

# Chapter 29: American and State Government

## *South Carolina as a part of the United States of America*

**Objective:** To become familiar with the role and arrangement of the federal and state government.

**Standard:** Government is not directly included in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade South Carolina standards; however, it provides important background information for *Standard 8-7—Modern Era*.

### Evaluating History

The United States has thrived since the creation of the Constitution over 200 years ago. America, however, is not invincible—the Roman Civilization flourished as a world power for over 800 years (*four times as long as the United States*) before its demise. Ask your students to brainstorm the possible factors that could lead to the **downfall** of the United States government. Also examine what **precautions** were taken in the Constitution to avoid the eventual breakdown of the government. Here is a small list to get you started:

<u>Possible factors that could lead to the demise of the United States government.</u>		<u>Ways that the Constitution was designed to prevent these factors from occurring.</u>
• The government could grow too powerful, and infringe on the rights of the people.	→	• A series of “checks and balances” was created to prevent any branch from growing too powerful.
• The United States could be taken over by a foreign enemy during a war.	→	• A military has been established, and Congress has the authority to declare war.
• Police and military forces could turn against the people, and invade private homes.	→	• The private citizen has the right to bear arms for self-protection.
• The economic system of the nation could break down.	→	• A series of procedures exist for the making of money and the regulating of its value.
• The people could grow unsatisfied with the government and overthrow it.	→	• The Constitution is designed to allow the citizens to abolish the government if it fails to perform its proper duties.

### Group Discussion

Ask your students to **brainstorm** the different elements that a constitution must have in order to create an effective working government (*i.e. a series of checks and balances, protection of certain rights, an amendment process, etc*). After the list is complete, discuss whether the Constitution of the United States has these elements. How about the South Carolina’s state constitution?

Discuss the current South Carolina Constitution (*the text of the Constitution can easily be found on the internet*) and the laws of the state, and decide what roles the South Carolina government plays in these areas: **education, law enforcement, health care, defence, ethical business practices, and road construction/maintenance**. In most cases, these duties are divided in some way among the people, the state government, and the national government.