

## Rhode Island Grade Span Expectations for Civics & Government and Historical Perspectives/Rhode Island History

### APPENDIX A - Glossary of Terms

**Amendment** – (constitutional) changes in, or additions to, a constitution; proposed by a two-thirds vote of both houses of Congress or by a convention called by Congress at the request of two-thirds of the state legislatures; ratified by approval of three-fourths of the states

**Anarchy** – political and social disorder due to the absence of government control: *The death of the king was followed by a year of anarchy.*

**Artifact** – an object made or used by man that is of archeological or historical interest (e.g., tools, weapons, ceramics, pieces of furniture, etc.)

**Authority** – the right to control or direct the actions of others, legitimized by law, morality, custom, or consent: *According to the Constitution of the United States, the executive branch, namely the President, has the authority to veto laws approved by Congress.*

**Autocracy** – a form of government in which one person possesses unlimited power: *A monarchy is a type of autocracy.*

**Bill** – a form or draft of a proposed law presented to a legislature: *A bill must pass in both chambers of Congress before it can become law.*

**Bill of Rights** – the First Ten Amendments to the Constitution of the United States; ratified in 1791, these amendments limit government power and protect basic rights and liberties of individuals

**Branches of Government** – the three branches of the federal government are the Executive (President), Legislative (Congress: Senate and House of Representatives), and Judicial (Supreme Court)

**Brown v. Board of Education (1954)** – a Supreme Court case which declared that “separate-but-equal” educational facilities are inherently unequal and therefore a violation of equal protection of the law guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment

**Boycotting** – voluntarily abstaining from using, buying, or dealing with a person, organization, or product as an expression of protest – usually motivated by sociopolitical reasons

**Buycotting** – voluntarily choosing to use, buy, or deal with a specific person, organization, or product as an expression of support – usually for sociopolitical reasons; the opposite of boycott

**Checks and Balances** – the system whereby each branch of an organization can limit the powers of other branches. This system is enacted through the Constitution of the U.S. in order to prevent any of its three branches (executive, legislative, and judicial) from dominating the Federal government: *e.g. Congress (legislative) has the power to declare war, the President (Executive) has the power to veto bills passed by Congress, and the Supreme Court (Judicial) has the power to interpret laws. e.g., the Senate must confirm major executive appointments, and the courts may declare acts of Congress unconstitutional*

**Chronicle** – (n) an account, description, record, history, narration, story, journal, or diary of events; (v) to record, recount, narrate, or write down to keep track of events

**Chronology** – the study of history is grounded in chronology; the main way historians arrange events and trends in history to see patterns of continuity and change in history; understanding the order of events is crucial to understanding, analyzing, or explaining the importance or meaning of events

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**Citizen** – a native or naturalized member of a state or nation who owes allegiance to its government and is entitled to its protection, privileges, or franchises (distinguished from Alien): *Citizens of the United States have United States passports to prove their U.S. citizenship when visiting another country.*

**Citizenship** – the status of being a member of a state or country, one who promises allegiance to the nation and is entitled to its protection and to political rights

**Civic** – of or pertaining to citizenship; civil: *civic duties.*

**Civics** – the study of citizenship and government

**Civil** – of or pertaining to, or consisting of citizens; civil life; civil society or of citizens in their ordinary capacity, or of the ordinary life and affairs of citizens as distinguished from military or religious life and affairs

**Civil liberties** – areas of personal freedom with which governments are constrained from interfering

**Civil rights** – protections and privileges of personal liberty given to all citizens by law, rights bestowed by nations on those within the territorial boundaries: *e.g. Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution.*

**Common good (public good)** – the good of the community

**Constitutional government (constitutionalism)** – the idea that the powers of government should be distributed according to a written or unwritten constitution and that those powers should be effectively restrained by the constitution's provisions

**Debate** – a discussion, as of a public question in an assembly, involving opposing viewpoints: *a debate in the Senate on farm price supports.*

**Democratic ideals** – is a rhetorical phrase used to denote either personal qualities or standards of government behavior that are felt to be essential for the continuation of a democratic policy. e.g., individual dignity, equality, liberty, freedom, legitimate authority, privacy, responsibility, justice, etc.: *e.g. advocates for greater equality in the distribution of wealth will argue that inequalities create differing levels of opportunity and that equality is a democratic ideal.*

**Democracy** – government by the people; a form of government in which supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under the electoral system: *The U.S. and Canada are democracies.*

**Dictatorship** – A country, government, or the form of government in which absolute power – usually gained and maintained by force – is exercised by a ruler or small group not restricted by a constitution, laws, opposition, etc. to be held responsible to the will of the people; a form of totalitarianism: *Cuba has been called a dictatorship even though it espouses communism.*

**Discourse** – communication of thought by words; talk; conversation or a formal discussion of a subject in speech or writing, as a dissertation, treatise, sermon, etc.

**Discriminate** – is to make a distinction between people on the basis of class or category without regard for individual merit; the unfair treatment or denial of normal privileges to persons because of their race, age, sex, nationality or religion

**Diversity** – variety in culture and ethnic background, race and belief is not only permissible but also desirable and beneficial in a pluralistic society

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**Divine right** – the doctrine that monarchs derive their right to rule directly from God and are accountable only to God

**Due process of law** – the principle that government must normally respect all of a person’s legal rights when the government deprives a person of life, liberty, or property, guaranteed under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution

**Election** – is a decision making process where people choose people to hold offices (through voting): *The presidential elections in the United States are held every four years.*

**Enduring documents** – historical documents which are central to the ideology, structure, and actions of a government, institution, or society: *e.g., Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, Constitution of the United States, Magna Carta.*

**Federal (federalism)** – system of government in which power is divided between a central authority (national government) and constituent unit (states); in particular, the allocation of significant law making powers with most powers retained by the central authority: *e.g., the United States is a federal system*

**Feudal (feudalism)** – a political and economic system in which a king or queen shared power with the nobility who required services from the common people in return for allowing them to use the noble’s land: *Feudalism was prevalent in the Middle Ages.*

**Freedom** – quality or state of independence; demonstration of free will in areas such as: to gather in public (assembly); to print or publish without government interference (press); to worship as one pleases (religion); to express oneself verbally or non-verbally (speech); etc.

**Functions of government** – to establish justice, to insure domestic tranquility, to provide for the common defense, to promote the general welfare, and to secure the blessings of liberty: *Preamble to the U.S. Constitution*

**Government** – the people, institutions and/or procedures through which a political unit (territory, people, organization, etc.) is ruled or administered

**Habeas corpus** – court order demanding that the individual in custody be brought into court and shown the cause for detention; guaranteed by the Constitution and can be suspended only in cases of rebellion or invasion

**Historical interpretation** – the act of interpreting historical sources that takes place when researching a person, topic, or event in history, by selecting certain facts to emphasize and organizing facts around certain concepts; all history is an interpretation by historians who bring to their research and writing their own frame of reference or set of perceptions and experiences through which they view the world and people

**Historical thinking skills** – skills that enable students to: differentiate among the past, present, and future time; formulate historical questions for inquiry; seek and evaluate evidence; compare and analyze historical stories, illustrations, and records; interpret historical records; and construct historical narratives of their own (source: *National Standards for History*, National Center for History in the Schools)

**Human rights** – concept of human beings as having universal rights, or status, regardless of legal jurisdiction or other localizing factors, such as ethnicity, nationality, or sex: *According to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights are conceptualized as based on inherent human dignity.*

**Ideology** – the combined doctrines, assertions, and intentions of a social or political group that justify its behavior

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**Individual rights** – held distinct from human rights, but the rights of individuals by virtue of their humanness provide the moral claim to freedom of action often codified into law so they may be protected by impartial third parties

**Institution** – (political or government) organizations such as Congress, the presidency, and the court system that play a significant role in the making, carrying out, and enforcing [of] laws and managing conflicts about them; also a custom, practice (e.g., the institution of slavery), organization (e.g., Congress), relationship, or behavioral pattern of importance in the life of a community or the larger society

**Interdependence** – a situation in which decisions or events in one part of the world or in one sector of the economy affect decisions and events in other parts of the world and other sectors of the economy

**Judicial Review** – the power of the court to study and decide on the constitutionality of the laws of the government or the acts of a government official: *The precedent for judicial review was established in the 1803 Supreme Court case Marbury v. Madison.*

**Justice** – the fair distribution of benefits and burdens, fair correction of wrongs and injuries, or use of fair procedures in gathering information and making decisions

**Law** – a set of rules, issued and enforced by a government, that binds every member of society: *If you break the law and disturb the peace, you will pay the consequences.*

**Legitimized (legitimacy)** – Acceptance as right and proper; belief among citizens that their government has the right to pass and enforce laws. To make lawful or legal; pronounce or state as lawful: *Parliament legitimized his accession to the throne.*

**Liberty** – permission granted by a government to go freely within specified limits; privileges of various social, political, or economic rights and privileges

**Majority rule** – is the rule that requires more than half the members of a polity (community, government, or corporation) who cast a vote to agree in order for the entire polity to make a decision on a measure being voted on: *After sixty-nine percent of the community voted to approve the amendment to the law, it went into effect according to the majority rule.*

**Magna Carta** – a document signed by King John of England in 1215 that guaranteed certain basic rights; considered the beginning of constitutional government in England

**Marbury v. Madison (1803)** – a historic case in which the Supreme Court held that it had the power of judicial review over acts of Congress

**Minority rights** – embodies two separate concepts; first, normal individual rights as applied to members of a racial, ethnic, class, religious, linguistic, or sexual minorities, and second, collective rights of minority groups. A legal framework designed to ensure that a specific group, which is vulnerable, disadvantaged or in a marginalized position in society is able to achieve equality and is protected from persecution: *e.g. children's rights, women's rights and refugee rights. Civil rights movements often seek to ensure that individual rights are not denied on the basis of membership in a minority group.*

**Monarchy** – form of government that has a monarch (king or queen) as Head of State; usually political power is exercised under the claim of divine or hereditary right of that single ruler; a type of autocracy: *The United Kingdom is a monarchy.*

**Oligarchy** – a form of government where the many are ruled by a few rather than one

**Parliamentary (system)** – a form of government that gives governmental authority to a legislature that selects the executive from its own members: *England and France have parliamentary governments.*

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**Pluralism** – the affirmation and acceptance of diversity; in politics, the affirmation and acceptance of diversity in the interests and beliefs of the citizenry is one of the most important features of a democracy

**Policy** – a course of action adopted and pursued by a government, ruler, political party, etc.

**Political ideology** – an organized, coherent set of attitudes about government and public policy: *By identifying with a political party, you show your agreement with their political ideology.*

**Political party** – A group of people with broad common interests who organize, however loosely, to elect government officials under a given label, control government, and influence government policies; An organization that seeks to attain higher political power within a government, usually through participating in a campaign. *e.g., in the United States: Democrat, Republican, etc.*

**Political system** – the government, ruler(s), and institutions exercising power over a specific territory

**Politics** – the methods by which individuals and groups try to influence operations of government

**Popular sovereignty** – the concept that political and legislative power resides with the citizens, who entrust that power to the government, which is under their control because the people’s vote is considered the final authority

**Primary source** – an original fundamental and authoritative document pertaining to an event or subject of inquiry; a firsthand or eyewitness account of an event: *e.g. an autobiography is a primary source.*

**Privileges** – any of the rights common to all citizens under a modern constitutional government

**“Regime of truth”** – a power structure or truth-generating apparatus (school, discipline, profession, law) that reinforces a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements

**Republic (republican government)** – state in which the supreme power rests in the body of citizens entitled to vote and is exercised by representatives chosen directly or indirectly by them to promote the common welfare

**Rights** – the just claims that belong to a person by law, nature, or tradition: *The Declaration of Independence states that all people are created equal with “certain unalienable rights ... Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”*

**Rule** – a principle or regulation governing conduct, action, procedure, arrangement, etc. that is enforced by those who established it, but is not necessarily universally applicable or enforceable: *e.g., some schools enforce the wearing of school uniforms, but not all schools in that state are required to follow that rule.*

**Rule of Law** – The principle that every member of a society, even a ruler, must follow the law; The principle that government authority is legitimately exercised only in accordance with written, publicly disclosed laws adopted and enforced in accordance with established procedure. The principle is intended to safeguard against arbitrary governance: *e.g. separation of powers or principle of legitimate equality of all before the law.*

**“Rule of man”** – government officials and others governing by their personal whim or desire rather than by the “rule of law”

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**Secondary source** – any document that describes an event, person, place, or thing; usually not created by someone living in the same time period; contains information others have gathered and interpreted; indirect or second-hand information: *e.g. a biography is a secondary source.*

**Seminal documents** – documents extolling original, relevant ideas that are seen to influence the development of future events or issues: *e.g., Declaration of the Rights of Man, Universal Declaration of Rights, International Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

**Separation of powers** – the division of governmental power among several institutions that must cooperate in decision making: *The separation of powers in the United States government provides a series of checks and balances among the three branches of government.*

**Service learning** – a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities (usually incorporated into an educational system as a graduation requirement)

**Social contract (compact)** – an agreement among all the people in a society to give up part of their freedom to a government in return for protection of their natural rights; a theory developed by Locke to explain the origin of legitimate government

**Sovereignty** – the ultimate, supreme power in a state; in the United States, sovereignty rests with the people; complete independence and self-government

**Special interest group** – an organized body of individuals who share some goals and try to influence public policy to meet those goals

**States' rights** – the rights belonging to the various states, especially with reference to the strict interpretation of the Constitution, by which all rights not delegated by the Constitution belong to the states

**Suffrage** – right to vote

**Theocracy** – a form of government in which the leaders of the government are also the leaders of the religion and they rule as representatives of the deity (by divine authority): *The Holy Roman Empire was a theocracy.*

**"Unalienable" (inalienable) rights** – fundamental rights of the people that may not be taken away; a phrase used in the Declaration of Independence

**Vote** – (n) A formal expression of opinion or choice made by an individual or body of individuals: *According to the tally of the votes, the new student council will consist entirely of new members.*; (v) An individual's act of expressing support or preference for a certain motion, candidate, or selection of candidates by casting a ballot: *Each student voted for the candidate he or she thought would be the best for the position.*

### The following sources were referenced when developing the glossary:

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