

# The Roots of American Government

- Aristotle and the Greeks articulated the idea of natural law.
- Society should be governed by ethical principles that are part of nature and can be understood through reason.
- Government before had been by “divine right,” but these philosophical changes put humans on the road toward self government.

# Popular Consent

## Social Contract Theory

- People are source of power
- People give consent to government to rule
- Government provides protection of natural rights

# Founding a New System

At the time of the founding of our nation several forms of governments existed...

- Monarchy
- Oligarchy
- Aristocracy

} All are based on elite rule and give few rights to the people who live under them.

The colonists did not want to live under the systems they had suffered under in the Old World so they established a new system: democracy.

# The Theory of Democratic Government

- Direct democracy
- Indirect democracy
- Republic

# Direct Democracy

- A system in which all come together periodically to discuss policy and abide by majority rule.
  - New England town meeting

# Indirect Democracy

A system of government that allows citizens to vote for representatives who will work on their behalf.

# Republic

A government rooted in the consent of the governed.

# The Economic System

## Capitalism

- private ownership of property
- free market economy (laissez-faire)

# Characteristics of American Democracy

1. popular consent
2. popular sovereignty
3. majority rule
4. individualism
5. equality
6. personal liberty

# Ideology of Americans

- **Conservatism** – thought to believe that a government is best that governs least and that big government can only infringe on individual, personal, and economic rights.

# Ideology of Americans

- **Liberalism** – thought to favor government involvement in the economy and the provision of social services and to take an activist role in protecting women, the elderly, minorities, and the environment.

# Ideology of Americans

- **Libertarianism** – thought to favor a free market economy and no governmental interference in personal liberties.

# Views of Government

- Our ideology and experiences greatly affect how we view our government.
- It is part of our culture to expect negative campaigns, dishonest politicians, and political pundits who bash our leaders and institutions.
- Looking at our government in such a light leads many to remain uninformed and pessimistic.