

# Citizenship Government and



## Before You Read

Copy these statements into your notebook. Then, based on what you now know or think, write “Agree” or “Disagree” under each statement. When you have finished reading about government and citizenship, come back to your answers and change them if necessary.

1. The only reason governments exist is to make laws that tell us what we can and cannot do.
  2. All governments are democratic, which means that ordinary people are in control.
  3. Our right to say whatever we want to say is protected by the US Constitution.
  4. As citizens we do not need to know much about important issues, as they are decided by our elected representatives.
- .....



- **democracy**
- **constitution**
- **limited government**
- **separation of powers**
- **checks and balances**
- **representative democracies**
- **citizens**
- **citizenship**

## WHAT DO GOVERNMENTS DO?

Governments do many things that improve our daily lives. Yet we seldom stop to think about them. What is government? What does it look like? Here are some common scenes that show government at work:

- a police car with its lights flashing
- a school under construction
- a street repair crew at work
- a fighter jet soaring overhead
- a nurse entering a hospital
- a judge leaving a courthouse



## Focus Your Reading

- What do governments do that affects you?
- What kind of government does the United States and Colorado have?
- What are your rights and responsibilities as a citizen?



- a state senator voting on a new tax
- a park or a zoo

These everyday scenes describe some of the tasks governments perform. They include:

- enforcing the laws
- building schools and educating children
- providing public services
- defending the nation
- providing health services
- settling disputes
- making new laws
- providing recreation

Reflect for a moment. On a typical day, how does government affect your life? Make a list and share it with a partner.

In the United States, governments make decisions at different levels. The national government in Washington, DC, makes laws for all the people. It also protects the nation, prints money, and decides when to go to war. State governments provide services for citizens of that state. County and town governments make decisions only for the people who live at the local level. School districts are set up to govern a city's schools. Some rural areas have "service districts" that provide a single service. This may be fire protection, public safety, or water treatment. All levels are important, but here we will focus on Colorado's state government.

### US Capitol



# Our Government at Work

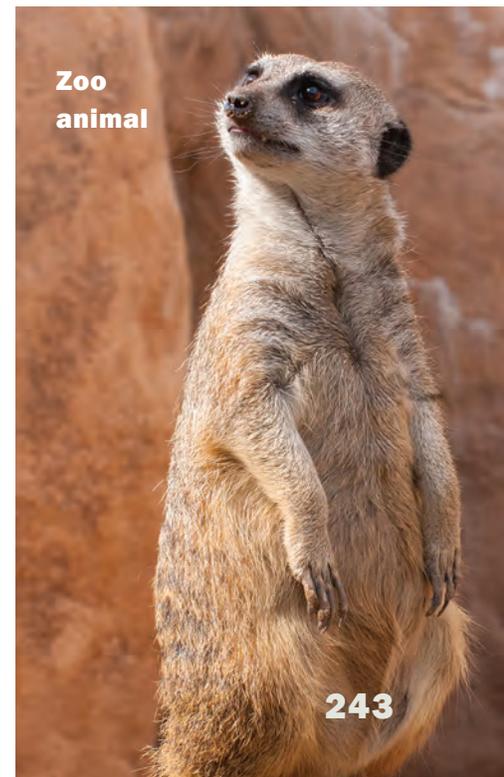
The House of Representatives chamber in the Colorado capitol building, Denver, Colorado



Policeman



Nurse



Zoo animal



**School bus**



**Street repair**



**Judge**



**Fighter jet**

# **Our Government at Work**



**Mesa Verde National Park**



**King George III of the United Kingdom**



**Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France**



**Joseph Stalin, Soviet dictator**

## WHAT KIND OF GOVERNMENT DO WE HAVE?

Not all governments are alike. The United States has a democratic form of government. So does Colorado. In a **democracy**, power comes from the people. Not all governments are democratic. In some governments, power is held by a single person. In the past, this person was usually a king, queen, or emperor. This type of government is called a monarchy. A government today that carries out the orders of a single person is called a dictatorship. When a small group of people hold power, the government is called an aristocracy. When these people are army officers, it is a military junta. Those governments do not govern with the consent or agreement of the people.

To create their democracy, Coloradans in 1876 used the US national government as their model. They have the following in common.



### While You Read

Read the section “What Kind of Government Do We Have” with a partner. Decide on a stopping point about halfway through. When you reach it, each partner must ask a question or state an opinion about either the government of the United States or the government of Colorado.



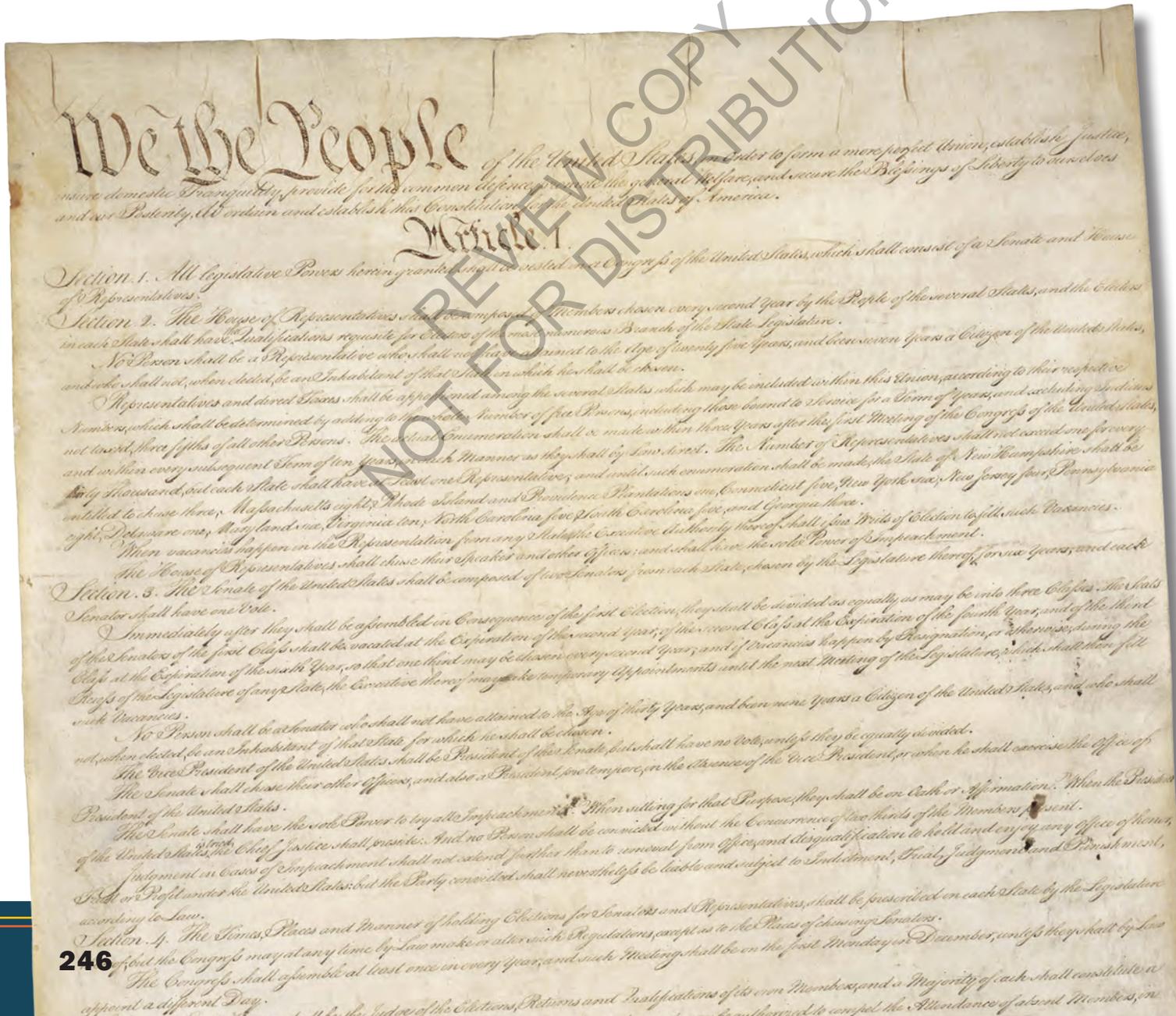
# A Written Constitution

First, both are based on a written **constitution** or document. Some governments, such as Great Britain's, are based on many documents and court cases. A written constitution makes clear what powers people are giving to the government.

# Limited Government

Both governments are **limited governments**. That is, the powers given to the government are limited and clearly spelled out. The governments do not have powers that would violate people's rights, such as freedom of speech.

## US Constitution



We the People

of the United States, do hereby ordain, establish, justice, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do hereby establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Article I

Section 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.  
Section 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.  
No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.  
Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and including Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty thousand, but each State shall have at least one Representative; and until such Enumeration shall be made, the State of New Hampshire shall be entitled to choose three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New York six, New Jersey four, Pennsylvania eight, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three.  
When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof, shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.  
The House of Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.  
Section 3. The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six Years, and each Senator shall have one Vote.  
Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Clases. The Seats of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Class at the Expiration of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second Year; and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or otherwise, during the Term of the Legislature of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such Vacancies.  
No Person shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State, for which he shall be chosen.  
The Vice President of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless he equally be elected.  
The Senate shall chuse their other Officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the Absence of the Vice President, or when he shall exercise the Office of President of the United States.  
The Senate shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments: When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmation: When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members present.  
Judgment in Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of Honor, Trust or Profit under the United States; but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment and Punishment, according to Law.  
Section 4. The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators.  
The Congress shall assemble at least once in every Year, and such Meeting shall be on the first Monday in December, unless they shall by Law appoint a different Day.



White House

## Separation of Powers

A **separation of powers** also helps keep government power in check. This means that power is divided among three divisions, or branches, of government.

- **The Legislature.** At the national level, the legislature is called the US Congress. At the state level, it is known as the State Legislature. The legislative branch of government makes the laws. Congress also approves people the president appoints to important offices.
- **The Executive.** The executive branch of government carries out the laws made by the legislature. The president of the United States is the chief executive at the national level. The governor of Colorado is the head of our state executive branch.
- **The Judiciary.** The judiciary is made up of judges who work in courts to settle conflicts over laws and what they mean. They also decide whether laws



conflict with the US and the Colorado Constitutions. The highest level of the judiciary is the United States Supreme Court at the national level and the Colorado Supreme Court at the state level.

### Checks and Balances

A system of **checks and balances** further limits the government's power. While the legislature can pass a new law, the executive can veto or overturn it. The legislature helps keep the executive in check by voting to override a veto. The judiciary can balance the power of both by throwing out a law the US Constitution does not allow.

### Representative Democracy

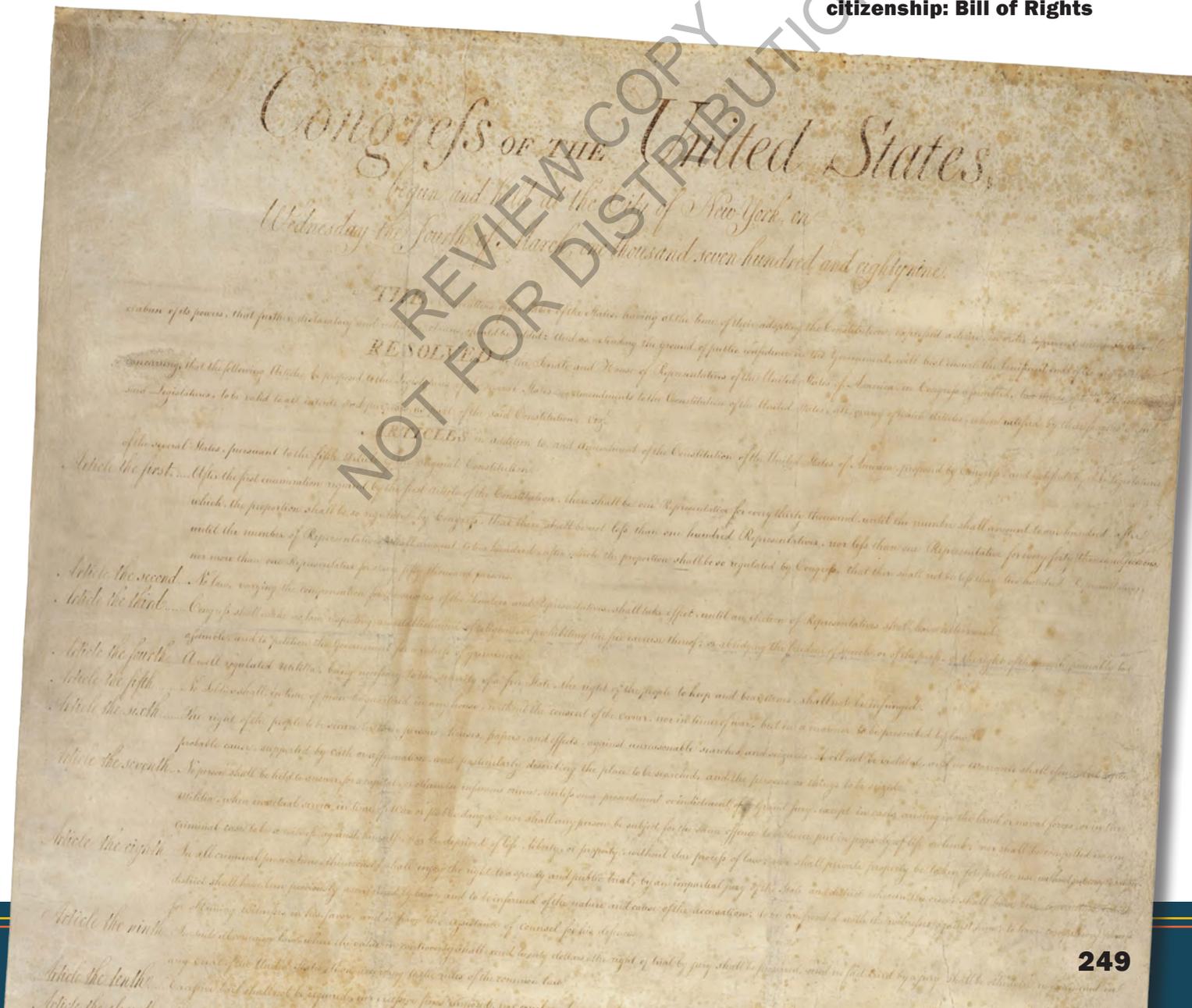
Colorado and the national government are **representative democracies**. Voters do not go to the State House in Denver or to the nation's Capitol in Washington, DC, to vote on legislation. Instead, they elect representatives to vote for them.

# RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS

Citizens of a democracy have both rights and responsibilities. A right is the freedom to do something the government cannot take away. The rights of citizens in all fifty of the United States are protected by the US Constitution. Among the most basic rights are:

- Freedom of speech
- Freedom of religion
- Right to vote (by age eighteen)
- Right to own firearms
- Right to a trial by jury

**Rights and responsibilities of citizenship: Bill of Rights**





**Rights and responsibilities of citizenship: a Colorado voter drops his election ballot at a ballot drop box**

Rights are important, but so are the responsibilities of citizenship. Responsibilities of citizenship are what we must do to use our rights wisely and to protect them. They include:

- To know your rights
- To keep informed about public issues
- To be aware of different points of view
- To discuss issues with others
- To listen to other points of view
- To volunteer time to public service
- To vote at election time
- To run for public office



Colorado capitol building  
with gold-leaf dome

## **CITIZENSHIP IN A DEMOCRACY**

Every citizen should be well informed about public issues. A public issue is a question or proposal that people disagree about. Why is it important to be well informed? Ordinary citizens do not decide most issues. They elect representatives to the US Congress and the State Legislature to do this for them. It is important because voters need to know how individuals running for office stand on public issues. Whether they share or do not share those views should help them decide for whom to vote. They also need to keep their elected representatives informed about issues that matter to them. Well-informed citizens make democratic government good government.

Here are public issues a well-informed citizen today should know about. Select one of these issues and find out as much as you can about it. Then outline your best argument for (Pro) or against it (Con).

## School Taxes

Should taxes be increased to provide more money for public schools?

**Pro:** schools need more money

**Con:** schools already have all the money they need

## Use of Fossil Fuels

Should the state discourage oil and natural gas drilling in Colorado?

**Pro:** fossil fuels contribute to global warming

**Con:** we need more oil and gas, which are Colorado's cheapest fuels

**Should oil drilling be encouraged?**





## Water Diversion

Should Denver and other cities be allowed to divert more water from the Western Slope?

**Pro:** growing cities need the water more than Western Slope farmers do

**Con:** taking water from the Western Slope is unfair and threatens fish and wildlife

**Should water be diverted from one region to another?**



## After You Read

1. Go back to the four statements you copied in your notebook before you read about government and citizenship. Based on what you knew then, you wrote “Agree” or “Disagree” under each statement.
2. Reread the statements and your responses. Do you want to change any of your responses based on what you have learned?

