

# Principles of Democracy



## Governing by Coalitions and Compromise

Every society has (or includes) groups of people with differing views on subjects of importance to all citizens. A liberal democracy recognizes this as a benefit to the nation and thus supports tolerance for and expression of different points of view.

- ☞ Democratic governments succeed when politicians and officials understand that complex issues rarely present solutions that are clearly "right" or "wrong" and that differing interpretations of democratic principles and social priorities exist.
- ☞ Freedom of assembly and the press foster open debate and exchange of ideas. This openness allows a government to identify problems and permits groups to meet and resolve differences. (In the private sector, this same "marketplace of ideas" offers opportunities for innovation and investment that are the engines of economic growth.)
- ☞ Coalitions are formed when interest groups or political parties join together on issues of common interest, even if they strongly disagree on other issues. Compromise on important decisions allows the government to go about the business of governing.
- ☞ Legislative bodies in democracies rely on coalition-building to pass laws:
- In a parliamentary system, political groups form partnerships with other groups to promote their own interests and form governments.
- In a presidential system, lawmakers sometimes cross party boundaries to vote on issues they and their constituents care deeply about.
- ☞ Coalitions often require that a political party be willing to put aside certain differences with other groups in order to achieve more important parts of their agendas.
- ☞ Because coalition governments are made up from parties representing sometimes-opposing viewpoints, there does exist the potential for dissolution of the government. In some democracies, it is common for ruling coalitions to form and disband several times, even in a single year.