The background of the cover features a composite image. At the top, an American flag with stars and stripes is shown waving. Below the flag, the dome of the United States Capitol building is visible, illuminated from within, showing its architectural details. The lower portion of the image shows the facade of the Capitol building at night, with many windows lit up, creating a warm glow. The entire scene is set against a dark background.

American Government

ROGER LE ROY MILLER

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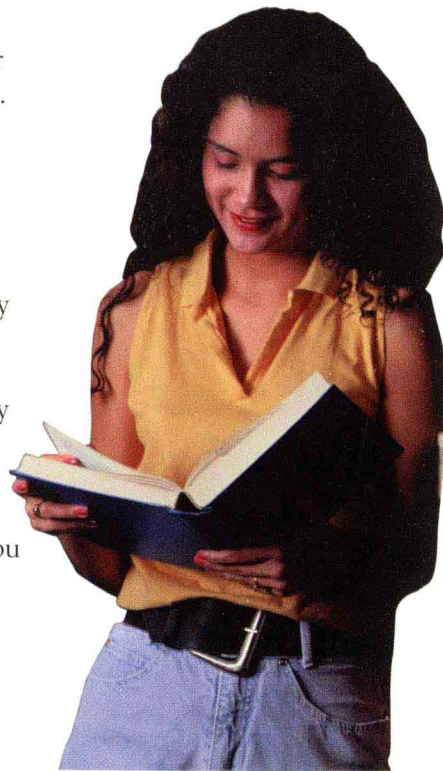
Introduction

Americans can be proud of their country, for they are living under a system of government that is quite special. Our Constitution is now over two hundred years old—it is the oldest written constitution in the world. Since this nation's beginning, we have had over forty presidential administrations, all of which have come into power without violence. Indeed, the American system of government is the envy of much of the world—and dozens of nations have copied the U.S. Constitution.

The book you hold in your hands, *American Government*, is a significant tool for learning about the American political system and why it is important. In the following pages, you will examine the *process* of government and politics. Political events that happen today may be forgotten tomorrow, but the political process in this country changes very slowly. You will learn how this process works and how decisions reached through the political process affect the daily lives of all Americans. An understanding of the American process of governing will also help you understand the problems and political turmoils in other countries that you will undoubtedly learn about in newspapers, TV broadcasts, or on the Internet.

Learning about American government is the first step toward your full participation in that government as a citizen. Throughout this text, you will find information about how you can get involved in the political process and how, through this participation, you can help shape government decisions. We have a living democracy because people like you are willing to participate in it.

Controversies have always been part of the American political landscape. They started well before the Constitution was ratified, and they will continue to exist in the future. Learning about controversies and how they are resolved helps you better understand the American political system. That is why you will find at the end of every chapter a special feature called *America at Odds*. In each of these features, you will discover the positions taken by various groups of Americans on a current controversial issue, such as gun control, affirmative action, free speech on the Internet, school choice, or lawsuits against the president. At the end of each feature, you will be asked to come up with some ideas of your own. Take those assignments seriously, for developing your own views on particular issues helps you become an active participant in the American political process.



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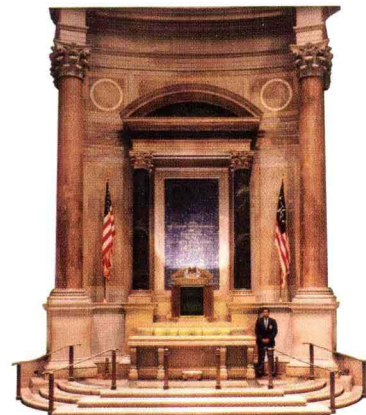


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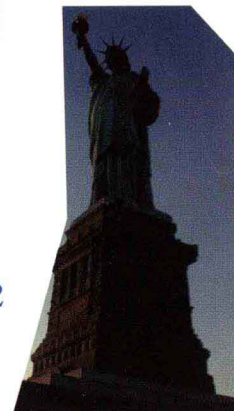
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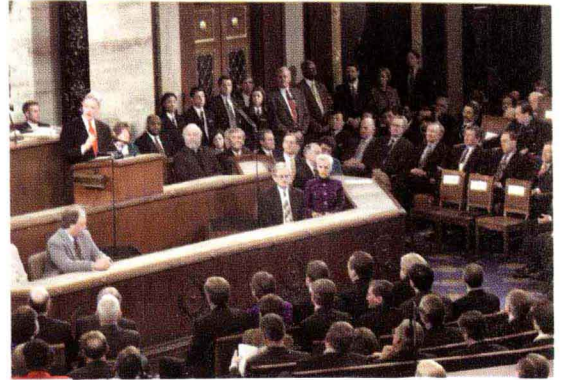
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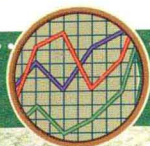
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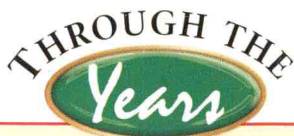


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