

# 4 Cornerstones of Democracy

- 1) Participation **\*(assumes freedom of speech)**      2) Choice  
3) Freedom of information      4) Wide distribution of government power
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1) Participation in government decision-making (“we, the people...”)\

- \* By voting
- \* joining a political party
- \* volunteering for an election campaign
- \* challenging laws in court
- \* running for office
- \* publicly expressing your opinion in an effort to persuade others
- \* writing letters, joining a lobby group, or signing a petition

2) Choice; (Democracy is only really possible when people have options, and the ability to make choices)

- \* many political parties
- \* can vote for party leader if you join a party
- \* in most places, citizen can choose whether or not to vote (Australia has a mandatory voting law. That is, it is illegal to not vote, although of course there is no control over what choice citizens make. )

3) Freedom of Information (“the truth will set you free”)

- \* need good information in order to make good voting & citizenship decisions
- \* media must be free to publish a variety of opinions
- \* every party must have access to the media

4) Wide distribution of government power (“Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.”)

\*since having only one person in charge would basically allow that one person to make decisions (even if he or she was elected), it is necessary to have as many people as reasonably possible in power positions.

- representation by population

OR

- proportional representation

- \* courts that cannot be interfered with by government
- \* as many people as possible having the right to vote, and access to voting
- \* ‘checks and balances’ (ways of limiting the power of the leader(s))
- \* constitution
- \* Charter of Rights and Freedoms
  - by giving more power to citizens, including the right to vote, protest, equality rights, mobility rights, and legal rights, the power of the government to control the citizens is limited – even while the power of the citizens to influence the government remains.

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After introductory notes – 2<sup>nd</sup> set of notes. Goes with article about election terms, along with vocabulary regarding the actual meaning of the terms used. Then ‘What is democracy’ reading, and Strum lecture.

\*\*Any changes or adjustments that a government makes that restrict participation, choice, freedom of information, or the distribution of government power, make it a less democratic government. This does occur when a War Measures Act, conscription, or Orders in Council take place, as well as in other ways.

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