

## from Bouvier's 1856 Law dictionary

**SOVEREIGN.** A chief ruler with supreme power; one possessing sovereignty. (q. v.) It is also applied to a king or other magistrate with limited powers.

2. In the United States the sovereignty resides in the body of the people. Vide Rutherf. Inst. 282.

**SOVEREIGN,** Eng. law. The name of a gold coin of Great Britain of the value of one pound sterling.

**SOVEREIGN STATE.** One which governs itself independently of any foreign power.

**SOVEREIGNTY.** The union and exercise of all human power possessed in a state; it is a combination of all power; it is the power to do everything in a state without accountability; to make laws, to execute and to apply them: to impose and collect taxes, and, levy, contributions; to make war or peace; to form treaties of alliance or of commerce with foreign nations, and the like.

2. Abstractedly, sovereignty resides in the body of the nation and belongs to the people. But these powers are generally exercised by delegation.

3. When analyzed, sovereignty is naturally divided into three great powers; namely, the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary; the first is the power to make new laws, and to correct and repeal the old; the second is the power to execute the laws both at home and abroad; and the last is the power to apply the laws to particular facts; to judge the disputes which arise among the citizens, and to punish crimes.

4. Strictly speaking, in our republican forms of government, the absolute sovereignty of the nation is in the people of the nation; (q. v.) and the residuary sovereignty of each state, not granted to any of its public functionaries, is in the people of the state. (q. v.) 2 Dall. 471; and vide, generally, 2 Dall. 433, 455; 3 Dall. 93; 1 Story, Const. \_208; 1 Toull. n. 20 Merl. Reper. h. t.

## from Black's Law Dictionary, Sixth Edition (1990)

**SOVEREIGN.** A person body or state in which independent and supreme authority is vested; a chief ruler with supreme power; a king or other ruler in a monarchy.

**Sovereign people.** The political body, consisting of the entire number of citizens and qualified electors, who, in their collective capacity, possess the powers of sovereignty and exercise them through their chosen representatives. See *Scott v. Sandford*, 19 How. 404, 15 L.Ed. 691.

**Sovereign power or sovereign prerogative.** That power in a state to which none other is superior or equal, and which includes all the specific powers necessary to accomplish the legitimate ends and purposes of government. *Aetna Casualty & Surety Co. v. Bramwell*, D.C. Or., 12 F.2d 307, 309.

**Sovereign right.** A right which the state alone, or some of its governmental agencies, can possess, and which it possesses in the character of a sovereign, for the common benefit, and to enable it to carry out its proper functions; distinguished from such "proprietary" rights as a state, like any private person, may have in property or demands which it owns.

**Sovereign states.** States whose subjects or citizens are in the habit of obedience to them, and which are not themselves subject to any other (or paramount) state in any respect. The state is said to be semi-sovereign only, and not sovereign, when in any respect or respects it is liable to be controlled by a paramount government. In the intercourse of nations, certain states have a position of entire independence of others, and can perform all those acts which it is possible for any state to perform in this particular sphere. These same states have also entire power of self-government; that is, of independence upon all other states as far as their own territory and citizens not living abroad are concerned. No foreign power or law can have control except by convention. This power of independent action in external and internal relations constitutes complete sovereignty.

**Sovereignty.** The supreme, absolute, and uncontrollable power by which any independent state is governed; supreme political authority; the supreme will; paramount control of the constitution and frame of government and its administration; the self-sufficient source of political power, from which all specific political powers are derived; the international independence of a state, combined with the right and power of regulating its internal affairs without foreign dictation; also a political society, or state, which is sovereign and independent.

The power to do everything in a state without accountability, -to make laws, to execute and to apply them, to impose and collect taxes and levy contributions, to make war or peace, to form treaties of alliance or of commerce with foreign nations, and the like.

Sovereignty in government is that public authority which directs or orders what is to be done by each member associated in relation to the end of the association. It is the supreme power by which any citizen is governed and is the person or body of persons in the state to whom there is politically no superior. The necessary existence of the state and that right and power which necessarily follow is "sovereignty." By "sovereignty" in its largest sense is meant supreme, absolute, uncontrollable power, the absolute right to govern. The word which by itself comes nearest to being the definition of "sovereignty" is will or volition as applied to political affairs. *City of Bisbee v. Cochise*