

# Core Democratic Values

# What is Democracy?

- de·moc·ra·cy – *n* – *Government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives.*
- Comes from the Greek word *demo*, meaning “people,” and *kratia* meaning “rule” or “government”



# What are Core Democratic Values?

- They are fundamental beliefs and constitutional principles of American society, which unite all Americans.
- These values are expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and other significant documents, speeches, and writings of the nation.

# Life

- The individual's right to life should be considered inviolable except in certain highly restricted and extreme circumstances, such as the use of deadly force to protect one's own life or the lives of others.



# Liberty

- The right to liberty is considered an unalterable aspect of the human condition. Central to this idea of liberty is the understanding that the political or personal obligations of parents or ancestors cannot be legitimately forced on people.
- The right to liberty includes **personal freedom**: the private realm in which the individual is free to act, to think and to believe, and which the government cannot legitimately invade.
- Also **political freedom**: the right to participate freely in the political process, choose and remove public officials, to be governed under a rule of law; the right to a free flow of information and ideas; open debate and right of assembly; and
- Finally, **economic freedom**: the right to acquire, use, transfer and dispose of private property without unreasonable governmental interference; the right to seek employment



# The Pursuit of Happiness

- It is the right of citizens in the United States constitutional democracy to attempt to attain—“pursue”—happiness in their own way, so long as they do not infringe upon the rights of others.



# Common Good

- The public or common good requires that individual citizens have the commitment and motivation—that they accept their obligation—to promote the welfare of the community and to work together with other members for the greater benefit of all.



# Justice

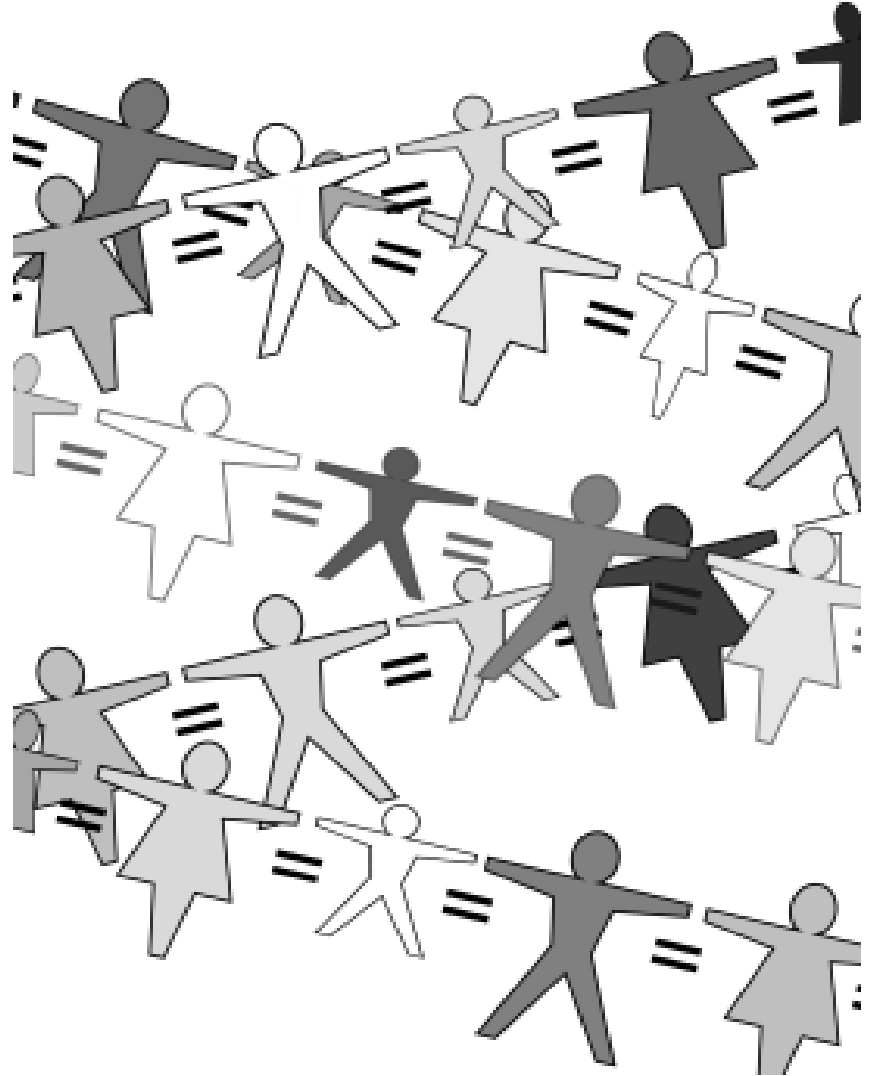
- People should be treated fairly in the distribution of the benefits and burdens of society, the correction of wrongs and injuries, and in the gathering of information and making of decisions.





# Equality

- All citizens have...
- **Political equality** and are not denied these rights unless by due process of law;
- **legal equality** and should be treated as equals before the law;
- **social equality** so as there should be no class hierarchy sanctioned by law;
- **economic equality** which tends to strengthen political and social equality for extreme economic inequality tends to undermine all other forms of equality and should therefore be avoided.



# Diversity

- Variety in culture and ethnic background, race, lifestyle, and belief is not only permissible but desirable and beneficial in a pluralist society.



# Truth

- Citizens can legitimately demand that truth-telling as refraining from lying and full disclosure by government be the rule, since trust in the veracity of government constitutes an essential element of the bond between governors and governed.



# Popular Sovereignty

- The citizenry is collectively the sovereign of the state and holds ultimate authority over public officials and their policies.



# Patriotism

- Virtuous citizens display a devotion to their country, including devotion to the fundamental values and principles upon which it depends. They should exhibit a reasoned commitment to the core democratic values in their words and deeds.

