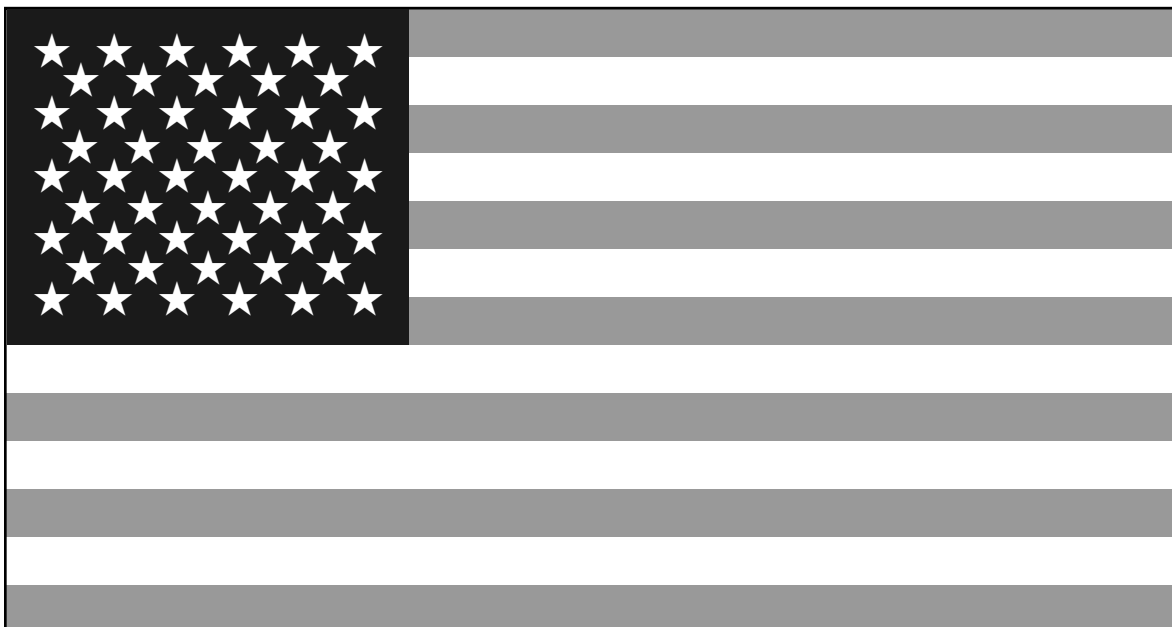


The Republic For Which It Stands

Each day we pledge our allegiance to the flag of the United States of America:

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag, of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."



Just what is the American Republic?

Perhaps it's best to understand the American Republic by looking first at three forms of government: a monarchy, a dictatorship (or totalitarian form), and a democracy.

In a monarchy, the power to govern is held by a king or queen. In old times it was thought it was the divine (or God-given) right and responsibility of the king or queen to rule. In this form, as a king dies, the royal crown passes to his or her oldest child. The people have no fundamental rights under a pure monarchy, other than the duty of the monarch to care for his or her people.

In a dictatorship or a totalitarian form of government, power is held absolutely by a dictator or a small group. Regardless of the title of the dictator (he may use the term president, general, ruling junta, or other term), power is totally vested in this leader or small group of leaders. Generally fear, intimidation, and military force are used to keep the dictator in power.

In a democracy, power belongs to the people. A majority of people decide everything. Power is held by the people, and whatever a majority agree to is the rule. It is easy to see that in a city, state, or a country, having a pure democracy is not possible. For example, everyone cannot meet in the same place to make a decision. That is why most “democratic” forms of government really are indirect democracies, where voters elect representatives and officers who then exercise power.

The founders of our country referred to our form of government as a Republic. Our Republic is a form of a representative democracy, with important distinguishing features. **First**, it acknowledges individual liberty. It is based on the view that political power is vested in the people, and only in certain cases is that power delegated to government by the people. **Secondly**, it is based on the rule of law, the cornerstone of which is the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Third, it is a union of states — the thirteen original colonies which came together after the American Revolution and others created since. **Finally**, our Republic utilizes representative democracy. That is, we hold elections regularly, our officials are elected and hold office for certain terms, and they are accountable to the voters. In our Republic there are several important “checks” or restraints on the power of a majority; in our system the rights of minority points of view are protected as well under our Constitution.

Thus as we pledge allegiance to the Flag, and to this Republic, we are acknowledging what George Washington called an “experiment” in self-government to preserve “the sacred fire of liberty.” To be a voter in our American Republic is an important privilege and responsibility.