

12 Politics

Government

A government is responsible for the **administration** of a nation's or country's **affairs**. Its **policies**, e.g. **domestic policy** and **foreign policy**, **influence decision-making**. Although policies and forms of government differ, there are generally considered to be three main types: **republics**, **monarchies** and **dictatorships**.

Over 2,000 years ago, Plato wrote *The Republic*, setting out ideas for a **democracy** – or government by the people. In a democracy it is the people's right to **have a say in** the government of their country. Over the centuries people have fought for their right to **vote** – for **universal suffrage**. In democracies most **adult citizens** are nowadays **eligible to vote** and can **elect** their **representatives** in the government. **General elections** are usually **held** at regular intervals, and on Election Day the people **go to the polling station** and **cast their votes**. Instead of putting **ballot papers** in a **ballot box**, today people often vote in electronic **polling booths**. Once the votes have been counted, the winning party, who might even **have a landslide victory**, can **form a government**. If no party **has an overall majority**, then a **coalition** can be formed, as often happens in Germany.

Politics in the UK

The UK is a **parliamentary democracy** and a **constitutional monarchy**. The **prime minister** is the **head of government** and the **monarch** (king or queen) is the **head of state**. Unlike many other countries, the UK does not have a single, written **constitution**. The **rights and responsibilities** of both individuals and society are **laid down** in different **sources**.

The UK Parliament is often called Westminster because it is housed in the Palace of Westminster in London. Parliament has two **chambers**: the **House of Commons** and the **House of Lords**. Their work is similar: **making laws (legislation)**, checking the work of the government (**scrutiny**), and debating **current** issues. >>>

politics ! *pl*
administration [-,--']
affairs *pl*
policy
 ▶ politician
domestic policy
foreign policy
to influence ['ɪnfluəns] **sth/sb**
decision-making
republic [rɪ'pʌblɪk]
monarchy ['mɒnəki]
 ▶ monarch ['mɒnək]
dictatorship [-'---] ▶ dictator

Politik (*Politik im Allgemeinen*)
hier: Verwaltung, Organisation
 Angelegenheiten
 (eine bestimmte) Politik
 Politiker(in)
 Innenpolitik
 Außenpolitik
 etw./jmdn. beeinflussen
 Entscheidungsfindung
 Republik
 Monarchie
 Monarch(in)
 Diktatur

to have a say in sth
to vote
universal suffrage ['sʌfrɪdʒ]
adult ['ædʌlt] **citizen**
to be eligible ['----] **to vote**
to elect sb
representative [reprɪ'zentətɪv]
to hold a general election ! held, held
(to go to the) polling [əʊ] **station**
 ▶ to go to the polls
to cast one's vote ! cast, cast
ballot ['bælət] **paper**
ballot ['bælət] **box**
polling [əʊ] **booth**
to have/win a landslide victory ! won,
 won
to form a government
to have an overall majority

ein Mitspracherecht bei etw. haben
 wählen
 allgemeines Wahlrecht
 volljährige(r) Bürger(in)
 wahlberechtigt sein
 jmdn. wählen
 Vertreter(in) (*hier:* im Parlament)
 eine allgemeine Wahl abhalten
 (zum) Wahllokal (gehen)
 zur Wahl gehen
 seine Stimme abgeben
 Stimmzettel
 Wahlurne
 Wahlkabine
 einen überwältigenden Sieg/einen
 Erdrutschsieg erringen
 eine Regierung bilden
 die absolute Mehrheit haben

parliamentary democracy
constitutional monarchy
head of government
head of state
constitution [konstɪ'tju:ʃn]
rights and responsibilities
to lay sth down ! laid, laid
source

parlamentarische Demokratie
 konstitutionelle Monarchie
 Regierungschef(in)
 Staatsoberhaupt
 Verfassung
 Rechte und Pflichten
 etw. festlegen/festschreiben
 Quelle

chamber [eɪ]
House of Commons ▶ the Commons
House of Lords ▶ the Lords
to make a law
legislation [ledʒɪ'sleɪʃn]
scrutiny
current

Kammer
 Unterhaus
 Oberhaus
 ein Gesetz verfassen
 Gesetzgebung, Gesetze
 genaue Untersuchung
 aktuell



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However, only the Commons may decide on financial **bills**, such as **proposed new taxes**. The Lords can consider them but cannot block or **amend** them. In general, the decisions made in one House must be **approved** by the other, thus creating a system of **checks and balances**. The 646 members of the Commons are elected by **the public**, whereas members of the Lords are generally **appointed**. Government ministers, like the Prime Minister and the **Lord Chancellor**, meet and debate with the other **MPs** in the Commons.

For the past 150 years Britain has mainly had a two-party system – over the last 60 years these parties have been the Conservative (Tory) Party and the Labour Party. The third largest party, the Liberal Democrats, was formed in 1988. Although there are other smaller parties, their chances of winning many seats in an election are **slim**, as, unlike Germany, Britain does not have **proportional representation** at national level.

In a **general election**, the members of the **electorate** vote for a **Member of Parliament (MP)** to represent their area or **constituency** in the House of Commons. The **candidate** with the most votes becomes the MP in that constituency. (If an MP later **resigns** or dies, a **by-election** is held in that constituency to decide on the **successor**.)

The political party with the largest number of seats usually **forms the government** – a system that is known as “**first-past-the-post**”. If no party has an **absolute majority**, there is a **hung parliament**. In this case, a party can either try to **govern** without a majority, making it difficult to **pass laws**, or two (or more) parties may **form a coalition**.

The leader of the winning party becomes the **Prime Minister (PM)** and he or she appoints about 20 **Cabinet** members. They include the **Chancellor of the Exchequer**, the **Foreign Secretary** and the **Home Secretary**. The party with the second largest number of MPs becomes the **Opposition** with its own leader and “**Shadow Cabinet**”. The leaders of the Government and the Opposition sit on the front benches on opposite sides of the Chamber – their supporters who do not hold important positions are known as “**backbenchers**” and sit behind them. The Commons is **presided over** by the **Speaker**, who is elected by the MPs. He or she is the highest authority of the House of Commons and must remain **politically impartial** at all times. The Speaker acts as chairperson during the debates, calls MPs to speak and keeps order.

The House of Lords is made up of **life peers**, elected **hereditary peers** (both known as **Lords Temporal**) and **bishops (Lords Spiritual)**. The majority of its members are life peers. Two important events have changed the way that members of the House of Lords are appointed: the House of Lords **Act** 1999, which reduced the number of hereditary peers to 92 and ended the right of hereditary peers to pass membership down through the family, and the introduction of the House of Lords Appointments **Commission** in 2000. **The latter recommends** individuals for appointment as **non-party-political** life peers but it is the monarch who officially creates the **life peerage**. >>>

bill
to propose a tax
to amend a bill
to approve sth
(system of) checks and balances

the public
to appoint sb (to a post)
Lord Chancellor
MP = Member of Parliament

slim
proportional representation

general election
electorate [ɪˈlektərət]
constituency [-'----]
 ▶ constituent
to resign [rɪˈzaɪn] ▶ resignation
by-election
successor [sək'sesə] ≠ precursor

to form a government
first-past-the-post system
absolute majority
 ≠ minority
hung parliament

to govern
to pass a law
to form a coalition (with)

Chancellor [ˈtʃɑːnslə] **of the Exchequer** *BE*
Foreign Secretary *BE*
Home Secretary *BE*
to preside over sth
Speaker
politically impartial

life peer
hereditary [hɪˈredɪtri] **peer**

Lords Temporal
Lords Spiritual
Act (of Parliament)
the latter ≠ the former
to recommend sb/sth
non-party political
life peerage

Gesetzentwurf, Gesetzesvorlage
 eine Steuer vorschlagen
 eine Gesetzesvorlage ändern
 etw. billigen, etw. genehmigen
 System der gegenseitigen Kontrolle
 (Gewaltenteilung)
hier: das Volk
 jmdn. ernennen/in ein Amt berufen
 Lord(groß)kanzler(in), Justizminister(in)
 Parlamentsabgeordnete(r)

hier: gering
 Verhältniswahlrecht

Parlamentswahlen
 Wählerschaft
 Wahlkreis
 Wähler(in)
 zurücktreten
 Nachwahl
 Nachfolger(in)

eine Regierung bilden
 Mehrheitswahlrecht
 absolute Mehrheit
 Minderheit
 Parlament ohne klare Mehrheitsverhältnisse
 regieren
 ein Gesetz verabschieden
 eine Koalition bilden (mit), koalieren
 (mit)

Finanzminister(in)
 Außenminister(in)
 Innenminister(in)
 etw. leiten, den Vorsitz bei etw. haben
 Vorsitzende(r) des Unterhauses
 politisch unparteiisch

Mitglied des Oberhauses auf Lebenszeit
 Mitglied des Oberhauses mit erblichem Titel
 weltliche Mitglieder des Oberhauses
 geistliche Mitglieder des Oberhauses
 (verabschiedetes) Gesetz
 der/die/das Letztere
 jmdn./etw. empfehlen
 parteipolitisch neutral
 Peerswürde auf Lebenszeit



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The main **role** of **the Lords** is to examine and **amend bills** which have been **drawn up** in the Commons, especially important ones. They may not **veto a bill**, but they may **delay** it and their **consent** is necessary before it can become an Act of Parliament. Bills to raise **taxation** are an exception. The Lord Speaker presides over the House of Lords and acts as an **ambassador** for the House in the UK and **abroad**. He or she is elected by the members of the Lords for a period of five years and may only serve for two **terms**. The Lord Speaker may not vote on **proceedings** in the Lords as he or she has to remain politically impartial.

Each party appoints **whips** – MPs or peers – to **maintain discipline** within the party and to **keep** members **up-to-date**. They also try to make sure that party members **toe the party line** and **vote** in the way their party would like on important **issues**. They are led by the **Chief Whip**.

The **Civil Service** is the name given to the **administrative staff**, who carry out government **policies**. **Civil servants** are non-political as they work for the government, whichever party is in power.

The monarch's role is largely symbolic: in practice he or she acts on the advice of the PM. Official **duties** include signing bills and appointing the PM, new life peers and bishops. Every autumn the monarch formally opens the coming **parliamentary session, delivering a speech** in the Lords. It is written by the government and outlines its policies for the coming parliamentary year. At the end of the **legislative period**, the monarch officially **dissolves Parliament**.

Reform

Constitutional Reform Act 2005

This was a major piece of **legislation, enshrining judicial independence in law** for the first time in almost 900 years.

Changes included:

- establishing an independent **Supreme Court**, separating the highest **appeal court** from the House of Lords. **Prior to** this, the 12 most senior **judges**, the former **Law Lords**, sat in the House of Lords. Thus these judges are no longer part of the **parliamentary process** and also meet in a separate building in Parliament Square. It started work on 1 October 2009.
- reforming the role of the **Lord Chancellor**, one of the most senior roles in British government, as it **contravened** the idea of the "separation of powers". Before this, the Lord Chancellor was the Speaker in the House of Lords, a Cabinet Minister and Head of the **Judiciary** (courts of Law in England and Wales), thus a member of Parliament, a government minister and a judge. However, it was felt that this did not fit in with the separation of powers. Following the Act, these roles were transferred to the Lord Speaker and the **Lord Chief Justice respectively**. He or she is still appointed by the monarch on the advice of the PM and is a Cabinet minister as well as Secretary of State for Justice.

the Lords = House of Lords
 ▶ the Commons = House of Commons
to amend a bill
to draw up a bill ! drew, drawn
to veto ['vi:təʊ] **a bill**

to delay sth
consent [-'] ▶ to consent to sth
taxation
ambassador
abroad
term
proceedings

whip
to maintain [meɪn'teɪn] **sth**
discipline ['dɪsəplɪn]
to keep sb up-to-date ! kept, kept
to toe the party line
to vote
issue ['ɪʃu:]

Civil Service
administrative [-'-----] **staff** [stɑ:f]
policy
civil servant

duty
parliamentary session
to deliver a speech
legislative period
to dissolve Parliament

legislation [ˌledʒɪs'leɪʃn]
to enshrine sth (in law)
judicial [dʒu:'dɪʃl] **independence**

Supreme Court
appeal court
prior to this
judge
Law Lords
parliamentary process

Lord Chancellor
to contravene sth ! *without prep.*
judiciary
Lord Chief Justice

respectively

Oberhaus
 Unterhaus
 eine Gesetzesvorlage ändern
 eine Gesetzesvorlage entwerfen
 Veto gegen eine Gesetzesvorlage ein-
 legen
 etw. verschieben/verzögern
 Zustimmung
 Besteuerung
 Botschafter(in), Repräsentat(in)
 im Ausland
hier: Legislaturperiode
 Verfahren

parlamentarische(r) Geschäftsführer(in)
 etw. aufrechterhalten
 Disziplin
 jmdn. auf dem Laufenden halten
 sich nach der Parteilinie richten
hier: stimmen
 Frage, Angelegenheit

Staatsdienst
 Verwaltungspersonal
 (eine bestimmte) Politik
 Staatsbeamter/Staatsbeamtin

Pflicht
 parlamentarische Sitzungsperiode
 eine Rede halten
 Legislaturperiode
 das Parlament auflösen

Gesetzgebung
 etw. (im Gesetz) verankern
 gerichtliche Unabhängigkeit

Oberstes Gericht
 Berufungsgericht
 zuvor
 Richter(in)
normals: Lordrichter
 parlamentarischer Vorgang

Lord(groß)kanzler
 gegen etw. verstoßen
 Gerichtswesen
 Oberhaupt des
 Gerichtswesens
 jeweils



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Coalition Agreement 2010

When the coalition government – Tory and Liberal Democrat – **came into power** in 2010, the **deputy PM** Nick Clegg promised the “biggest **shake-up**” of British democracy since the Great Reform Act of 1832. Plans for political reform included:

- cutting the **number** of peers in the House of Lords from 800 to 300 of whom about 20% would still be appointed for their **expertise** and the rest would be elected for a single period of 15 years;
- cutting the number of MPs to 600 and changing the size of constituencies to make them more similar in size;
- having **fixed term** Parliaments. An **Act was passed** in 2011 so that parliamentary general elections must be held every five years on specific **polling days** – the first Thursday in May, the first being 7th May 2015. There are **special circumstances** under which this can be changed. Prior to this the PM could ask for **Parliament to be dissolved** whenever he or she chose.
- **holding a referendum** on whether the UK should change from the **first-past-the-post system** to the alternative vote system, a **ranking system**, for elections. The referendum took place in 2011 but the voters **overwhelmingly** decided to keep the first-past-the-post system.

Devolution

In 1999 as part of fundamental changes made by the Labour Party, Parliament agreed to **devolve power** to **regional assemblies** in Wales and Northern Ireland and to the Scottish Parliament. The idea was to **decentralize government** and give more powers over **day-to-day issues** to these nations. (The UK government is responsible for all matters in England that have been devolved.) Devolved powers include decisions concerning education, **local** government, health, justice and transport, although the powers vary. The UK government is still responsible for **foreign affairs**, **defence**, **social security** and **trade**. Scotland has been given more powers, including the right to set its own **rate of income tax** from 2016. In autumn 2014 the Scottish electorate will vote in a referendum on the issue of independence from the UK.

Politics in the US

Government in the US

The **Declaration of Independence** (1776) and the **Constitution** (written in 1787) with its seven original **articles** and twenty-seven **amendments** form the basis of US **democracy** and the system of **federal** government. The Constitution guarantees a **separation of powers**, meaning that three separate **branches** of government share power. These are

- the **legislative branch** (**Congress**),
- the **executive branch** (the **Administration**),
- the **judicial branch** (the **Supreme Court**).

to come into power

deputy PM

shake-up ▶ to shake sth up ! shook, shaken

an die Macht kommen
Vizepremierminister(in)
Umstrukturierung

expertise [ˌɛkspɜːˈtiːz]

fixed term

to pass an Act

polling [əʊ] **day**

special circumstances

to dissolve Parliament

to hold a referendum ! held, held

first-past-the-post system

ranking system

▶ to rank

overwhelmingly

Fachkenntnis, Kompetenz
mit fester Laufzeit (Legislaturperiode)
ein Gesetz verabschieden
Wahltag
besondere Umstände
das Parlament auflösen
ein Referendum abhalten
Mehrheitswahlrecht
Rangsystem
aufstellen
hier: überwiegend

to devolve power

▶ devolution

regional assembly

day-to-day issues

foreign affairs *pl*

defence

social security

trade

rate of income tax

▶ tax

▶ taxation

die Macht dezentralisieren/Macht übertragen
Dezentralisierung
Landesversammlung, Regionalparlament
alltägliche Themen
Außenpolitik
Verteidigung
Sozialversicherung
Handel
Einkommenssteuersatz
Steuer
Besteuerung

Declaration of Independence

Constitution [ˌkɒnstɪˈtjuːʃn]

article

amendment [əˈmɛndmənt]

federal

▶ federal republic

▶ federal state

branch

Unabhängigkeitserklärung
Verfassung
Artikel, Paragraph (eines Gesetzes)
Zusatz (zur Verfassung)
Bundes-
Bundesrepublik
Bundesstaat
Zweig

legislative [ˈlɛdʒɪslətɪv] **branch**

Congress [ˈkɒŋɡres]

executive [ɪɡˈzɛkjətɪv] **branch**

Administration

judicial [dʒuːˈdɪʃl] **branch**

Supreme Court [suːˌpriːm ˈkɔːt]

gesetzgebender Zweig, Legislative
der Kongress
ausführender Zweig, Exekutive
hier: Regierung
rechtsprechender Zweig, Judikative
Oberstes Bundesgericht in den USA



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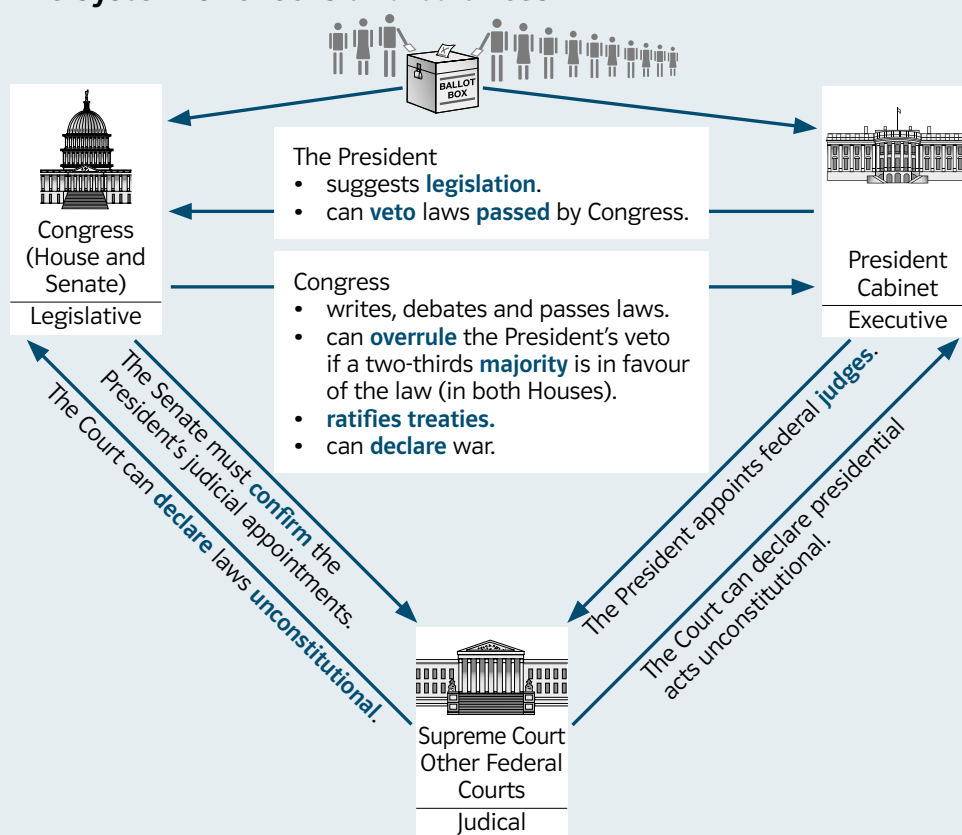
There is a system of **checks and balances** to **maintain** a **balance of power** between the three branches of government and to stop any one branch from becoming too powerful. The separation of powers also **applies** at state level; each state has its own constitution, its own executive branch **headed** by the **governor**, and its own state laws and courts.

Congress consists of two **chambers**: the **Senate** and the **House of Representatives**. The **Vice-President** is leader of the Senate, and there are 100 **Senators** (two from each state), who are **elected** for a six-year **term**.

The House of Representatives has 435 members, who are elected every two years. The number of Representatives from each state is based on the size of its **population**. The House and the Senate may **reject** each others' **bills**. Members of Congress are elected as **individuals** and not as members of a particular party. In practice, however, the US has a two-party system: the **Republicans** and the **Democrats**.

The President is **head** of the executive branch as well as being **Head of State** and **Commander-in-Chief** of the **armed forces**. He or she **appoints** the **Cabinet** members, which include the **Secretary of State**, the **Treasury Secretary**, the **Interior Secretary**, the **Defense Secretary** and the **Attorney General**. The Cabinet members do not have to belong to Congress, although the Senate must **approve** their **appointments**.

The system of checks and balances



(system of) checks and balances

to maintain [meɪn'teɪn] *sth*
balance of power
to apply
to head sth
governor ['gʌvənə]

System der gegenseitigen Kontrolle
 (Gewaltenteilung)
 etw. aufrechterhalten
 Gleichgewicht der Kräfte
hier: gelten, zutreffen
 etw. leiten
 Gouverneur(in)

chamber [eɪ]
Senate ['senɪt]
House of Representatives [ˌhəʊs 'rɛzɪntəvətɪvz]
Vice [vaɪs] **President**
to elect sb
term
population [ˌpɒpjə'leɪʃn]
to reject a bill
 ▶ rejection
individual

Kammer
 Senat
 Abgeordnetenhaus in den USA
 Vize-Präsident(in)
 jmdn. wählen
hier: Amtszeit
 Bevölkerung
 eine Gesetzesvorlage zurückweisen
 Ablehnung, Zurückweisung
 Einzelperson

head
Commander-in-Chief
armed forces *pl*
to appoint sb (to a post)
Secretary of State *AE*
Treasury Secretary *AE*
Interior Secretary *AE*
Defense Secretary *AE*
Attorney General [əˈtɜːnɪ 'dʒɛrəl] *AE*
to approve sth
 ▶ approval
appointment
 ▶ to appoint sb (to a post)

hier: Oberhaupt
 Oberbefehlshaber(in) (der Streitkräfte)
 Streitkräfte
 jmdn. ernennen/in ein Amt berufen
 Außenminister(in)
 Finanzminister(in)
 Innenminister(in)
 Verteidigungsminister(in)
 Generalbundesanwalt/-anwältin
 einer Sache zustimmen
 Zustimmung
 Ernennung
 jmdn. ernennen/(in ein Amt) berufen

legislation [ˌledʒɪs'leɪʃn]
to veto ['vi:təʊ] **a law**
to pass a law
to overrule a veto
 ▶ to overrule sb
majority ≠ minority
to ratify a treaty
 ▶ to sign a treaty
to declare war (on sb)
to confirm sth ▶ confirmation
to declare sth unconstitutional
judge

Gesetzgebung
 Einspruch gegen ein Gesetz erheben
 ein Gesetz verabschieden
 ein Veto ablehnen
 jmdn. überstimmen
 Mehrheit
 ein Vertrag ratifizieren
 ein Vertrag unterschreiben
 (jmdm.) den Krieg erklären
 etw. bestätigen
 etw. für verfassungswidrig erklären
 Richter(in)



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Presidential elections

The basic process of electing a President is **laid down** in the Constitution, although it has been changed and **modified** over time. The President **serves** a four-year **term** and may only **remain in office** for two terms. He or she must be an American **citizen** born in the US, over 35 years old, and have been living in the US for 14 years.

There are six **stages** to the presidential elections:

Stage 1

Individuals decide to **run for President**; there are usually several **candidates** from each of the main parties and a few independent ones.

Stage 2

Primaries and **caucuses** are held to decide which **delegates** will **represent** the state at the national party **conventions**.

Stage 3

At the conventions, usually held in the summer, the delegates from the states choose the party's **presidential nominee**. Often during this time, each presidential candidate chooses a **running-mate** (or vice-presidential candidate). Following the official **nomination**, the **election campaign** begins to heat up.

Stage 4

Election Day is always the Tuesday after the first Monday in November in **leap years**. The **voters** do not **vote** for the presidential candidate but for **presidential electors** (members of the **Electoral College**), who have **pledged to** vote for a particular candidate.

Stage 5

In December the electors meet in their state capitals to **cast their votes** and officially choose the next President. The candidate with the most votes wins.

Stage 6

The new President is **sworn in** on January 20 at the **Inauguration Ceremony**, where he or she **delivers** the **Inaugural Address**.

to lay down sth ! laid, laid to serve a term to remain in office citizen ['sɪtɪzn] ▶ citizenship	etw. festschreiben eine Amtszeit durchlaufen im Amt bleiben Staatsbürger(in)
stage	<i>hier:</i> Etappe
to run for President ! ran, run	als Präsident(in) kandidieren
primary ['praɪməri] caucus ['kɔːkəs]	Vorwahl Vorversammlung von Wählern zur Vorbereitung einer Wahl und Ernennung eines Kandidaten
delegate ['delɪɡət] to represent [ˌreprɪˈzent] sb ▶ representative [ˌrɛpɪˈzɛntɪv] convention	Delegierte(r) jmdn. vertreten Vertreter(in) Versammlung, Parteitag
presidential nominee [ˌnɒmɪˈniː] running-mate election campaign	Präsidentschaftskandidat(in) Kandidat(in) für die Vizepräsidentschaft Wahlkampf
leap year voter ▶ to vote for sb presidential elector	Schaltjahr Wähler(in) jmdn. wählen, für jmdn. stimmen Wahlmann/Wahlfrau bei einer Präsidentschaftswahl
Electoral [ɪˈlektərəl] College	Gremium der Wahlmänner und Wahlfrauen
to pledge to do sth ▶ pledge	sich verpflichten etw. zu tun Versprechen, Zusicherung
to cast one's vote ! cast, cast	seine Stimme abgeben
to swear [eə] sb in ! swore, sworn ▶ to swear an oath Inauguration [ɪˌnɔːɡjəˈreɪʃn] Ceremony ▶ to inaugurate [ɪˌnɔːɡjəreɪt] sb to deliver a speech/an address = to give/make a speech Inaugural Address [ɪˌnɔːɡjərəl]	jmdn. vereidigen einen Eid ablegen Feier zur Amtseinführung jmdn. feierlich in ein Amt einführen eine Rede halten/eine Ansprache halten Antrittsrede



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