

DEFINITIONS OF BASIC CONSTITUTIONAL TERMS—Dr. John W. Ray

CHECKS AND BALANCES AND SEPARATION OF POWERS—The legislative, executive and judicial powers of government are located in three distinct branches of government that are supposed to check and balance each other. Each branch can limit and oversee one another. No concentration of power in one branch.

FEDERALISM—Constitutional division of power and responsibility between the national government and state government. A check on national government.

RULE OF LAW—A political and legal principle stating that no person, group, or government official is above the law. Everyone is equal before the law, and laws must be applied fairly and consistently. The law is supreme; no one above it.

POPULAR SOVREIGNTY—Supreme and final legal authority rests with the people who are the legitimate source of government power and authority. It is a political doctrine stating that the authority of a state and its government is created and sustained by the consent of its people, who are the ultimate source of all political power. State is based on consent of the governed.

REPUBLICAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT—Government power is exercised through elected representatives, rather than through a monarch or hereditary ruler.

LIMITED GOVERNMENT-- A limited government is a political system where legal power is restricted by a constitution or governing document so that public officials cannot exercise arbitrary or absolute control over citizens.

PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS—Individual rights are basic liberties and moral or legal claims that belong to every person by virtue of being human, allowing individuals to live freely and pursue their own goals without interference from the government or other people.

PROMOTING THE COMMON GOOD—The common good consists of the social systems, institutions, environments, and conditions that work to the benefit and well-being of all or most members of a given community. The general welfare or good of all. A state where collective infrastructure, such as justice systems, educational systems, clean water, enables individuals to reach their full potential.