

THE GOVERNMENT SYSTEM AND THE SYMBOLS OF THE USA

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Abstract: This article explores the intricate relationship between the governmental system and national symbols of the United States of America. It examines how the structure and function of the U.S. government, as defined by the Constitution, are reflected in and reinforced by the nation's iconic symbols. Conversely, it investigates how these symbols have shaped perceptions, both domestic and international, of the American government and its values. The article will begin by providing a concise overview of the U.S. governmental system, focusing on its key components: the separation of powers, federalism, and the Bill of Rights.

Keywords: U.S. Government System, Separation of Powers, Federalism, Bill of Rights, National Symbols, American Identity, America, Exceptionalism, Political Culture, Governance, Patriotism, Nationalism, Symbolism, American Flag, Great Seal of the United States, Statue of Liberty, Pledge of Allegiance, Constitution, Declaration of Independence, National Unity, Legitimacy, Symbolic Representation, Contestation, Reinterpretation (of symbols) Foreign Policy, Image Building, Historical Periods/Events, Founding Era, Civil War, Civil Rights Movement, Cold War, Post-9/11 Era, Politician of Reality, Hegemony, Nation-Building.

The U.S. government is a constitutional federal republic, meaning it's based on a written constitution, has a federal structure with power divided between the national government and state governments, and is a republic where citizens elect representatives. It operates under a system of separation of powers and checks and balances, with the federal government divided into three distinct branches: the legislative, executive, and judicial. "American Government: Institutions and Policies" Authors: James Q. Wilson, John J. DiIulio Jr., Meena Bose Details: Widely used in U.S. schools and colleges, this textbook explains the structure and function of the U.S. government, including federalism, the Constitution, the branches of government, and civil rights. "Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy" Authors: George C. Edwards III, Martin P. Wattenberg, Robert L. Lineberry Details: This book focuses on how the American government operates and how politics affect policy. It covers the Constitution, federalism, Congress, presidency, courts, and political participation.

"The Federalist Papers" Authors: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay Details: A historical collection of essays defending the U.S. Constitution. These essays explain the reasoning behind the design of the U.S. government system. "The U.S. Constitution" (Primary Source) Details: The foundational legal document that outlines the structure of the American government, including the separation of powers, checks and balances, and federalism. "Understanding the U.S. Constitution" Author: Sally E. Hadden Details: A beginner-friendly book that explains the Constitution and the structure of government in easy terms

1. Federalism: The U.S. government is a federal system, where power is shared between the national government and the individual state governments. This means some powers are reserved for

the federal government (like declaring war, regulating interstate commerce), while others are reserved for the states (like education, establishing local governments). This division of power ensures that the federal government's authority is limited and that states have some autonomy.

2. Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances: The U.S. Constitution establishes a system of separation of powers, dividing authority among the three branches. Each branch has specific powers and responsibilities. Checks and balances are built in to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful. For example, the legislative branch can impeach the president, while the executive branch can veto laws passed by the legislative branch.

3. The Three Branches: Legislative Branch: The Congress, composed of the Senate and the House of Representatives, is responsible for making laws.

Executive Branch: The President is the head of state and head of government, and is responsible for enforcing laws. Judicial Branch: The Supreme Court and other federal courts are responsible for interpreting laws and resolving disputes.

4. A Republic: The U.S. government is a republic, meaning citizens elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf. This system ensures that the government is accountable to the people and that their voices are heard.

Official Symbols of the United States: National symbols embody the history, values, and identity of a nation. In the United States, many of these symbols are codified in federal law, while others have become iconic through tradition and cultural significance. National Bird: Bald Eagle: The bald eagle has symbolized American freedom and strength since 1782, when it was featured on the Great Seal. However, it wasn't until December 24, 2024, that it was officially designated as the national bird by law. President Joe Biden signed the bill into law, correcting a 242-year oversight.

The eagle is native to North America and appears on currency, military insignia, and official documents. National Flag: The Stars and Stripes: The U.S. flag, commonly known as the "Stars and Stripes," consists of 13 horizontal stripes representing the original colonies and 50 stars symbolizing the current states. The colors hold specific meanings: red for valor, white for purity, and blue for vigilance and justice. The flag is a powerful symbol of American identity and is protected under federal law.

The National Bison Legacy Act (H.R. 2908) was signed and enacted into United States law on May 9, 2016, by President Barack Obama. The act designated the bison as the official national mammal. In support of the act the findings of the U.S. Congress declared that bison (buffalo) are a national historical symbol integrated with the spiritual and economic lifeways of several Indigenous peoples, and more than 60 tribes of the United States. The American bison along with the American bald eagle have been designated as national animals that are symbols of America the bison designation as a national mammal [4] was supported by the InterTribal Buffalo Council and National Bison Association after the species' resurgence following near extinction. National Flower: The Rose: The rose was designated as the national floral emblem in 1986. It represents love, beauty, and the diversity of the American people. National Tree: The Oak: The oak tree, known for its strength and endurance, was declared the national tree in 2004.

It symbolizes the nation's strength and the enduring nature of American democracy. National Anthem: "The Star-Spangled Banner" Written by Francis Scott Key during the War of 1812, "The Star-Spangled Banner" was adopted as the national anthem in 1931. The lyrics reflect the resilience and bravery displayed during the defense of Fort McHenry. American independence and is located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The Great Seal is the seal of the United States. The phrase is used both for the impression device itself, which is kept by the United States secretary of state, and more generally for the impression it produces. The obverse of the Great Seal depicts the national coat of arms of the United

States while the reverse features a truncated pyramid topped by an Eye of Providence. The year of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, 1776, is noted in Roman numerals at the base of the pyramid. The seal contains three Latin phrases: *E Pluribus Unum* (“Out of many, one”), *Annuit cœptis* (“He has favored our undertakings”), and *Novus ordo seclorum* (“A new order of the ages”).

Largely designed by Charles Thomson, secretary of the Continental Congress, and William Barton, and first used in 1782, the seal is used to authenticate certain documents issued by the federal government of the United States. Since 1935, both sides of the Great Seal have appeared on the reverse of the one-dollar bill. The coat of arms is used on official documents—including United States passports—military insignia, embassy placards, and various flags. The seal of the president of the United States is directly based on the Great Seal, and its elements are used in numerous government agency and state seals.

Today’s official versions from the Department of State are largely unchanged from the 1885 designs. The current rendering of the reverse was made by Teagle & Little of Norfolk, Virginia, in 1972. It is nearly identical to previous versions, which in turn were based on Lossing’s 1856 version. *E pluribus unum* included in the Great Seal of the United States, being one of the nation’s mottos at the time of the seal’s creation. That the phrase “*E pluribus unum*” has thirteen letters makes its use symbolic of the original Thirteen Colonies which rebelled against the rule of the Kingdom of Great Britain and became the first thirteen states, represented today as the thirteen stripes on the American flag. Original 1776 design for the Great Seal by Pierre Eugene du Simitiere. The shields with 13 initials of the colonies surrounding symbols for the side origin nations England (rose), Scotland (thistle), Ireland (harp), Holland (the Netherlands) (lion), France (fleur-de-lis), and Germany (eagle) linked together with motto.

The meaning of the phrase originated from the concept that out of the union of the original Thirteen Colonies emerged a new single nation. It is emblazoned across the scroll and clenched in the eagle’s beak on the Great Seal of the United States. Statue of Liberty: A gift from France in 1886, the Statue of Liberty stands as a symbol of freedom and democracy. Located on Liberty Island in New York Harbor, it has welcomed millions of immigrant arriving by sea and remains an enduring icon of American ideals. Uncle Sam: Uncle Sam, a personification of the U.S. government, originated during the War of 1812. The iconic image, popularized by James Montgomery Flagg’s 1917 recruitment poster, depicts a stern-faced man pointing with the caption “I Want You for U.S. Army.” National Motto: “In God We Trust”: Adopted in 1956, “In God We Trust” is the official motto of the United States. It reflects the nation’s religious heritage and is found on currency and public buildings.

The article highlights the structure of the U.S. government three branches and then focuses on the symbolic representation of the nation through officially designated symbols. These symbols aim to embody American history, values freedom, strength, justice, love, diversity, and identity, and are officially recognized through federal law or tradition. The bison also signifies Native American spiritual and economic life and the oak tree represents strength, endurance, and democracy. The Great Seal authenticates federal documents, has phrases and images relating to American ideals, and is on the reverse of the one-dollar bill. In conclusion, the United States government is a complex yet carefully designed system rooted in the principles of federalism, separation of powers, and checks and balances. As a constitutional republic, it empowers citizens through elected representation while dividing authority among three distinct branches – legislative, executive, and judicial – to prevent tyranny and ensure accountability. Symbols like the bald eagle and the Stars and Stripes embody the nation’s values and history, reminding citizens of the ideals upon which the country was founded. Understanding the structure, function, and underlying principles of the U.S. government is crucial for informed civic engagement and preserving the strength and resilience of American democracy.

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