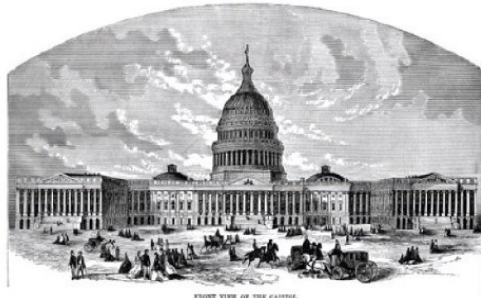


CONGRESS HAS THE POWER TO PASS LAWS, CREATE FEDERAL BUDGETS, AND DECLARE WAR.



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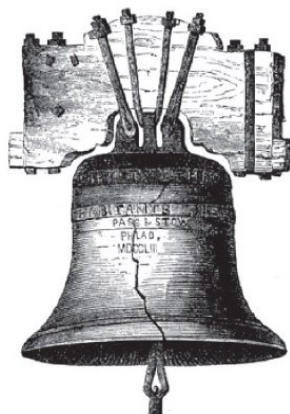
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

FROM THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS TO THE IOWA CAUCUS, EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT U.S. POLITICS

101

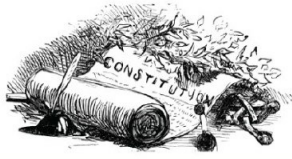


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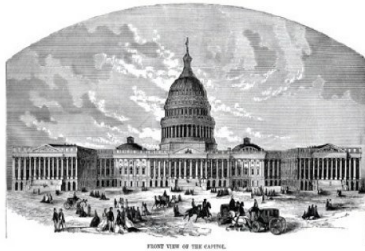


A
CRASH COURSE
IN
THE U.S.
GOVERNMENT

KATHLEEN SEARS



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American Government 101

**From the Continental Congress to the Iowa Caucus,
Everything You Need to Know about U.S. Politics,
Everything You Need to Know about U.S. Politics**

Kathleen Sears



Avon, Massachusetts

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Introduction

Have you ever wondered just what the qualifications are to be president of the United States? Have you been curious about the Electoral College—what it is and why we have it? Are you curious about how Congress creates laws?

If so, *American Government 101* is for you. Here you'll learn, in clear, simple language, how American government works—from presidential elections to your local town council elections. You'll find entries that cover such topics as:

- What's really in the Constitution
- The role of the Senate and the House of Representatives
- The daily life of the president
- The powers of a state governor
- How federal, state, and city elections are conducted

It's important to know these things because the United States expects its citizens to participate in governing. After all, not only do Americans regularly select representatives in city, state, and federal government, but the American people also vote on an often-bewildering array of issues, ordinances, and initiatives. The better the American people are informed about how their government works, the better decisions they'll make about how it *should* work.

Understanding governmental institutions often seems challenging because of the sheer size of the government. When the House of Representatives met for the first time on March 4, 1789, it had just twenty-nine members; today it contains 435 (as well as six nonvoting members). As of 2014, the federal government employed approximately 4,185,000

people. In 1789, the entire population of the newly formed United States was only 3,929,000.

Apart from sheer numbers, the American government has become increasingly complicated. Although it may be hard to believe, the first Congress didn't have political parties; the national founders disapproved of them and hoped to avoid them. Today, it's impossible to imagine the U.S. governmental system without them. Reports of discussion in the House and Senate are dotted with references to "filibusters," "whips," "cloture," "Blue Dog Democrats," "Tea Party Republicans," and more.

While this sounds complicated, this book will help you make sense out of the government, whether it's in Washington, D.C., or in your local town hall. It will show you things like how a bill becomes a law, what's needed to pass and ratify a constitutional amendment, and much more. It will explain to you the complex rules of procedure followed by the Senate and the House, and how politicians use these to craft legislation.

Above all, this book will explain government to you as it *really* works. It will discuss the importance of money in politics and how it became such a major ingredient. This book will tell you about lobbyists: who they are and what they do. It will outline controversial Supreme Court decisions, from *Brown v. Board of Education* to *Obergefell v. Hodges*, and explain why these decisions were so controversial.

The Founding Fathers of the United States didn't anticipate all the twists and turns the country's history would take. But Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Madison, and others were confident that the government they had created would be sufficient to cope with even the greatest crises and survive. So far, after more than two centuries, the government has done just that.

The Mayflower Compact and Colonial Government

The Beginning of Self-Rule

The story of American government dates back to the earliest settlement of North America. Our grade-school textbooks taught us that the first settlers were religious separatists who came to America to escape the Church of England. Some did seek religious freedom; others sought a new beginning; and still others were simply attracted to adventure. A few were even fortune seekers.

Early Arrivals

The earliest English settlement took place at Roanoke Island, North Carolina. Established by English explorers in the mid- to late 1580s, the Roanoke Island colony is best remembered for its mysterious and sudden demise.

The Lost Settlement

John White attempted to settle Roanoke in 1587. He left the colonists and sailed back to England for additional supplies. However, his return was delayed and it was three years before he returned. To his

surprise, the colonists had all vanished, leaving the mysterious word “Croatoan” carved on a tree. A search of the area turned up nothing, and historians and archaeologists have speculated ever since on what became of the lost colony.

The British government set up a trading outpost at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. Although the colony managed to survive for two decades, it had to contend with harsh conditions and hostile Indians. Jamestown did leave an important legacy, however: The colonists adopted a representative assembly to govern their affairs.

The year 1620 saw the establishment of a colony in New England, when the Puritans crossed the Atlantic and landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts. The Crown did not charter these pilgrims; rather, they were fleeing England in search of freedom to practice their religion.

Before Plymouth

The New World wasn't the first haven the Puritans sought. Before setting out from England for America, the Puritans made their way to Holland. They lived there from 1606 to 1620 but found the Dutch language hard to understand and the relatively free ways of the Netherlands not to their liking. After much negotiation with various English and Dutch companies, they received a grant of land in the Virginia territory. However, they missed their destination and instead arrived first at Cape Cod and subsequently at Plymouth Bay.

Before touching land, forty-one men on board their ship, the *Mayflower*, signed the Mayflower Compact—a social contract that bound them to obey the authority of whatever government was established on land. Though the compact wasn't a constitution, it did have a profound impact on future generations of colonists, because it established the precedent that any governing authority in the New World requires the consent of the people. This powerful notion would spread throughout the colonies.

The Colonies and the British Crown

For the first 150 years of settlement on the North American continent, the king and British Parliament showed little interest in the nuances of colonial government. The Crown viewed the colonies as nothing more than a market for British goods and provider of an endless supply of natural resources.

“Having undertaken, for the Glory of God, and advancements of the Christian faith and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic; for our better ordering, and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.”

—From the Mayflower Compact

The Colonies Flourish

Settlements in Virginia and Massachusetts Bay were swiftly followed by more ships from England bearing colonists. By 1732, all of the original thirteen colonies were established. Though technically governed by London, the colonies enjoyed an enormous amount of autonomy. All thirteen had popularly elected legislatures that passed laws, levied taxes, and set policy, and each also had a formal governing document that resembled a constitution. For instance, Connecticut had the Fundamental Orders, Pennsylvania passed the Frame of Government, and Massachusetts adopted the Body of Liberties.

Kinds of Colonies

From the point of view of government, the American colonies fell into three categories. New Hampshire, New York, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina were royal colonies, which had royal governors appointed by the king. The governor could call a local assembly, to which he acted as an adviser. Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland were proprietary colonies, in which the governor was appointed by the lord proprietor rather than the king. Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut were charter colonies, in which legislative functions stemmed from letters patent (a type of written legal instrument) issued by the Crown. Massachusetts changed in 1684 from a charter colony to a royal colony.

Given its vast distance from the New World, and its abiding interest in commerce with the colonies, Britain found the system of home rule equally agreeable.

Prelude to a Revolution

Relations between the colonies and Britain remained smooth through the mid-1750s, until the French and Indian War. Although ultimately victorious, the tremendous cost of waging this seven-year war left England virtually bankrupt. Parliament decided to replenish Britain's treasury by taxing the colonies, something it hadn't done before.

Beginning in 1763, the British Parliament imposed a series of taxes and demands on the colonies, including the Sugar Act, the Townshend Acts, the Quartering Act, and the Stamp Act. The colonies rallied around the idea of "no taxation without representation" and began to boycott British goods, effectively forcing the British Parliament to repeal the taxes, except for a tax on tea. For the first time, the colonies had acted in unison to thwart Britain's will. This was an important first step toward gaining independence.