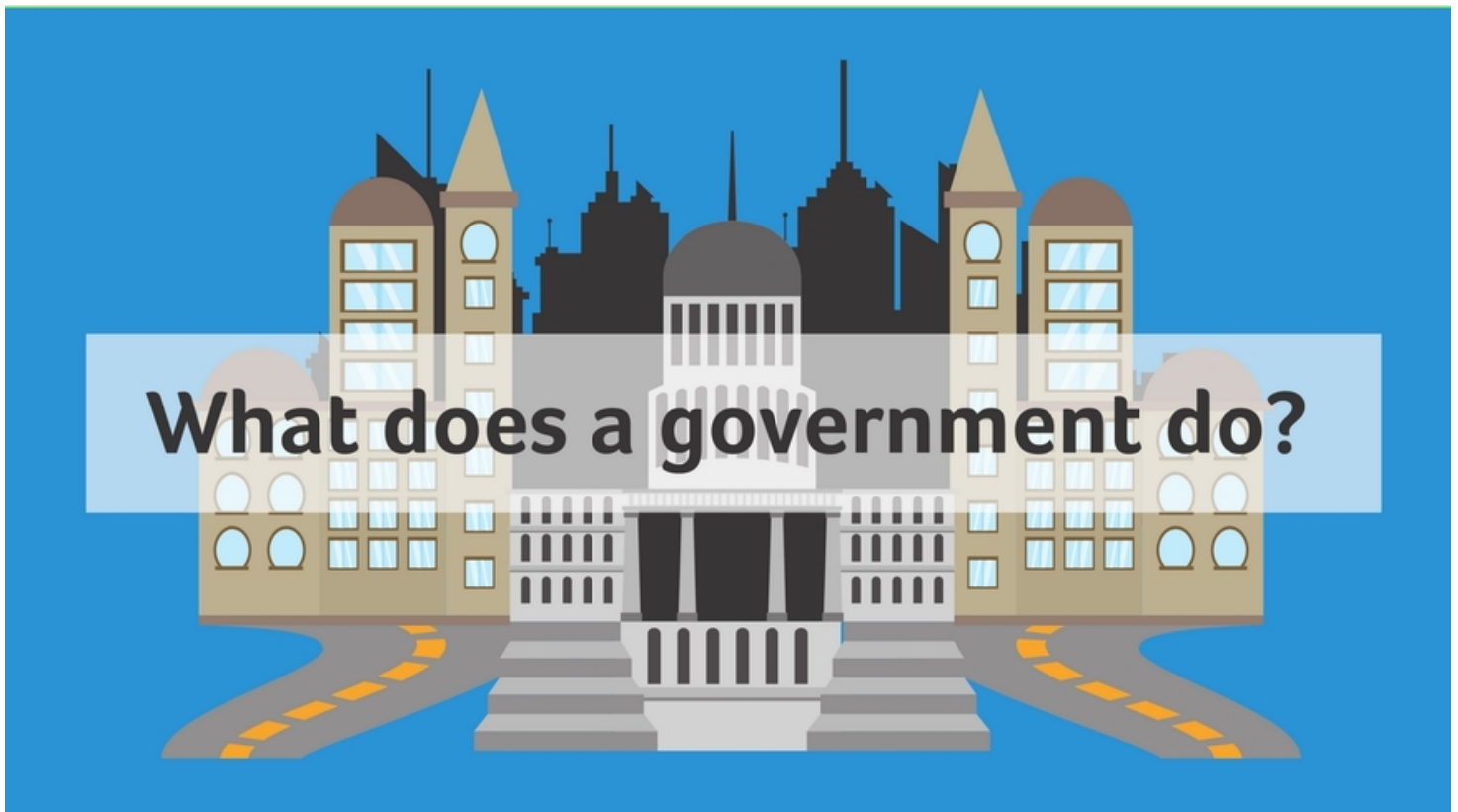


How Government Works: What is the job of the government?

By UShistory.org, adapted by Newsela staff on 02.22.17

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Why do we have governments? One important reason is that governments set rules. They say what is and is not allowed in a country or other place.

Not everyone agrees on the types of rules governments should make, though. Different kinds of governments make different rules.

Governments were first created for a simple reason: They helped protect people. Long ago, people learned that it was safer to be in a group of people than out on your own. But people in a group sometimes fought. So it helped to have a leader in the group. That person would have more power than the others. They could use their power to put an end to fights and disagreements. Governments grew out of this idea.

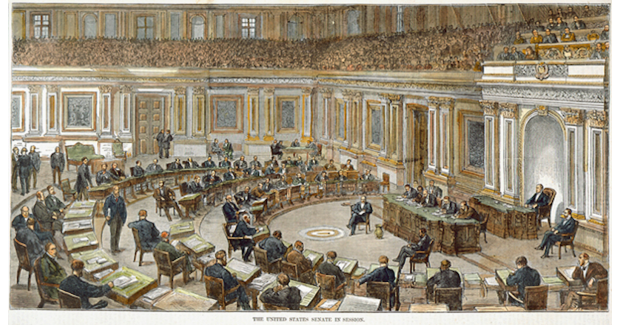
As governments developed, they did not only need to keep their people from harming one another. They also had to protect their people from outsiders. Some governments built great walls for this purpose. They guarded the walls to keep invaders out.

Other governments moved their people to safer places. They might move to high mountains or beyond wide rivers. These features would block out people who wanted to come in.

Government Partnerships Keep Order Around The World

Most governments in history have formed armies, as well. They trained a big group of people to protect the others.

Different governments have also worked together to keep peace. They form partnerships with one other. They agree not to fight or harm each other. Today, partnerships like these are very important. They help keep order around the world.



Over time, the idea of government changed. People had new ideas about what government should do. Today most governments watch over the economy of a country. The economy is the money and resources that an area has. Some governments run the economy. Others just step in to help when needed.

People Disagree About What Governments Should Do

Some governments today also provide social programs for their people. Many countries in Europe do this. These governments pay for people's health care. They provide education and other programs, too.

Not everyone likes these government programs. People who are against these programs say they are too expensive. They cost the government too much money, these people say. Also, they stop people from doing things to help themselves.

Others disagree. People who like government programs say it is the government's job to help its people. When they do, it's better for everyone, supporters say.

People today do not all agree on what governments should do. They have different ideas about the purpose of government.

Still, most people agree that a government should set rules. It is still government's job to protect people. The government must set laws for this reason.

Others would add that the government should do more. It should take care of the people it protects.



Quiz

- 1 Read the sentences below. They are the first part of a summary of the article.
- The government is in charge of making laws. It is also there to protect its people from each other and outsiders. Some governments are in charge of the army, money and programs that help people.
- Which answer BEST completes the summary?
- (A) Many countries in Europe provide social programs that pay for people's health care.
 - (B) People today do not always agree about what the government's job should be.
 - (C) Most governments throughout history have formed armies to protect people.
 - (D) Governments usually run the economy of a country and give money to people.
- 2 What is the MAIN reason why the first governments needed leaders?
- (A) Leaders were needed to fix problems when people did not agree.
 - (B) Leaders were needed to provide armies for other countries' governments.
 - (C) Leaders were needed so they could get health care for their families.
 - (D) Leaders were needed so they could spend their money on social programs.
- 3 Read the section "Government Partnerships Keep Order Around The World."
- Select the paragraph that gives an example of how governments can work together.
- 4 Which sentence from the section "People Disagree About What Governments Should Do" explains WHY some people do not think government should provide social programs?
- (A) These governments pay for people's health care.
 - (B) They cost the government too much money, these people say.
 - (C) People who like government programs say it is the government's job to help its people.
 - (D) Others would add that the government should do more.