Foundations of Democratic Government

Greece, Rome, England
Greece: Background

- Loose collection of **City-States**
  - Small independent nations
- Between 750 and 550 B.C.E. started to develop ideas on government
- City-State of Athens ruled by Great Council
  - More Athenians wanted to be involved
  - Leads to idea of *Demos Kratia*
    - “Government by the people”
Greece: Athenian Democracy

- Structured as a **direct democracy**
  - People directly voted for rulers and laws
- Develop the idea of **Citizenship**
  - Those who are citizen have the ability to vote and participate in government
Greece: Problems and legacy

• Citizens were only males who owned large amounts of property
  – Women, slaves, small farmers/business owners no

• Athenians first to develop and implement large scale democratic style government
Rome: Background

- Between 750 B.C.E. and 350 B.C.E. Romans develop idea of a Republic
  - People vote for representatives to the Senate
- Representatives – an elected official who participates in the making and passing of laws
Rome: Roman Republic

• At first only patricians (upper class) could participate in the government
• Eventually plebeians (lower class) were allowed to participate as well
• Senators handled day to day governmental issues
Rome: Problems and Legacy

• Around 450 B.C.E. Romans called to have laws codified
  – Laws were written down to prevent the government from abusing its power
• The Roman republic functioned much more efficiently
  – Less participation needed by citizens
• Allowed for the rise of tyrants
England: Background

• During Middle Ages England was ruled by an absolute Monarch
  – King had full power to make decisions

• In 1100s C.E. Henry II established English Common Law
  – Kings courts established to make unified court system across kingdom
England: The Magna Carta

• Barons of England banned together and forced King to sign *Great Charter* in 1215
  – Spelled out rights of nobles
  – Made it illegal for king to imprison people without a jury trial
England: Parliament

- *Parler* in French means “to talk”
- Developed out of great council of nobles
- Would talk about ideas then present them to the king
  - Led to a **Limited Monarchy**
    - Where king had to share power with the people
England: Bill of Rights

• Passed in 1689
• First time the people had more power than king/Queen
  – Limited kings ability to tax, pass laws, and could not interfere with elections
How does it all connect?

• The United States is a democratically elected Constitution-Based Federal Republic