**SS.7.C.1.9**
*Define the rule of law and recognize its influence on the development of the American legal, political, and governmental systems.*

---

**SS.7.C.1.9 Benchmark Clarification 2:** Students will assess the importance of the rule of law in protecting citizens from arbitrary and abusive uses of government power.

A critical role of the rule of law is to protect citizens from the government. The Founding Fathers feared that government would become too powerful and look like a **monarchy** or some other form of abusive government. The Constitution controls government from becoming too powerful by separating the powers of government into the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and then holding each branch accountable to each other with the principle of checks and balances.

Having a written set of laws created by popularly elected representatives also protects citizens against laws created randomly and abuses of government powers. Additionally, the laws are available to people accused of crimes. The **Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendments** to the U.S. Constitution guarantee that citizens accused of crimes are protected from unfair administration of the law.

---

**Eighth Amendment** – an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that provides freedom from excessive bail or fines and freedom from cruel or unusual punishment for a person accused of a crime

**Fourth Amendment** – an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that provides freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. This amendment also states that warrants must only be issued with probable cause.

**Fourteenth Amendment** - an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that defines citizenship, grants citizenship to former slaves and defines voters as males at least 21 year of age

**Fifth Amendment** – an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that provides protections to a person accused of a crime, including the right of due process. Due process is the concept that a person cannot have life, liberty, or property taken away without appropriate legal procedures and protections.

**monarch** - a form of government headed by a king or queen who inherits the position, rules for life, and holds power that can range anywhere between limited to absolute

**rule of law** - a concept that those who govern are bound by the laws; no one is above the law

**Sixth Amendment** - an amendment to the Constitution that provides protections and rights to a person accused of a crime including the right to a speedy trial with an impartial jury