

Core Democratic Values Defined

Core democratic values are the fundamental beliefs and Constitutional principles of American society, which unite all Americans. These values are expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and other significant documents, speeches and writings of the nation.

Life: Each citizen has the right to the protection of his or her life.

Liberty: Liberty includes the freedom to believe what you want, freedom to choose your own friends, and to have your own ideas and opinions, to express your ideas in public, the right for people to meet in groups, the right to have any lawful job or business.

Pursuit of Happiness: Each citizen can find happiness in his or her own way, so long as he or she does not step on the rights of others.

Justice: All people should be treated fairly in getting advantages and disadvantages of our country. No group or person should be favored.

Common Good: Citizens should work together for the good of all. The government should make laws that are good for everyone.

Equality: Everyone should get the same treatment regardless of where their parents or grandparents were born, their race, their religion or how much money they have. Citizens all have political, social and economic equality.

Truth: The government and citizens should not lie.

Diversity: Differences in language, dress, food, where parents or grandparents were born, race and religion are not only allowed but accepted as important.

Popular Sovereignty: The power of the government comes from the people.

Patriotism: This means having a devotion to our country and the core democratic values in what we say and what we do.

Source: Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education, a collaborative project of the Center for Civic Education and the Council for the Advancement of Citizenship, National Council for the Social Studies Bulletin No. 86, 1991.

