

# The American Citizen

## Chapter 3: The Constitution: Supreme Law of the Land

### Vocabulary and Key Terms

1. **Bill of Rights:** A constitutional list of the basic civil liberties of citizens; the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution
2. **Cabinet:** The group of presidential advisors made up of the heads of the executive departments; in parliamentary systems of government, a small group of party leaders chosen by a prime minister to help decide policies
3. **checks and balances:** A system under which each branch of government limits the power of the other branches
4. **constituency:** The people to whom elected government officials are directly accountable
5. **District of Columbia Amendment:** A constitutional amendment, proposed in 1978, designed to give the District two senators and two representatives and thus provide its citizens with representation in Congress; a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would grant statehood to the District of Columbia
6. **enabling act:** A provision added to a constitutional amendment authorizing Congress to pass whatever laws are necessary to make the amendment effective; a congressional act stating the conditions for a territory's admission to the Union as a state
7. **Equal Rights Amendment:** A constitutional amendment, first proposed in 1923, that would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex or gender
8. **executive:** The branch of federal, state or local government that is responsible for putting laws into effect (enforcing laws, implementing laws)
9. **executive agreement:** An agreement, not requiring the Senate's approval, between the President of the U.S. and the leader of a foreign government
10. **executive privilege:** The theoretical right of the president and other top officials of the executive branch to withhold information from Congress and the courts
11. **fundamental law:** Law outlining the basic principles, powers and structure of a government
12. **judicial :** The branch of federal, state or local government that decides if laws have been broken and punishes lawbreakers
13. **judicial review:** The power of the courts to declare national, state or local acts of government invalid (unconstitutional)
14. **legislative:** The branch of federal, state or local government that makes the laws (public policies)
15. **Marbury v. Madison:** An 1803 court case in which the U.S. Supreme Court asserted its right to declare laws passed by Congress unconstitutional
16. **parliamentary government:** A system in which legislative and executive functions and responsibilities are combined in an elected legislature
17. **Preamble (to the Constitution):** The introduction (first paragraph) to the U.S. Constitution
18. **presidential government:** A system of government in which the executive branch acts independently of the legislative branch, and in which the head of the executive branch is elected (directly or indirectly) by popular vote
19. **prime minister:** The head of the cabinet and the chief executive of a parliamentary government, elected from and by the membership of the parliament
20. **popular sovereignty:** A system in which the power to govern belongs to the people but is transferred to the government under their control
21. **senatorial courtesy:** The custom that senators will not confirm a presidential nomination opposed by both senators from the state of the appointee or by the senior senator of the president's party
22. **separation of powers:** The division of governmental power among separate branches