

What Is Representative Government?

In a **representative government** _____

MAGNA CARTA (Great Charter) – 1215 – English nobles forced their king to sign this document which said that the king could not raise taxes without first consulting a Great Council of nobles and church leaders.

While the Magna Carta benefitted nobles, over time, these rights were extended to other people. The Great Council became a “representative assembly” called _____. Only a few wealthy nobles had the right to vote, but this is the start of representative government.

- House of Lords – comprised of wealthy nobles
- House of Commons – elected

Back in Virginia, the governors ruled the colony like a military outpost without much freedom for the people. This kept people from wanting to leave England and move to the new colony.

HOUSE OF BURGESSES

To convince more people to move to Virginia, the Virginia Company enacted reforms in 1619. Male settlers were allowed to select **burgesses** (_____) who met in an assembly called the **House of Burgesses**. Along with the governor, the House of Burgesses made the laws and decisions for the colony. This marks the **beginning of representative government in the English colonies**.

The idea took hold that individual people should have a say in their government. Colonists in Virginia began referring to the 1619 frame of government as their own “great charter.”