

# Core Democratic Values

Core democratic values are the basic beliefs that unite all Americans. These values are found in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and other important documents of our nation.

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**Life:** An individual has the right to life, except in extreme cases, such as when a person is killed when threatening the life of someone else.

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**Liberty:** A person has the freedom to act, to think and to believe as he/she wants without the government interfering. This 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.

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**The Pursuit of Happiness:** A person has the right to find happiness in his/her own way as long as he/she does not step on the rights of others.

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

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**Justice:** All people should be treated fairly when correcting wrongs or injuries and when making decisions. All people should be treated fairly. No group should be favored.

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**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.

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**Diversity:**

In our society, we respect variety in culture and ethnic background, race, lifestyle and belief. Differences in language, dress, food, where parents/grandparents were born, race and religion are acceptable.

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**Truth:**

The government and citizens should not lie.

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**Popular Sovereignty:**

The power of the government comes from the people.

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**Patriotism:**

We should show respect and loyalty to our country and the core democratic values.

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**Rule of Law:**

Everyone, including the governmental officials, must obey the law.

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**Separation of Powers:**

We have three branches of government (legislature, executive and judiciary). Each has different members and duties to balance the power between them.

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**Representative Government:**

Citizens elect others to represent their interests in government.

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**Checks and Balances:**

Different branches of the government have equal powers so that no branch can dominate the others. Each branch limits the power of the other branches so no one branch gets too much power.

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**Individual Rights:**

Each individual in the United States has certain basic rights: life, liberty, economic freedom, and the pursuit of happiness. The government must protect these rights.

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**Freedom of Religion:**

Citizens have the freedom to choose whatever religion they want to follow. They also have the right to follow no religion.

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**Federalism:**

The state and national governments share power and responsibilities.

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**Civilian Control of the Military:**

Civilian (non-military) people should be in charge of the military. The President is the Commander-in-Chief of the military.

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