Service and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation are the two most famous examples of governmental agencies that create revenue and are expected to run like businesses.

**hold**

A request for a delay in the discussion of a bill in the Senate. If the leadership agrees, this hold can be a permanent block to the bill.

**honeymoon**

The general tradition that Congress, and the public, will be very supportive of a president during the first 100 days of the first term.

~~House Un-American Activities Committee~~

~~The investigative committee that gained notoriety during the late 1940s for its hunts of communists in the United States.~~

~~hyper-pluralist theory~~

~~The general contention that strong groups within societies will weaken the overall control of government.~~

**impeach**

The act of charging a public official (often the president) with criminal acts or misconduct while in office. The House can impeach, and the Senate must decide whether to remove a person as a result of an impeachment.

**inalienable rights**

The goals and duties of government and society to provide things such as "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," according to Jefferson. Locke used the terms "life, liberty, and the pursuit of property."

~~incite/incitement~~

~~The illegal action of causing violence or dangerous commotion through language.~~

**incorporation**

The ability of constitutional rights to be applied to state governments through the requirements of the 14th Amendment.

**incumbent**

A person already holding an office, often seeking re-election.

**indictment**

A grand jury's determination that sufficient evidence has been presented in a criminal case.

**inflation**

The overall rising of price in the economy. Inflation is caused by excessive consumer demand or spikes in the costs of producing goods.



**informal amendments**

~~An adjustment to one of the amendments to the Constitution without formally passing the change. This concept also covers important changes in powers of parts of the government that occur through acts of Congress or other branches that are not challenged or incorporated into amendments.~~

**interest group**

People who support a cause and work together for that cause or political interests.

**interest payments on the debt**

The payments required each budget year for at least the owed interest on the public debt of the United States.

**Jim Crow**

The various laws and practices of segregation, primarily in the South, installed after Reconstruction ended in 1876–1877.

**judicial review**

The power of the Supreme Court to evaluate the constitutional status of laws and lower court rulings, established as a result of the case *Marbury v. Madison*, 1803.

**~~junkyard function~~**

~~Media attacks that expose flaws, secrets, and scandals and are used to keep an eye on government leaders and sell stories.~~

**jurisdiction**

Powers of the court set within the limits of specific areas of law or location.

**lame duck**

A person who has been defeated in a recent election or has announced that he or she is retiring and has not yet been replaced. His or her power usually becomes severely limited.

**~~lapdog function~~**

~~The idea that the press is at the mercy of news sources such as the White House staff. News is reported only if the press is told to report it, and the requested emphasis.~~

**leaks (news leaks)**

Intentional slipping of key pieces of news to supportive members of the press.

**Lemon Test**

A test for the level of financial involvement of government agencies in religious schools based on *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 1971. The government might assist religious entities if (1) there is a legitimate secular purpose for the help, (2) the help does not have the primary effect of advancing or prohibiting religion, and (3) the help does not create "excessive entanglement" between the government and the religion.

**libel**

Any malicious or false content written about a person with the intention of causing ridicule and public derision.

**limited government**

The notion that government can only use certain powers and these powers must be given by the people.

**limited jurisdiction**

The federal government has only those powers given to it by the Constitution.

**linkage institutions**

The groups and agencies that connect the average citizens with the political leadership.

**litigation**

Presenting a lawsuit in court.

**litmus test**

Issues such as abortion, gay rights, and gun control that are important enough to determine where voters will give their support or how certain elected officials will vote.

**lobby/lobbyist**

Registered professionals who work at political centers on behalf of interest groups.

**majority**

The requirement that the winner of any vote must have 50 percent of the vote plus one more to win.

**majority opinion**

The decision written by the majority of the justices of the Supreme Court describing the meaning of the announced decision for the legal community.

**mandatory spending**

Budget items that Congress is required to fund. Most noted is Social Security because these funds are based on previous contributions from the public that are owed back.

**margin of error**

A positive or negative percentage attached to all polls to determine their levels of accuracy. If a candidate's support is 45 percent with a margin of error of 2 percent, then the prediction is that the support is between 43 percent and 47 percent.

**markup**

The action made when correcting or revising a bill.

~~**means testing**~~

~~The proof of need, usually based on low income levels, provided to the government for special program funding.~~

**midterm elections**

The period of elections for all members of the House of Representatives and one-third of the senators when the presidency is not up for election.

**minority opinion**

When the one to four justices who did not vote with the majority give their reasons for opposing the majority opinion. The legal community uses minority opinions as a guide to the power of the majority opinion and possible future challenges to that decision.

**Miranda warning**

An advisement of one's rights that must take place before police can question someone they intend to arrest.

**muckraking**

The practice of journalists to expose the inappropriate actions of public officials, government organizations, or corporations.

~~**narrowcasting**~~

~~The mail and email campaigning toward certain demographics to gain support in Congress for specific issues. The term also describes the rise of media outlets that focus only on specific political events or target specific audiences. Examples include cable channels and Internet sites.~~

**NASCAR dads**

Conservative male voters, often from the South, named after the race car organization because of its popularity in that faction of society.

**national chairperson**

The director of the party organization. The leader can be critical in the development of party issues, advertisements, and reactions to other party actions.

**national committee**

The committee group for a political party that focuses on elections, money-raising activities, party building, and the development of party platforms.

**natural rights**

John Locke's idea that all societies are given basic rights by God and that these cannot be removed by governments. This was included in Jefferson's reasoning for the Declaration of Independence.

**naturalization**

The process of becoming a citizen for someone born outside of the country.

**New Federalism**

A conservative movement designed to return more power and control of money to the states. The term was coined during the Nixon presidency and expanded by the Reagan administration.

**New Hampshire primary**

Traditionally, these are the first of the public votes for the new presidential election. In 2008, it was held January 8.

**New Jersey Plan (Paterson Plan)**

The smaller states' counter to the Virginia Plan. It gave the unicameral (one chamber) Congress equal representation for all states.

~~**Nuclear Test Ban Treaty**~~

~~A document signed to limit the above ground testing of nuclear weapons. The United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union were the main signers.~~

**"off the record"**

Information given to journalists with the understanding that the information is not for publication. This condition must be stated before a source divulges the information.

**omnibus**

Legislation that covers many different parts of government, subjects, or law in one bill.

**open primary system**

A primary that allows a voter to decide on election day which party list to select. Some states also allow voters to go to primaries for more than one party.

**open seat**

The relatively rare event when no incumbent is running for a post.

**original jurisdiction**

Rare court cases "affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, and those in which a State shall be Party," where only the federal Supreme Court hears the issue.

**patronage (or the "spoils system")**

The act of doling out political positions to supporters of a party and its candidates, often used as incentive to gain that support. The system was so corrupt that major reforms now limit such appointments to very few positions, such as ambassadorships.

**penumbra rights**

Rights not clearly defined but existing in the "shadow" of formal Constitutional rights. An example would be privacy rights in the shadow of 1st Amendment rights.

**per curiam decisions**

Supreme Court decisions that are announced without legal explanation or without a majority opinion.

~~**petition for redress**~~

~~The right to request that the government restore the rights of the governed.~~

**platform**

A list of issues that each state party group and the national parties draw up, outlining all the issues they would like to address if voted into office.

~~**Plum Book**~~

~~The list of federal positions, published by Congress, that are open to presidential appointments. The list includes about 400 upper policy making positions and about 2,500 assistant positions.~~

**pluralism**

The guiding principle that access to government should be open and widespread. Interest group proliferation is evidence of this in action.

**plurality**

Winning an election by finishing first, without regard to the percentage of the vote won, as in the U.S. presidential popular votes. A large number of presidents have won a majority of the electoral votes but only a plurality of the national popular votes.

**political action committee (PAC)**

A registered group that raises funds for candidates and campaigns.

**poll**

A sampling of opinions, political affiliations, or voting patterns used to predict outcomes or trends.

**pork/pork-barrel**

Legislation that is often local and intended to help districts with contracts and money. This is known as pork and is used by members of Congress to gain favors from home constituents and pad voting support.

**poverty line**

The amount of income a family in the United States needs to earn annually to maintain only an "austere" standard of living. Those with incomes below this line are the targets of many assistance programs.

**press corps/White House press corps**

The journalists invited to represent their news companies at presidential press conferences and other events.

**price controls**

The efforts led by the Nixon administration in the 1970s to freeze prices of products and try to keep inflation to a minimum.

**primary**

A public election of delegates for party candidates run by states.

**probable cause**

The requirement that police must have sufficient proof of evidence or suspicion of criminal acts before searching a suspect's personal property or possessions.

**Publius**

The name used by Alexander Hamilton as a pseudonym for the *Federalist Papers* essays, derived from the name of a famous Roman consul. Publius was noted as a supporter of citizens' rights and as an opponent of kings. Hamilton used this name to hint at the power of the new Constitution to protect rights and to cover his contributions to the essays, because many would ignore them if his name were attached. Opponents to the Constitution fought back by writing essays under the name Cato or Brutus. These Roman names were symbols of opposition against governments that became too centralized.

**pure speech**

Spoken or printed words and the extent of freedom involved. See also *symbolic speech*.

**quorum**

The number of members needed to hold an official meeting or conduct binding votes. The traditional number in the U.S. Congress is half of members plus one.

**random polling**

Polling conducted by selecting people from random phone and address lists. The poll data may not reflect actual intent to vote.

**realignment**

The major regrouping of support within political parties. The New Deal was a source of realignment for Democrat support, and the Reagan election did the same for Republicans.

**reapportionment**

The law created by Congress in 1929 that banned the addition of new seats to Congress, adding a cap of 435 seats. After the census, seats would be redistributed instead. Faster-growing states would gain seats from declining states or less rapidly growing states.

**recess appointments**

The ability of the president to fill vacant federal positions, such as federal court judgeships, without senatorial approval if the Senate is in recess. These appointee can serve for almost a year before approval must be considered. After that period, it is difficult for the Senate to remove the person from the position. It is considered a significant way for a president to put in controversial leaders.

**reciprocity**

The pattern of collecting vote promises from other members of Congress in exchange for vote support for their bills and projects.

**red states**

States where the Republican Party won the electoral votes during a presidential election and those that have a tendency to support the conservative position.

**red tape**

The general label of paperwork and procedures often required for actions to be completed in bureaucracies.

**reprieves and pardons**

The powers of the president to set a sentence aside or even declare that the crime is fully erased.

**republic**

The preferred form of government for the Founding Fathers because the public would guide the selection of some of the leaders, who would then make the laws. Other parts of government might be selected by educated elites.

**restraining order**

A court order restricting the actions and movements of persons or the press toward other individuals and their premises. Often used for the protection of one person from another who poses a severe threat.

**revenue bills**

Legislation concerning taxation or the use of tax dollars is a primary congressional duty.

**revolving door**

The practice of major lobby groups hiring recently retired members of Congress for high-paying lobby positions. The advantage of having a person who knows all the secret maneuvers of policy, has long experience with the key power brokers, and has made lasting friendships with those creating laws is seen as a major, and sneaky, advantage for those lobby groups with large amounts of money for such salaries.

**rider**

The name of an amendment, usually not of national import, attached to a larger and more important bill to allow the amendment to pass more easily.

**safe seat**

A term used when a representative appears to have an overwhelming level of local support in the home district. With greater uses of gerrymandering to ensure party domination, safe seats have become more common, thus allowing representatives to be more partisan and less willing to compromise.

**safety net**

A term that describes the idea of giving the elderly, jobless, and poor some assistance in order to avoid economic catastrophe.

**sample/target polling**

Polls that recruit specific groups that have certain ethnic, economic, or voting patterns to see how these groups react toward issues or candidates.

**search warrant**

An element of the 4th Amendment requiring that citizens be given a court-ordered document telling them what the police are searching for and the area being searched.

**self-incrimination**

An element of the 5th Amendment giving citizens protection from testifying against themselves. The police must prove the case without assistance of the defendant.

**senatorial courtesy**

The tradition that the president is expected to gather names of potential nominees from the senators of the states involved. This term also is used to refer to the tradition that the senior senator of the state of that nominee can block the approval of that person.

**seniority**

Those with the longest amount of service in Congress get the committee chairperson positions. Reforms in the seniority system allow some chair positions to be given to those with less seniority, but this is rare. Seniority positions on committees go to the discretion of the majority party.

**separations of power**

The powers specific to the different branches of government.

**session**

The annual meetings of Congress, starting in January and now usually ending in the late fall.

**school voucher programs**

The reform initiative by conservative groups to reallocate tax funds normally given to large school systems to parents in the form of refunds. This tax voucher allows parents to use the money to send their children to public schools or use it as tuition help for private schools. Recent challenges to such programs have focused on the possible use of public tax dollars to enrich church-run schools. In 2002, the Supreme Court held in the case of *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* that some vouchers could be used for private schools.

**shield laws**

Laws passed by state governments giving the press protection from revealing sources of information.

**Silent Majority**

The term used by the Nixon administration for the citizens who preferred traditional values, supported the U.S. government, and would not openly criticize leaders the way some were doing during the Vietnam War.

**slander**

Spoken words that are intended to injure a party and are knowingly false.

**spin**

The manner in which a news story is emphasized or explained, often by administrative representatives, to try to ensure a certain interpretation of information.

**split-ticket voting**

A trend where voters select different candidates of different parties for various offices from the same long ballot. These are more independent voters.

**soccer moms**

A label given to stay-at-home moms who tend to vote more conservatively and usually base their opinions on family issues and religious affiliations.

**social contract/social contract theory**

An idea from Rousseau and Locke stating that the government's powers are given by agreement of the citizens and the government is required to follow only these powers.

**stare decisis**

Major precedent-setting cases in the Supreme Court, where the decisions were made with strong majority votes. These decisions are the most powerful precedents, whereas votes of 5 to 4 are the weakest in terms of likely future challenges.

**statutory law**

Fixed laws determined as such based on a certain statute or recognized rule.

**straight-ticket voting**

The ability of voters to choose all of the members of the same party with only one vote.

**Strategic Arms Limitations Talks treaties (SALT treaties)**

A set of agreements that began the process of reducing the numbers of missile and nuclear weapons held by the United States and the Soviet Union.

**Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) or "Star Wars weapons"**

The policy of the Reagan administration to begin a series of plans to place antimissile weapons in space orbit.

**street-level (bureaucrats)**

The government employees who work directly with the public in the implementation of federal and local programs. They often have the responsibility of determining access to federal funds.

**subsidies**

Money assistance given to farmers and businesses aimed at protecting against monopolies, helping struggling companies, and providing sufficient resources for future growth.

**suffrage**

The constitutional term, coined during the Women's Rights Movement, for the right to vote.

~~**summit diplomacy**~~

~~A series of efforts made in the Cold War period to have the leaders of major powers sit down together and work on issues and conflicts.~~

**super delegates**

The members of Congress and members of the national committee given a certain set of votes at the Democratic National Convention. These delegates were created as part of Democratic Party reforms of the 1970s.

**Superfund**

Gasoline and chemical tax revenues set aside by the federal government in 1980 for a special trust fund used to clean up toxic waste sites around the country. The Love Canal site led to development of this fund.

**super majority**

A proposal that any legislation to increase taxes would need a vote percentage of two-thirds, or 66 percent, to pass, considered a "super" majority.

**surplus**

The amount of money left over in the budget when the government spends less than it collects in taxes. Rapid economic expansions of incomes created brief surpluses in the late 1990s, but these were eliminated by the crisis of 9/11, the recession of late 2001, tax cuts of 2001 and 2002, and the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**swing voters**

Key voters who tend to be independent, or less loyal to the party system, and have a significant influence on close elections.

**symbolic speech**

Forms of speech outside of spoken or written words that have political meaning, such as flag burning or sit-in protests. *See also pure speech.*

**talking heads**

The name given to press shows dedicated to media representatives analyzing events or leaders. A famous example is the weekly television program *Meet the Press*.

**term**

The amount of time an elected official serves in that position.

**think tank**

A group or company whose main purpose is to research, develop, propose, and lobby for types of policies that favor liberal or conservative causes. One of the most powerful is the conservative Heritage Foundation.

**Three-Fifths Compromise**

The compromise over slavery in Philadelphia. A federal ban was placed on interference in slave cases before 1808, and slaves were as only part of the population for census and representation numbers.

~~**transfer**~~

~~The economic term used to describe the movement of tax money from those who pay to those who need. It is a form of wealth distribution.~~

**trial balloons**

A tactic of giving information about possible policy decisions and checking the reaction of the public and other governmental groups. If the reaction is extremely positive or negative, then further plans can be developed.

**unilateral policies**

A term defining the efforts of a single country to change policies and align those changes with their relations with other countries.

**Virginia Plan (Randolph Plan, Madison Plan)**

An outline of a constitution drafted by Madison before the formal meetings began. Governor Randolph presented the list. It proposed a bicameral legislature (two chambers) but gave populated states the most representation in both houses. The general outline was used by the convention delegates to build the basic framework of the Constitution, thus giving Madison the nickname "Father of the Constitution."

**wall of separation**

A phrase used by Jefferson in 1802 in a letter to describe his opinion about the relationship between church and state. Jefferson's emphasis, and that of modern supporters, was that government controls actions but not the opinions of religion.

**war chest**

The amount of money a candidate has created for the next campaign. This is usually a tremendous advantage for incumbents.

**watchdog function**

The idea that it is a duty of the media to keep the public informed of political events and to ensure that the rules of government are being followed.

**whip**

A traditional name of the assistant to the House Majority and Minority Leaders.

**whistleblowers**

A name given to government employees who reveal waste or fraud within their own agencies. They are often attacked by superiors, the press, and the general public for their actions.

**white-collar**

A term denoting careers and jobs in business and office management. These positions usually do not involve any manual labor.

**writ of mandamus**

The power given to federal courts to require action by citizens or governmental agencies.

**writ of habeas corpus**

The power given to federal courts to require action by citizens or governmental agencies.

**writ of habeas corpus**

A decree that laws cannot be created to have persons seized by authorities and held without charges being presented. The accused has the right to defend himself or herself against all charges.

**yellow journalism**

A late 1800s trend of sensationalist news, often centered in New York, that helped influence policy. The best example is the Hearst papers that helped create the Spanish-American War crisis.