

## Glossary

Arena legislatures – A form of legislature in which policy initiatives come from outside the legislature, generally from executives or political parties, and where differences in society are articulated and government actions and plans are evaluated from different perspectives, but tend not to initiate or dramatically reshape policy proposals.

Auditor General – Auditors independent of the executive who review government accounts and prepares a yearly report for parliament.

Constituent services – Services including helping citizens cut through government bureaucracies to receive their benefits, assisting citizens with special problems, and accessing government funds for projects to benefit the constituency, such as bridges, clinics, water systems, schools, etc.

Departmental Committees – Also called standing, sessional, or permanent committees, these committees are responsible for overseeing line ministries and frequently have the authority to question ministers and ministry staff of the ministries they oversee.

Emerging legislatures – Legislatures that are in the process of change from one type to another.

Laws – the rules that govern society.

Legislators as delegates – A system in which legislators mirror or transmit constituency attitudes and preferences

Legislators as trustees – A system in which the legislators themselves determine what is in their constituent's best interests and the legislators consider themselves selected because of their special abilities, and see their job as adapting their constituents' needs into the national welfare.

Majority party – A political party that is generally characterized by strong discipline, bloc voting and distinct party platforms.

Oversight – This is one of the legislature's "check and balance" functions, through which it seeks to ensure that programs are carried out legally, effectively, and for the purposes for which they were intended.

Overt Executive – An executive system in which legislative conflict is not common in parliamentary systems and the parliament is not likely to exercise aggressive oversight.

Plurality-majority – An electoral system in which constituents in a geographic area vote directly for a candidate, and the candidate receiving the most votes wins. Since members are identified with specific districts, they may see their primary duty as being responsive to the needs of their constituents, and the concerns of their party and its platform secondary.

Proportional Representation (PR) – An electoral system in which candidates are placed on a list, and citizens vote for parties rather than for candidates directly. The percentage of votes the party – not the candidate – wins, determines whether or not a candidate gets into office. If, for example, a party wins 40% of votes cast in an election, the top 40% of candidates on that party's list are elected. MPs in PR systems will tend to be most responsive to their parties' leaders who determine whether and where a candidate will be placed on the party list in the next election. Most continental European countries elect parliamentarians through the PR method.

Public Accounts Committees (PACs) – Used by the majority of Westminster parliaments to follow-up on findings of public audits, to investigate irregularities reported, and to recommend changes to rectify any problems discovered. PACs invite ministers and other ministry officials to testify before the committee, and, in some systems, have the power to subpoena witnesses.

Public audits – Yearly reviews of government spending conducted by a nation's supreme audit agency.

Pure Parliamentary Legislature – In pure parliamentary systems there is a greater fusion of powers between the executive and the legislature. The terms of office are variable. The legislature selects the executive and the legislature dissolves the chief executive and cabinet through a vote of no confidence, forcing new parliamentary elections. The Prime Minister selects cabinet members from within the parliament and the executive initiates almost all legislation. Policy-making functions tend to be concentrated in the parties or ministerial bureaucracy.

Pure Presidential Legislature – A pure presidential legislature has a clear separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches with fixed terms. The legislature has the power to remove a president but only in extreme cases. The president selects the cabinet, whose members must be approved by the Senate and the cabinet members may not be serving in the legislature. Both the executive and the legislature initiate legislation and both can play strong policy-making roles. Incentives exist for strong, well-staffed and resourced committees.

Rubber stamp legislatures – This is the simplest type of legislature in which decisions are made elsewhere in the political system, usually by parties and/ or the executive branch and decisions are made by a leader or vanguard party, and in which the parliament is expected to simply endorse their decisions.

Select (investigative) committees – Temporary committees established for a specific period of time and with a mandate limited to investigating the matter for which they were established.

Semi-Proportional – An electoral system that combine features from both single-member and PR systems.

Transformative legislatures – Legislatures that represent diverse societal interests and shape budgets and policies. They amend legislation and budgets received from the

executive branch, initiate their own policy proposals, reach out to citizens, and conduct public hearings.

Westminster system – The Westminster system is a democratic system of government modeled after that of the United Kingdom system. It is used in most Commonwealth and ex-Commonwealth nations.