

DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CLUB of MANATEE COUNTY
Scholarship Winners' Essays on
"The Importance of the American Political System"

Gaomin Deng, \$1000 Scholarship Recipient

The U.S.'s political system is constantly evolving in order to attain a harmonious equilibrium among individual liberty, economic efficiency, and social justice (according to John Maynard Keynes, the most important political forces), but certain defining hallmarks—federalism, separation of powers, free elections—of our government have remained relatively constant throughout the years. Although imperfect, America's democratic republic is, arguably, one of the most successful in the world, characterized by a high degree of citizen participation and sociopolitical stability.

Ever since the Great Depression, the relationship between the federal government and individual citizens has become increasingly intimate. As a result, it is crucial that our political system contributes to our sense of political efficacy—how much the System responds to our demands. This has, regrettably, been on the decline for the past few decades, but the nature of democracy and federalism, ideally, insure government's responsibility for the people's welfare by placing power and accountability close to the people, rather than, for example, in some distant, Weberian bureaucracy. On the other hand, the system is also protective as a representative instead of direct democracy; ideally, it secures the rights of minorities against tyranny of the majority. Conversely, this and separation of powers protect the majority from tyranny of a minority. The power balance is a factor that contributes to the continued stability of the country, in spite of (or because of) numerous interest groups vying for dominance. This stability is a strong testament to the strength of our political system to have survived so many exchanges and external upheaval.

Kelsey Hage, \$500 Scholarship Recipient

I'm currently enrolled in an Advanced Placement American Government course at my high school. It was only a few days into the class that I realized how incredible our political system really is. Thanks to the innovative ideas of our Founding Fathers, the United States has a unique and effective democracy. Two of its aspects I find to be important are its system of checks and balances and the way the system allows U.S. citizens to get involved.

Checks and balances is the power of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government to block some acts by the other two branches. That makes it so that one branch will never have full power in the Government. There will always be a difference of opinion among people. Checks and balances are important because it doesn't let one person or group control the government and it allows for everyone's voice to be heard.

The American Political System allows for citizens to have a high level of political efficacy; a citizen's sense that as a citizen of the United States, my voice can be heard in the government. By becoming an activist, voting in an election, or writing to my state senators, I can participate. If unhappy with the way Government decisions are turning out, a person can join an interest group and work with people of similar beliefs to influence the making of public policy. The possibilities for participating in the American Political System are endless.

“The Importance of the American Political System”, cont.

Jamie Schindewolf, \$500 Scholarship Recipient

The American political system is remarkably important—not only domestically but also internationally. During each election, Presidential or otherwise, millions of dollars are spent rallying the support of voters with the goal of alluring the majority to agree with one’s platform. Said voters have a substantial task, as America’s superpower status means they are representing not only their nation but also the world. Because America is a democracy, citizens are fortunate enough to have the right (and often the responsibility) to vote. The presidential election is the most paramount of them all, and 2008 is going to be a stellar year for voter turnout and general political involvement.

Voting is a quintessential part of the American Dream. Each voter has a modicum of power and it really is imperative that everyone registers and votes. A beautiful example of this importance was the election of 1948. Leading up to the election, polls showed a landslide for Dewey, the Republican. However, not enough Republican supporters got out to vote when it truly mattered and Truman, the Democrat, won the presidency. Had more people voted as they said they would, the history of the country could be dramatically different.

As a leading economic and military power, America makes many decisions that affect the rest of the world. Will the war in Iraq continue? Will America provide aid to ailing African nations? How will Americans cut down on the 45% of the world’s greenhouse gases emitted by their cars alone? Such questions, despite their green effect on the entire globe, will only be answered by the next president.
