

Origins of American Government

SECTION 1

OUR POLITICAL BEGINNINGS

TEXT SUMMARY

The colonists brought with them to North America knowledge of the English political system, including three key ideas about government. The first idea was that of ordered government. This means that a government's rules should help people get along. The second idea, of **limited government**, means that government has restricted powers. The third idea, of **representative government**, means that government should serve the people.

The English tradition of government grew from three landmark documents. The **Magna Carta** (1215) said that the king did not have total power, and it protected the rights of trial by jury and due process of law. The **Petition of Right** (1628)

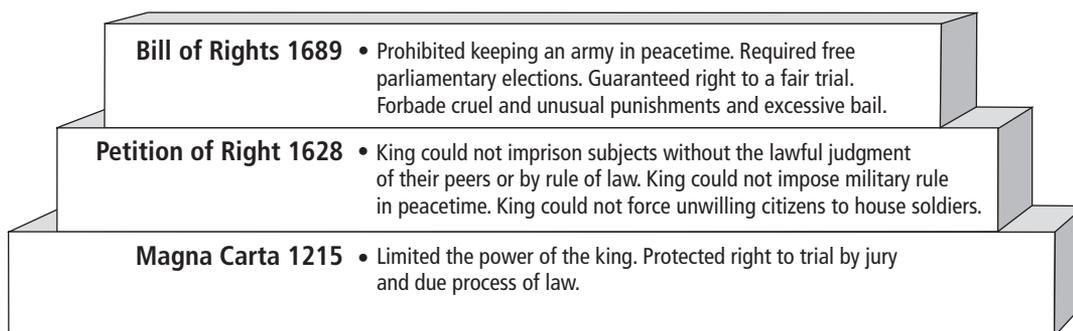
said the king could not use the military to rule during peacetime or let soldiers live in people's homes. The **English Bill of Rights** (1689) forbade keeping an army during peacetime, guaranteed a fair and speedy trial, and ensured that all parliamentary elections were free.

The three types of English colonies each provided training for the colonists in the art of government. Each colony was based on a **charter**, a written grant of authority from the king. Royal colonies were ruled directly by the Crown. **Proprietary** colonies were organized by an owner to whom the king had granted land. Charter colonies were based on charters granted directly to the colonists. Most colonies had **bicameral** (two-house) legislatures, although Pennsylvania's was **unicameral** (one-house).

THE BIG IDEA

The English tradition of ordered, limited, and representative government served as the basis of colonial governments.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Landmark English Documents



From these three English documents colonists took the basic ideas used to form their own governments.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were the three key ideas about government in the English tradition?
2. **Diagram Skills** What document first protected the right to a trial by jury?