CONSTITUTION UNIT VOCABULARY

The Constitution is the highest law of the land, and no lower law can contradict it. It is the blueprint for the three branches of our government. It is a living document that can be changed when needed to adapt to the times.

Checks and Balances - A system where each branch of government can check, or restrain, the powers of the other two branches so that the branches remain balanced, or equal in power and influence.

Consent of the Governed - People are the source of all government power, so the government has the right to rule people only when the people have a way to express their opinion of the government's actions (such as by voting).

Limited Government - A government whose powers and functions are restricted by law - in other words, a government that has certain rules and has to play by those rules.

Popular Sovereignty - The people have a right to choose their government and have a say in what it does.

Representative Government - A government where the people elect representatives to act in their interests.

Separation of Powers - Government power should be split among two or more branches, so that no one part of the government becomes strong enough to take power away from the other branches or from the people.

Central government - Government that handles issues that affect the entire nation

Federation - A partnership of states and central government where the central government has power over the states, which are all equal to each other.

Confederation - A partnership of states and central government where all partners have equal power

Branch (of government) - Subsection of government that handles related functions

- Judicial branch - Everything to do with the justice system (judges, courts, juries, etc.). Reviews laws to decide if they are Constitutionally valid.
- Legislative branch - Branch of government in charge of making and passing laws (Congress).
- Executive branch - Branch takes action (executes) as needed by the other two branches. Enforces laws and performs duties required for the other two branches to function.