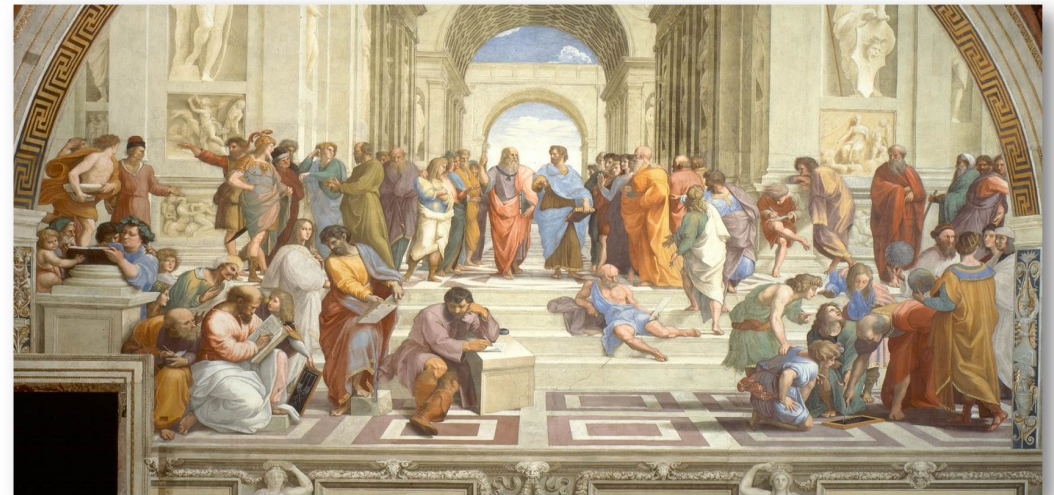


What is Democracy?

A Quick Introduction

What is Democracy?

- At its most basic, democracy means that “the people rule”
- The term “democracy” entered into English usage in the 16th century, derived from French, but the origins are from Greek
 - *Demokratia* (Greek)
 - Meaning:
 - *demos* (people)
 - *kratos* (rule)
 - Information from David Held, *Models of Democracy*



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Two Major Types of Democracy

“Direct” Democracy

- Also called participatory democracy
- When the people themselves vote on policies
- When the Founding Fathers referred to “democracy,” this is what they meant

Representative Democracy

- Also called “Indirect” Democracy
- When the people elect representatives who choose policies
- When the Founding Fathers referred to “republican” government, this is what they meant.

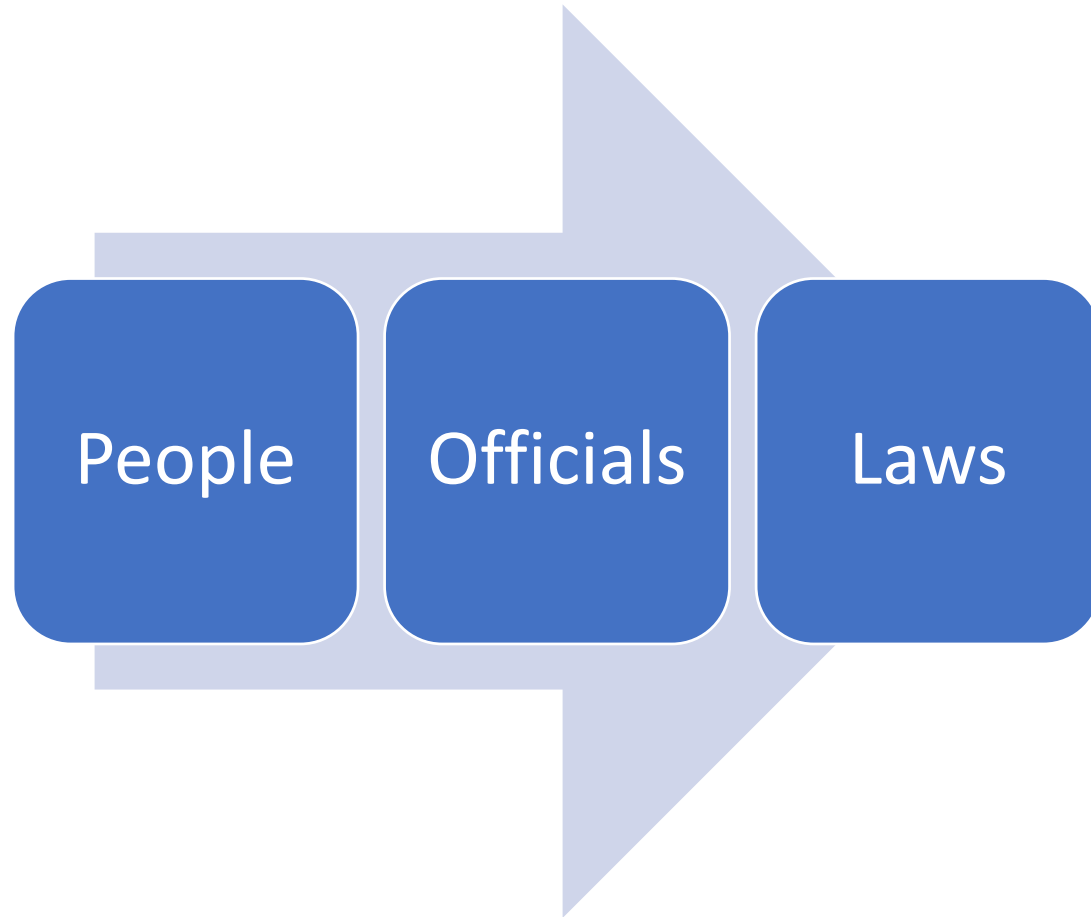
Direct Democracy



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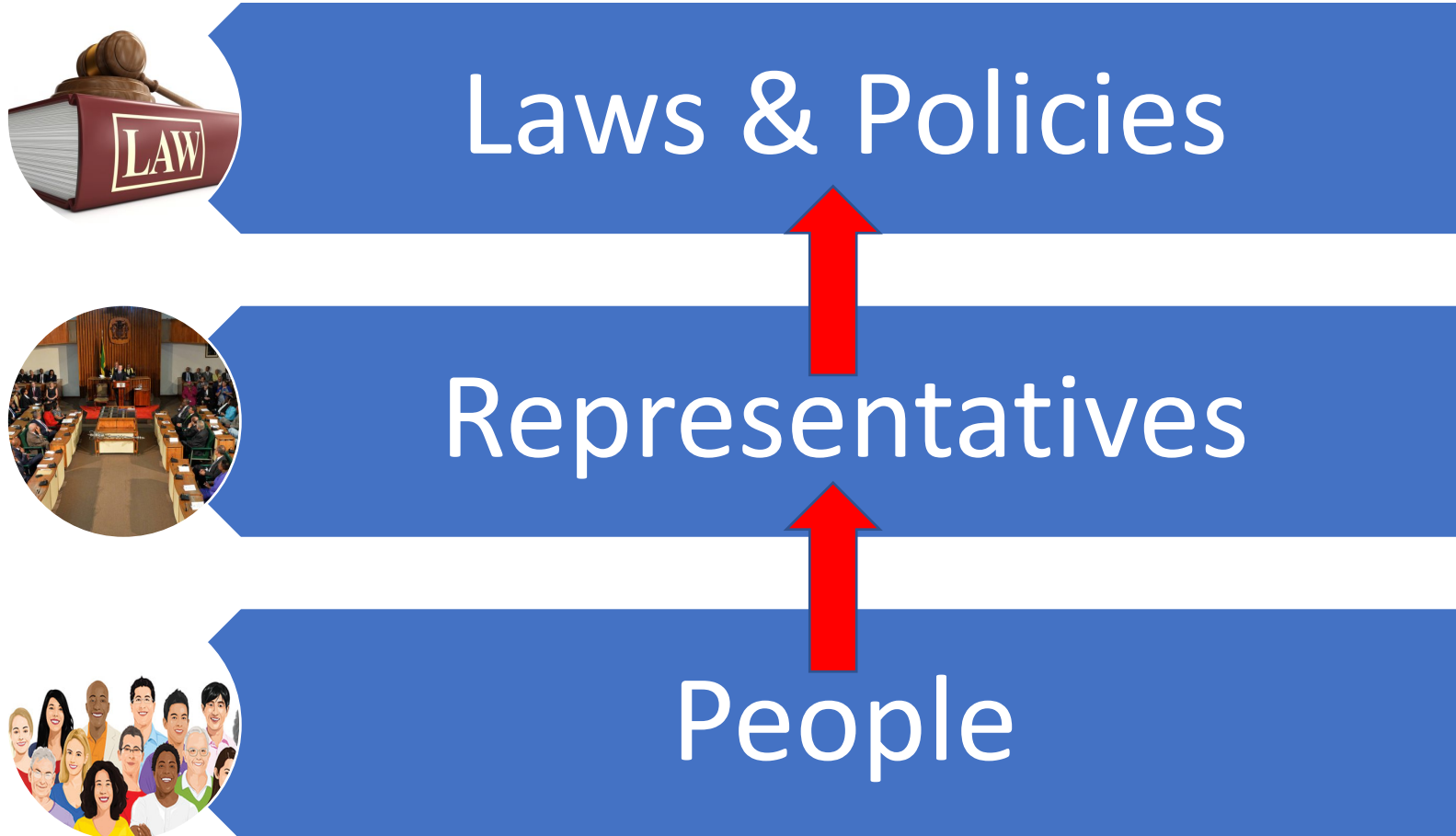
- A group makes decisions for themselves, through some decision rule (majority vote? consensus?)
 - Examples:
 - What taxes should be required?
 - Should there be a death penalty?
- California and other states have elements of direct democracy through the initiative process
 - Californians can vote for or against laws proposed as propositions and local measures.

Representative Democracy



- A group of people vote for officials who represent them by passing laws and making decisions for the entire group
 - This is the structure of the U.S. government and California government, and most governments in the world
- This is usually what is meant today, throughout the world, when one refers to “democracy”

Representative Democracy: another illustration



What are the criteria for calling a government “democratic”?

1. Leaders who run the government are elected in free and fair elections
 2. With universal suffrage
 3. And basic guarantees of civil liberties
- This is a simple, but not simplistic definition

Definition of democracy presumes more:

- Leaders who run government are elected through free and fair elections
 - Frequent and regularly scheduled elections
 - Fairly conducted (no major fraud that affects outcome of elections)
 - Competitive (nearly anyone can compete in elections, with only reasonable barriers)
- Universal Suffrage
 - Nearly all adults can vote without unnecessary barriers to exercising this right
 - Political equality
 - Current restrictions in some U.S. states include: felony convictions; institutionalization; citizenship
- Basic Guarantees of Civil Liberties (protection from government interference):
 - Freedom of expression without government censorship
 - Freedom of press (availability of information)
 - Freedom to organize (in political parties and other associations)

Democratic government also expects:

- Accountability of rulers to the ruled
- Alternation in government: no one person or party exclusively wins elections
- Peaceful transition of power: those who lose elections accept defeat and leave office
 - Election results are contested through established procedures (recounts, courts, etc.)
 - Protests are peaceful