



# WHAT MAKES UP A DEMOCRACY IN THE UNITED STATES

*A Living System of Rights, Representation, and Accountability*

*Why RescueOurDemocracy.com exists*



## 1. Free and Fair Elections

### Core Components:

- Universal suffrage (18+, citizens)
- Fair redistricting
- Ballot access
- Transparent vote counting
- Peaceful transfer of power

### Hot-Topic Issues:

- **Voter suppression** (ID laws, polling closures, felon disenfranchisement)
- **Election denialism** (false fraud claims, Jan. 6 aftermath)
- **Gerrymandering** (manipulation of district maps)
- **Attacks on mail-in and early voting**

### Why It Matters:

Without fair elections, the people lose the power to choose their leaders and policies. Democracy becomes performative.

## 2. Rule of Law

### Core Components:

- Independent judiciary
- Constitutional supremacy
- Checks and balances
- Legal accountability for all—including leaders

### Hot-Topic Issues:

- **Trump's pending criminal trials and immunity claims**
- **Stacking the courts and SCOTUS ethics violations**
- **Selective enforcement (e.g., immigration raids, protest crackdowns)**

### Why It Matters:

Rule of law ensures no one is above the law. Democracy requires legal integrity and a functioning justice system.



### **3. Free Press and Access to Information**

#### **Core Components:**

- Freedom of the press (1st Amendment)
- Whistleblower protections
- Government transparency (FOIA)
- Protection against propaganda

#### **Hot-Topic Issues:**

- **Disinformation campaigns & AI-generated fake news**
- **Book bans and educational censorship**
- **Attacks on journalists and media credibility**

#### **Why It Matters:**

A well-informed public is essential for making decisions in elections, civic action, and holding power accountable.

### **4. Freedom of Expression & Protest**

#### **Core Components:**

- Right to dissent
- Right to assemble
- Right to petition the government
- Artistic and academic freedom

#### **Hot-Topic Issues:**

- **Criminalization of protests (especially pro-Palestinian, racial justice)**
- **Surveillance of activists**
- **Censorship of DEI programs in schools**

#### **Why It Matters:**

Civil disobedience and protest are essential tools for societal change and correcting democratic failures.



## 5. Checks and Balances / Separation of Powers

### Core Components:

- Legislative, Executive, Judicial independence
- Congressional oversight powers
- Impeachment processes

### Hot-Topic Issues:

- **Congressional gridlock and abuse of the filibuster**
- **Overreach of executive power (use of emergency declarations, executive orders)**
- **Lack of Supreme Court accountability (lifetime appointments, ethics scandals)**

### Why It Matters:

No single branch can control the others—this balance protects against authoritarianism.

## 6. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

### Core Components:

- Bill of Rights protections
- Equal protection under the 14th Amendment
- Right to privacy, speech, religion, etc.

### Hot-Topic Issues:

- **LGBTQ+ rights rollbacks** (bathroom bans, drag laws, book bans)
- **Attacks on reproductive rights (Dobbs decision, abortion bans)**
- **Voting rights erosion (Shelby v. Holder effects, voter purges)**
- **Trans rights under threat** (sports, healthcare bans)

### Why It Matters:

Civil liberties ensure we are protected from government overreach and can live with dignity and freedom.



## **Economic Justice and Access**

### **Core Components:**

- Living wages
- Labor rights (unionization, strikes)
- Access to healthcare, education, housing
- Safety net programs (SNAP, SSI, SSDI)

### **Hot-Topic Issues:**

- **Union busting & strike suppression**
- **SSI/SSDI underfunding and bureaucratic barriers**
- **Veterans' healthcare crises**
- **Student loan forgiveness rollbacks**
- **Corporate welfare vs. social safety net cuts**

### **Why It Matters:**

Economic justice empowers people to participate in democracy, not just survive under it.

## **8. Inclusive Representation**

### **Core Components:**

- Elected leaders reflect demographic diversity
- Accessibility for disabled voters
- Immigration and path to citizenship
- Protections for marginalized communities

### **Hot-Topic Issues:**

- **Attacks on DEI programs**
- **Anti-immigrant rhetoric and deportations (e.g., Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia)**
- **Barriers to candidacy for poor or disabled individuals**
- **SCOTUS rulings undermining race-conscious policies**

### **Why It Matters:**

A true democracy hears every voice. Marginalized communities must be represented, not just permitted.



## **9. International Integrity & Human Rights**

### **Core Components:**

- Respect for international law
- Human rights leadership abroad
- Protection of asylum seekers and refugees

### **Hot-Topic Issues:**

- **Gaza and Israel policy debates**
- **Asylum seekers turned away or deported without due process**
- **Withdrawal from global agreements (e.g., climate)**

### **Why It Matters:**

A democratic nation cannot operate in a vacuum. Its credibility relies on respect for universal human dignity.