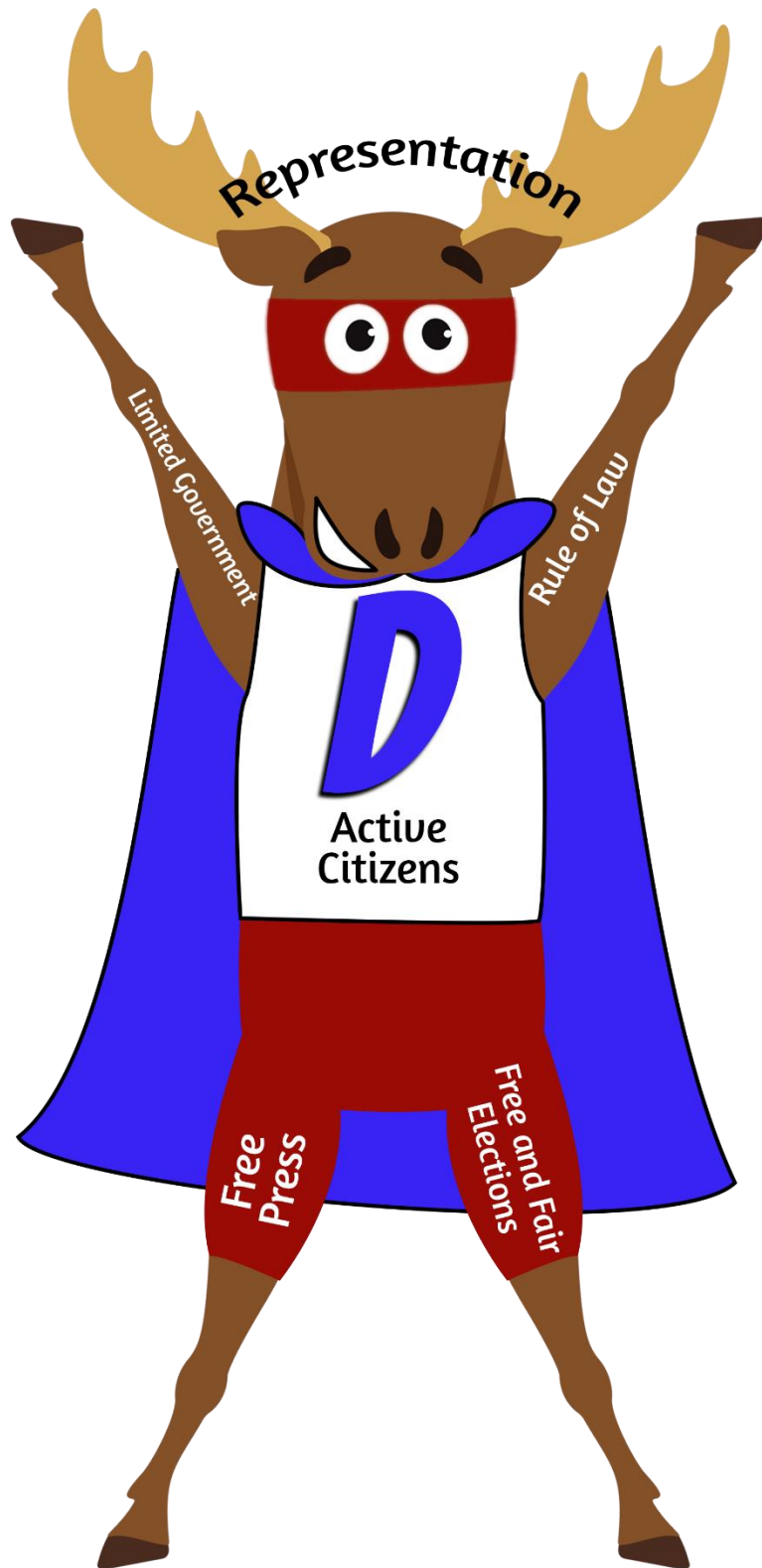


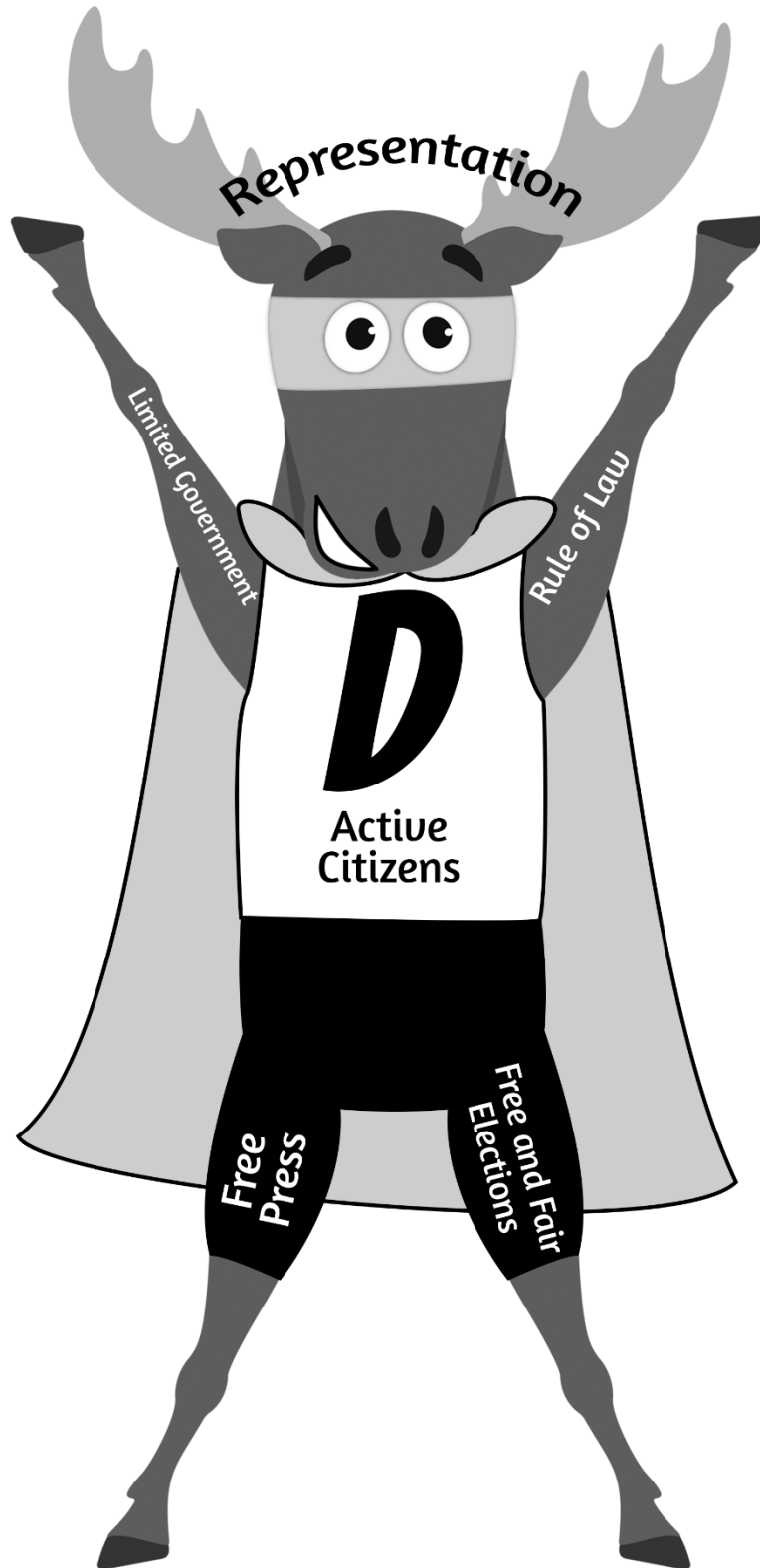


Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy





Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?





Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?

Name _____

Learn it! Characteristics of American Democracy

Read about each of the six characteristics of American democracy in the "Moose on the Loose." Answer the questions about each characteristic.

1) Representative democracy

What is a representative?

How does a person become a representative?

How do people change who represents them in government?

2) Rule of law

What is the most important set of laws in the United States?

At what levels of government are laws made?

Who has to follow laws?



Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?

3) Limited Government

What does it mean to limit something?

How do Americans limit their government?

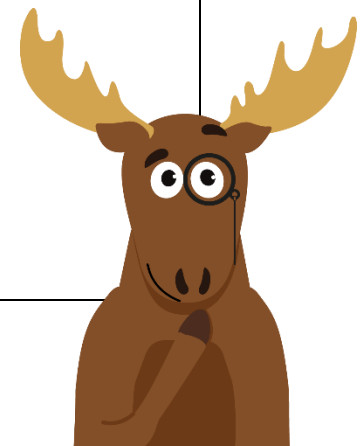
Why did the founders of our democracy limit the federal government?

4) Free and fair elections

What is an election?

Who can vote?

What helps make elections fair?





Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?

5) Active citizens

What does it mean to be active?

What are some ways citizens can be active in government, even if they don't work for the government?

6) Free press

What is a journalist?

How do journalists help other people understand the government?



Learn it! Characteristics of American Democracy

Read about each of the six characteristics of American democracy. Answer the questions about each characteristic.

1) Representative democracy. The United States is a representative democracy, which means the people elect other people to represent them in the government. These representatives make decisions for the people who elected them. The representatives have to run for re-election after a certain amount of time (called a term). If the people don't like the way they are being represented, they can vote for someone else to represent them instead. Representative democracy is the only way a democratic government could work in a country with as many people as the United States.

What is a representative?

How does a person become a representative?

How do people change who represents them in government?

2) Rule of law. The United States is governed by laws that are created by the people's representatives in the government. The most important law in the country is the U.S. Constitution, but there are many other laws as well. Some laws are made at the national level, while others are made by the states or by local governments. In America, no one is above the law, meaning that every person in the United States is equal before the law. In other words, all laws apply to all of the people.



Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?

What is the most important set of laws in the United States?

At what levels of government are laws made?

Who has to follow laws?

3) Limited Government. Americans believe that the power of government should be limited, and they organized their national and state governments so that their power cannot grow too big. One way that Americans limit government is by writing constitutions for both the federal government and the state governments. Constitutions are documents that say what the government can and cannot do.

Another way that Americans limit the power of government is to divide the government into three levels: the national government, state governments, and local governments. This division is called federalism. The government was divided this way so that no part of the government will grow too big and powerful. Each level of government can only govern in their own areas.

Americans also limit the power of government by dividing government power between different branches of government and then allowing each branch to check the others. The national government is divided into three branches: the executive branch (the presidency), the legislative branch (Congress), and the judicial branch (the Supreme Court). The branches must work together to govern the country, pass laws, and make sure laws are followed. The government's power is split, or balanced, between them. This is called a separation of powers. One branch can also stop the other branches from getting too much power, which is called a check. This separation of powers and system of checks and balances is also used in states to limit their governments.



Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?

What does it mean to limit something?

How do Americans limit their government?

Why did the founders of our democracy limit the federal government?

4) Free and fair elections. Americans choose their representatives by voting. Because voting is so important in America, Americans must trust the results of our elections. The state governments are in charge of running elections. They are responsible for making sure that every citizen is allowed to vote and that every vote counts. Not every adult citizen has always been able to vote. In fact, laws have sometimes been used to deny people the right to vote in the past because of discrimination. Each state makes its own decisions about how to carry out election rules fairly. It is a very complicated and important responsibility. Using technology to cast ballots or count ballots is also a new way of helping citizens vote, although making sure the technology works the way it is supposed to can be a challenge.

What is an election?



Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?

Who can vote?

What helps make elections fair?

5) Active citizens. Americans participate in American government in many different ways, including voting, contacting their representatives, speaking up when they are unhappy with the government, and serving in town, state, or national governments as elected officials. Americans also form citizen groups to solve problems in the country or their community, such as the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army. These groups are not part of the government. They rely on people to volunteer their time to help make things better for others. These groups work outside of the government but often cooperate with the government to solve problems that Americans are facing, which is another example of an active citizenry.

What does it mean to be active?

What are some ways citizens can be active in government, even if they don't work for the government?



Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?

6) Free press. Journalists play an important role in American government. They report to the people through written articles; television networks and videos; podcasts and radio; and social media. They tell people what the government is doing and how government officials are doing their jobs. Journalists do not work for the government; they are independent, which helps them report on the government fairly. In the United States, most people depend on the free press to keep them informed about the government.

What is a journalist?

How do journalists help other people understand the government?





Learn it! Characteristics of American Democracy

Read about each of the six characteristics of American democracy on "Moose on the Loose." Answer the questions about each characteristic.

1) Representative democracy.

What is a representative?

A representative is a person who speaks for another person or a group of people. The representative should make decisions based on the wishes of the people they represent.

How does a person become a representative?

A person becomes a representative by running in an election. If the person gets the most votes, they become the representative.

How do people change who represents them in government?

If people are not happy with the decisions made by the representative, they can vote for another person in the next election. It doesn't necessarily mean the representative will lose the election, but if enough people want a change and vote for it, it can happen.

2) Rule of law.

What is the most important set of laws in the United States?

The most important set of laws in our country is the United States Constitution.

At what levels of government are laws made?

Laws are made at all levels of government: federal, state, and local.

Who has to follow laws?

Everyone has to follow laws! In the United States, no one is above the law, meaning even the President and those appointed to the Supreme Court must follow the laws created by government.



Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?

3) Limited Government.

What does it mean to limit something?

To limit means to restrict something or prevent it from continuing or growing.

How do Americans limit their government?

Americans limit their government by writing constitutions, sets of laws that explain how the government works. Americans also separate their government into different levels (federal, state, and local) and branches (executive, legislative, and judicial) so that power is spread out.

Why did the founders of our democracy limit the federal government?

They did not want the federal government to have too much power.

4) Free and fair elections.

What is an election?

An election is a process that allows people to choose, by voting, from different options. The option with the most votes wins.

Who can vote?

All adult citizens can vote in elections.

What helps make elections fair?

States make rules about how votes are cast and counted to make sure that people feel safe voicing their opinion through voting.



Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?

5) Active citizens.

What does it mean to be active?

To be active is to do something.

What are some ways citizens can be active in government, even if they don't work for the government?

Citizens can be active in government by voting, contact their representatives, or join groups that march or demonstrate to express their beliefs. Citizens can become involved in bigger organizations that focus on specific needs and ideas.

6) Free press.

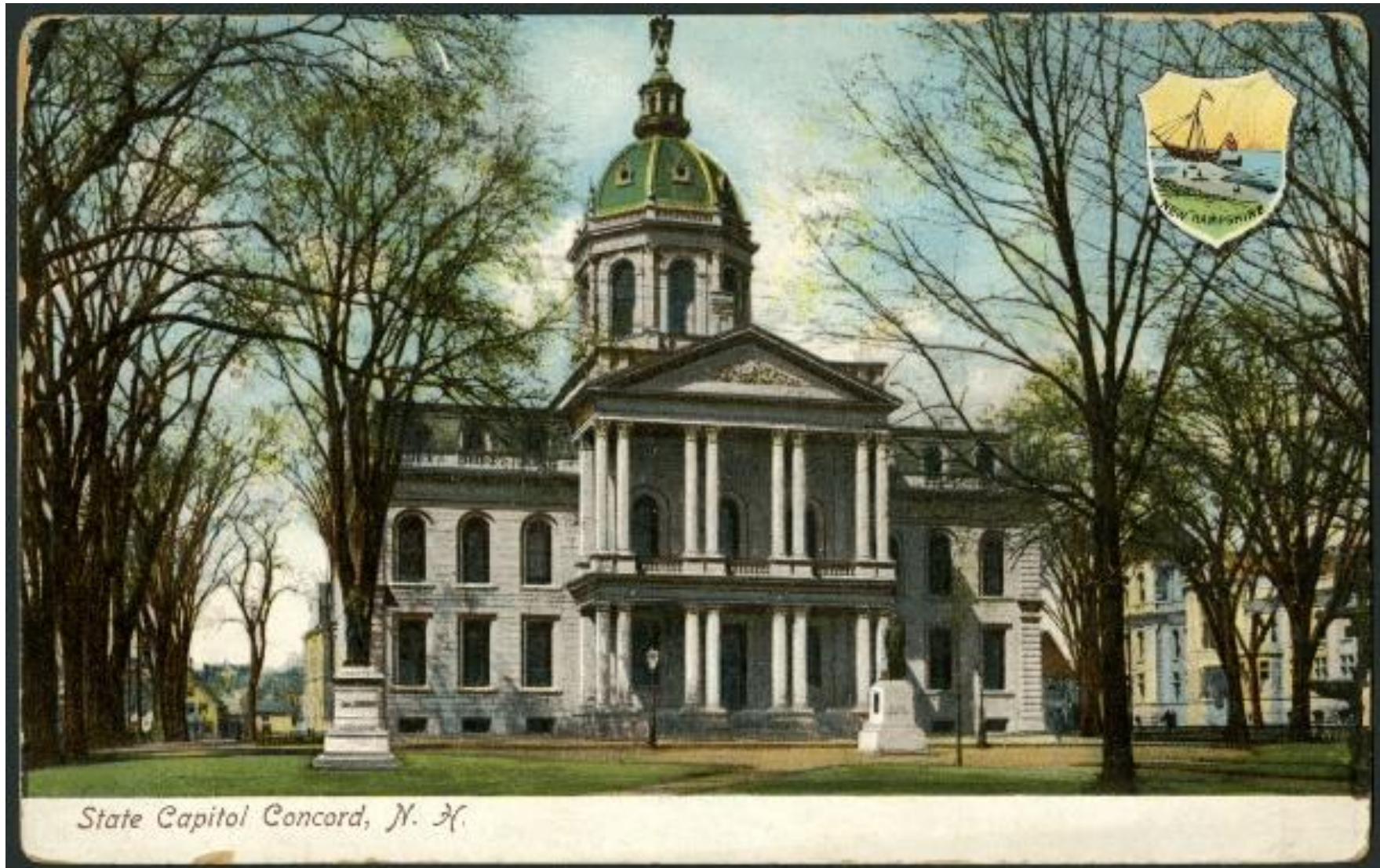
What is a journalist?

A journalist is a person who shares information through writing for a newspaper, presenting news on television, or through an online media source.

How do journalists help other people understand the government?

Journalists research and interview people to get more information about what the government is doing. They write that information or present it for viewers in a way that helps other people understand what is happening.

Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?



New Hampshire State House, circa 1898–1952
Source: New Hampshire Historical Society

Democracy in Action Image Set (1)



Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?



Ballot Box, circa 1850
Source: New Hampshire Historical Society

Democracy in Action Image Set (2)

Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?



Reporters Covering the 1952 Primary, 1952
Source: New Hampshire Historical Society

Democracy in Action Image Set (3)

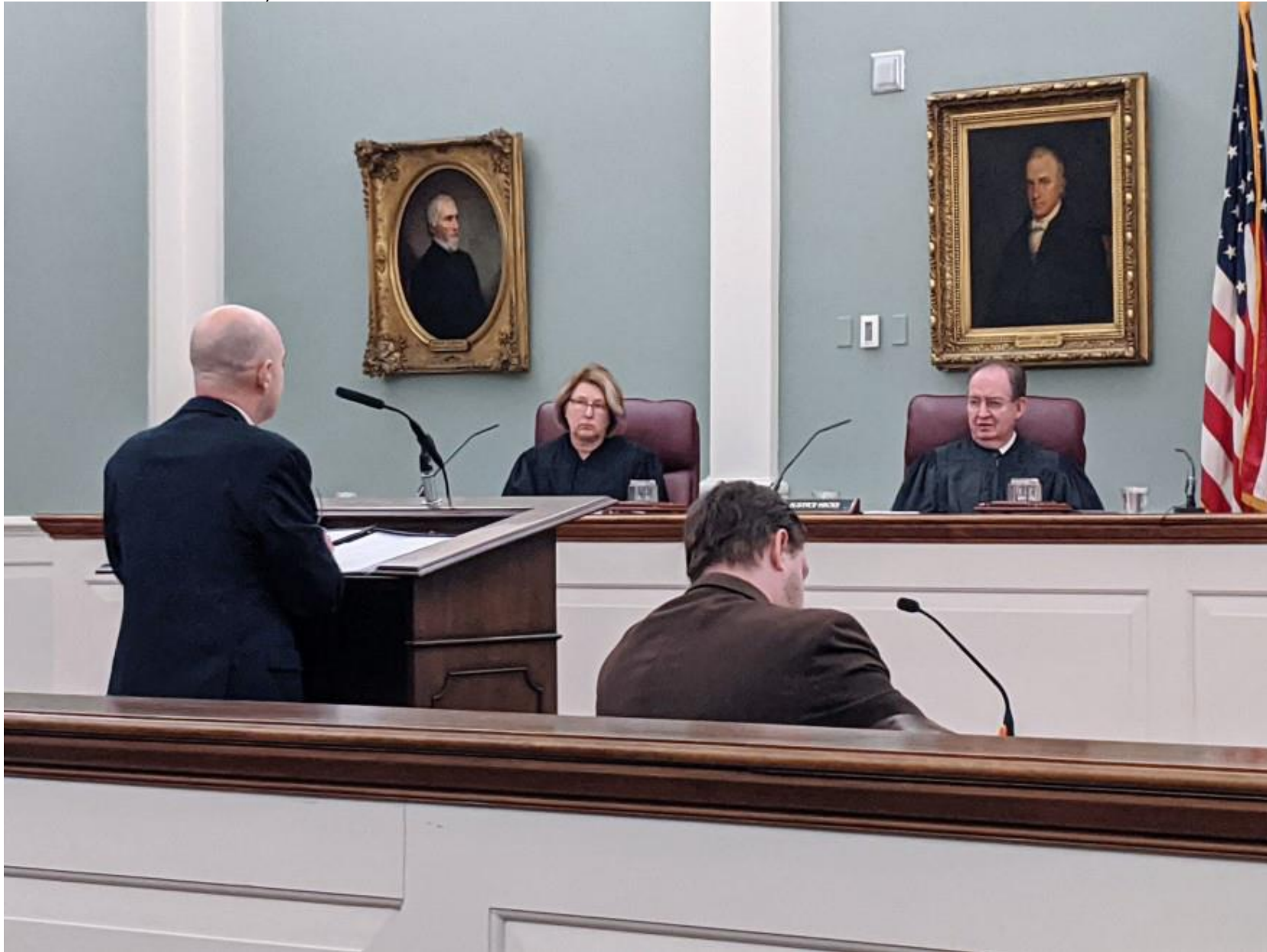
Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?



Women Marching in Concord, 1915
Source: New Hampshire Historical Society

Democracy in Action Image Set (4)

Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?

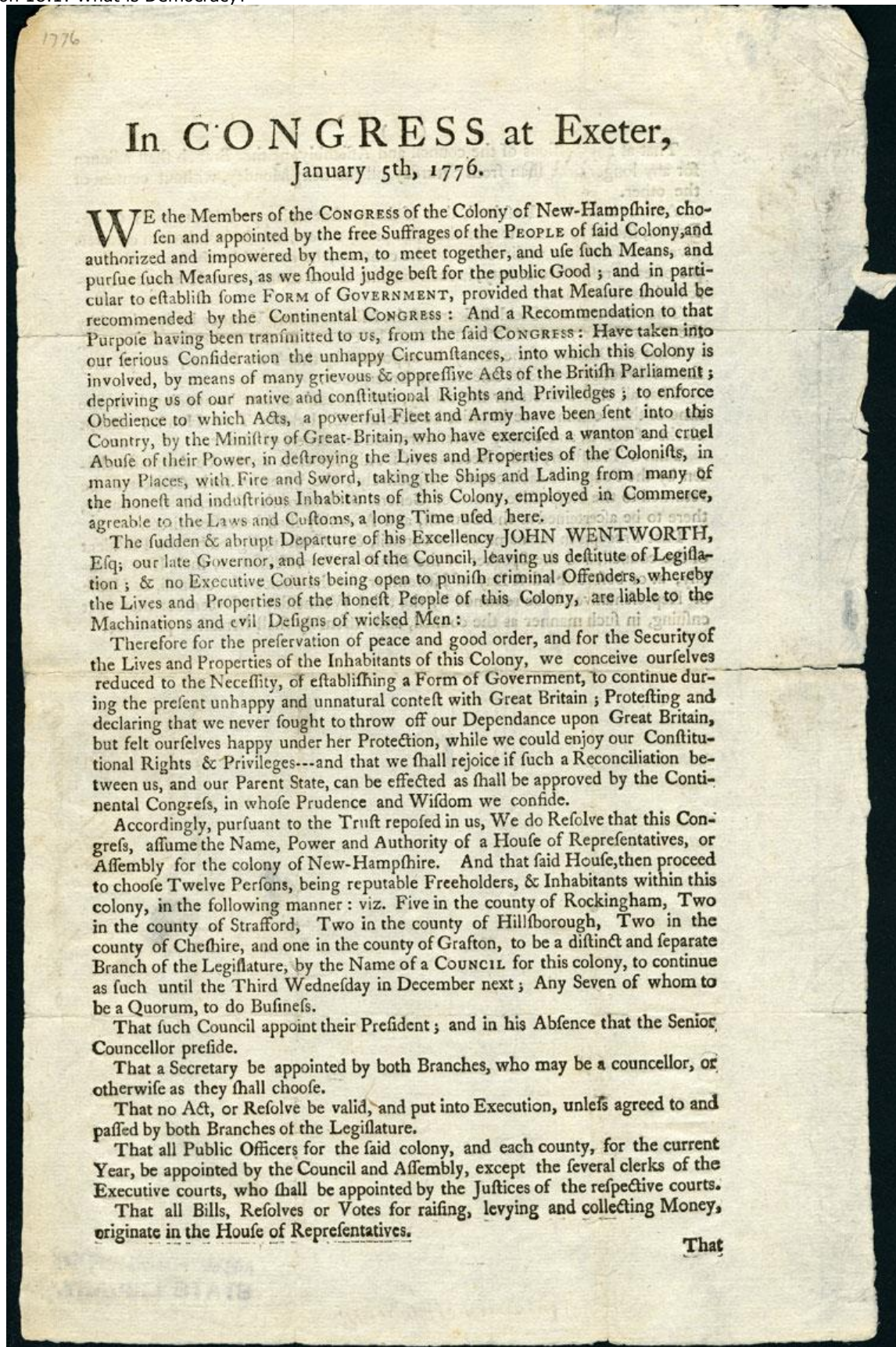


N.H. Supreme Court, 2020
Image courtesy of NHPR

Democracy in Action Image Set (5)



Lesson 18.1: What is Democracy?



New Hampshire Constitution of 1776
Source: New Hampshire Historical Society

Democracy in Action Image Set (6)



Who is Democracy?

A black and white line drawing of a stylized human figure. The figure has a circular head, a rounded torso, and two arms extended horizontally to the sides. The legs are represented by two vertical lines. The drawing is simple and appears to be a placeholder for a logo or a generic human icon.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.