

## **CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS**

The constitution provides the basic framework for the government

It is the supreme law of the land

## **THE CONSTITUTION**

The document is considered the key instrument of government

It is practical as well as functional

Each branch of government can lay claim to certain powers

Interrelationship between branches is established in checks and balances

Powers of the national government are defined

State governments are given legitimacy

Relationship between states and federal government (federalism) is established

Rights of citizens are outlined in the Bill of Rights

Limits are placed on both federal government and state governments

### **Longevity**

Objectives of the Constitution:

- To form a more perfect union
- To establish justice
- To ensure domestic tranquility
- To provide for the common defense
- To promote the general welfare
- To secure the blessings of liberty

Factors that created the longevity of the Constitution

- The separation of powers of each branch of government
- Checks and balances including a recognition that a simple majority vote may not be enough of a check
- A built-in elastic clause as part of Congress's power
- A reserved power clause giving states powers not delegated to the national government
- Rights guaranteed to the citizens
- Precedents and traditions creating an unwritten constitution
- Judicial review growing out of an interpretation of the power of the Supreme Court
- An amending process, which is flexible enough to allow for change even though it involves more than a majority vote
- The inherent powers of the president

### **Branches of Government**

The first three articles of the Constitution provide the basis of organization of the government

Article 1 defines the legislative branch

    splits the responsibility between a bicameral legislature

Article 2 defines the executive branch

Article 3 defines the judicial branch