**Primer Packet – Government Basics**

Understanding the following topics and concepts—prior to entering the course—can help a student “start strong” in Honors Government   
(by being comfortable with “the basics,” and being ready to participate in discussions*.)*

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Packet must be **completed fully**, with questions **answered specifically**, or it will not be collected.
2. Packet due **by the time the first class meets**—no exceptions.
3. For EVERY QUESTION students **must cite the sources** they used (specific website, book/author)

*The might be an “opening day quiz” on these topics, so be sure you use these questions to make yourself* ***comfortable*** *with some basic government concepts. (Don’t just fill it out and forget it.)*

Part One – Helpful Graphics

This information can be found in with a targeted web search*. \*Citing ALL sources is required*

1. *To have a basic understanding of the different LEVELS of government in the U.S. (also known as Federalism)*, create a graphic that shows the names of:
2. your **STATE Senators and Representatives** (or Assemblyman, etc.)
3. your STATE **Governor**
4. your **US Senators and Representatives** (including what **Congressional District** you live in)

*\*Bonus if you can also include the top government positions in your town!*

1. *To have a basic understanding of FEDERAL government structure*,   
   create a chart or graphic that correctly represents the three principle branches of the **federal government** including:
   1. both **houses of Congress**,
   2. the top **levels of the executive branch** (president, the Cabinet, etc.,
   3. the **levels of the judicial branch** (District Courts, Courts of Appeals, The Supreme Court).
2. *To understand how which candidates end up in ELECTIONS*,  
   create a graphic that shows the difference between **Primary Elections** and **General Elections.**
3. *To understand how few companies control what you see and hear*,  
   create a graphic that shows:
   1. your favorite show (Internet or TV)
   2. what **network** shows your favorite show,
   3. the company who owns that network
   4. any other “parent companies” that might own THAT company.

Part Two – Illuminating questions

*This information can be found in the course textbook, most AP prep books, or with a targeted web search.*

*\*Citing ALL sources is required*

1. *To better understand the three levels of government in the U.S.*, provide an example of:  
   a. a **local law** from your town (sometimes called a **civic ordinance**) that might affect you personally,  
   b. an “atypical”, or even strange, **state law** from your state (something more interesting than murder, theft, etc.)  
   c. a **federal law** that you think is unfair, or that you don’t agree with.
2. *To better understand how things REALLY work in Congress*:
   1. explain the difference between **“the Majority”** party in Congress, and “**the Minority**” party,
   2. note **which party currently** is in the Majority (in *both* the House and Senate)
   3. describe two important **advantages** that come from being in the Majority party.

1. *To better understand how things REALLY work in Congress*:
   1. list the *all* **Congressional Leadership** positions (in *both* the House or the Senate),
   2. provide the names of the politicians currently in those positions,
   3. pick which leadership position you would choose if you could, and explain your choice.

1. *To better understand how things REALLY work in Congress*:
   1. describe what a **Congressional Committee** is (in *either* the House or the Senate),
   2. explain what a Congressional Committee can do,
   3. pick a Committee (House or Senate) that you might choose to be in if you were in Congress, and explain your choice.

1. *To better understand HOW BILLS BECOME LAWS in the U.S. Congress*, provide an example of:  
   a. a **bill** in Congress that is currently being **drafted** (to be introduced in either the House or Senate)  
   b. a bill in Congress that is currently “**stuck in Committee**”  
   c. a bill in Congress that has passed in one chamber (House/Senate) but not in the other,  
   d. a bill that has been **signed** by the current president (and become a law.)
2. *To better understand different categories within* ***The Federal Bureaucracy*** (sometimes called the “fourth branch” of government), describe the **organizational differences** the between Post Office, The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), The Defense Department, and National Endowment for the Arts.
3. *To better understand the importance of the Supreme Court*, choose one famous **Supreme Court Decision**, and explain why you personally believe it is important for the country.