

We the People

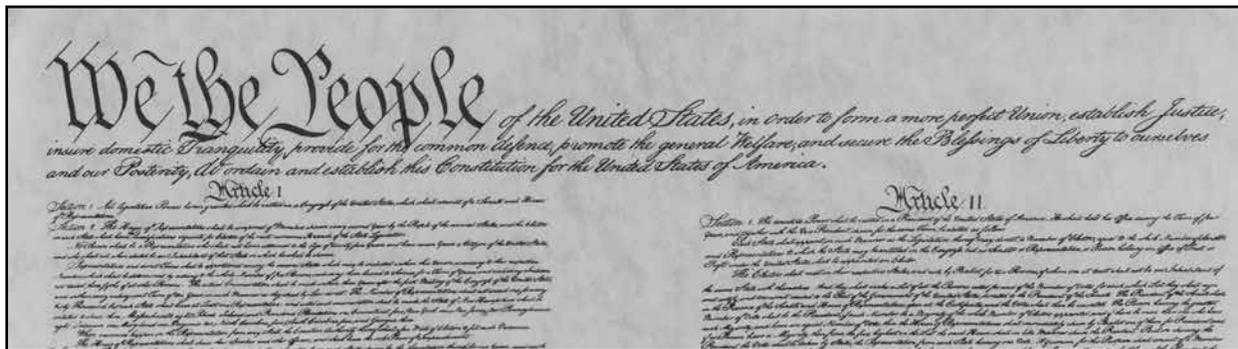


Jefferson Memorial

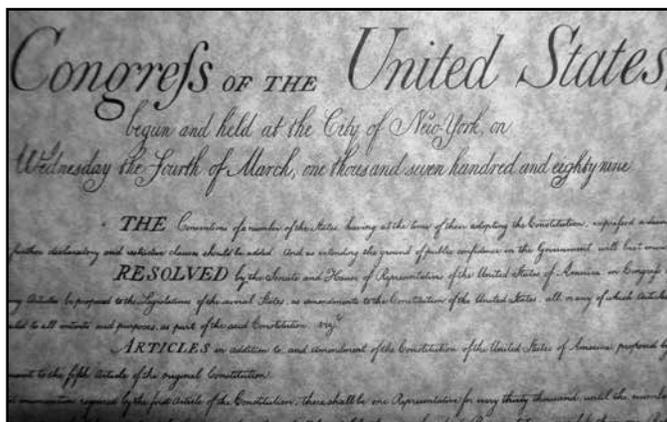
The
Government and Politics
of the
United States of America

★ *Sample Lessons* ★

The Constitution and the Bill of Rights



The Preamble of the Constitution begins: We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union ... To read the complete preamble, see Appendix 3 on page 56.



The first ten amendments to the Constitution established the rights and protections of the people. To read a brief (abridged) list of these Constitutional Rights, see page 54. For the full text and explanation of **The Bill of Rights**, visit <https://billofrightsinsstitute.org/founding-documents/bill-of-rights/>

Key Words

aristocracy	to abolish	to allot	census
especially	to compromise	according to	confident
to resolve	to dominate	to revise	to ratify

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The Constitution and the Bill of Rights

When the Revolutionary War finally ended, delegates from the 13 states convened in 1787 to create a constitution which would be the basis for a federal government, a federation of states. The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States begins with the words, “We the People” in very large letters. The delegates to the Constitutional Convention wanted to make it very clear that the Constitution was created by the people, not by an **aristocracy**, a king, or a political party.

Of course, there was considerable debate over how much power the federal government should have. Some states, **especially** the southern states, did not want the federal government to have a lot of power. Even today, many citizens are suspicious of a strong central government. Another problem was slavery. It existed in the North, but in the South it was everywhere and legal, and the South felt it needed slavery. The original Constitution never **resolved** the slavery question, but the 13th amendment **abolished** slavery in 1865.

Nevertheless, the delegates were able to **compromise** and create a new constitution. A guiding principle during the debates was “checks and balances,” the idea that no branch of the government should **dominate** the others. The major features of the government would be:

- ✪ A three-part government: executive, legislative, and judicial
- ✪ A legislature composed of two houses: a Senate and a House of Representatives
- ✪ The Senate would have two senators for each state.
- ✪ The House of Representatives would have 105 seats, **allotted** to the states **according to** their population. This number would be **revised** by a **census** every 10 years, beginning in 1790. (Eventually the number would be fixed at 435.)
- ✪ The delegates also provided a way to amend the constitution.

The Constitution did not, however, specify citizens’ rights. In the first meeting of the Congress, ten amendments, called the Bill of Rights (See Appendix 3 on page 56) were added to the Constitution. Since the establishment of the Constitution, there have been only 27 amendments (See Appendix 4 on page 57).

Not **confident** that all 13 state governments would **ratify** the constitution, the delegates agreed that when nine states ratified the new constitution, it would become the law of the land for all the states. In June, 1788, New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify the constitution. In 1790, Rhode Island became the 13th state. Finally, the United States of America were united. (411 words)

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A. Match the words or phrase in Column A with a phrase in Column B.

- | A | B |
|---|--|
| 1. An aristocracy ____ | a. were allotted according to population. |
| 2. Slavery was an especially difficult ____ | b. compromise and give up something. |
| 3. That problem ____ | c. dominate the smaller states. |
| 4. The 13 th Amendment ____ | d. with an amendment. |
| 5. Each side had to ____ | e. would be taken every 10 years. |
| 6. The larger states could ____ | f. is to approve. |
| 7. The representatives in the House ____ | g. problem. |
| 8. They revised the constitution ____ | h. is a government by the rich and powerful. |
| 9. The census ____ | i. the bill will be passed. |
| 10. The senator is confident ____ | j. was never resolved. |
| 11. To ratify ____ | k. abolished slavery. |

B. Fill in each blank with the correct word.

aristocratic	abolish	allotted	census
especially	compromise	according to	confident
resolution	dominate	revision	ratify

1. Massachusetts was _____ 10 seats.
2. Slavery was an _____ difficult question.
3. Large states would have a lot of power and _____ the others.
4. _____ the last _____, California has 53 seats in the House.
5. Which state was the last to _____ the constitution?
6. A democracy is not based on an _____ society.
7. The Bill of Rights is essentially a _____ of the Constitution.
8. There was no _____ to the problem of slavery.
9. Many people wanted to _____ slavery.
10. To reach an agreement, _____ was necessary.
11. I am _____ Senator Strong will be a good senator.

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C. Choose the best word.

1. The (ratify, ratification, abolition) of the Constitution took several months.
2. They were not (confidence, confident, confidently) the South would approve.
3. It has been (revisioned, revised, revise) several times.
4. New York's (allotment, allot, allotting) in 2010 was 27 seats in the House.
5. Because each state has two senators, no state can (dominating, domination, dominate) the Senate.
6. A (compromise, ratification, abolition) is necessary in order to go forward on this bill.
7. We will make a (resolve, resolution, compromise) that this will not happen again.
8. An (aristocracy, aristocratic, aristocrat) is usually a very wealthy person.
9. When something is (especial, special, especially) important, we must do something.
10. The (abolish, abolition) of slavery was finally achieved by the efforts of many abolitionists.

D. Fill in each blank with a key word.

1. It is _____ important that you follow the directions.
2. We have to _____ our plan; it's not working.
3. I will not _____ on this; it is totally wrong.
4. I am _____ the President will win the election.
5. Britain's powerful _____ of the colonies was not wise.
6. Each person will be _____ a share of the profits.
7. The _____ takers made a very careful count in my city.
8. _____ by nine states was required before it was the law.
9. Let's make a _____ to do better this year.
10. An _____ still exists in England.
11. _____ worked very hard to end slavery.
12. _____ to my weather channel, we will have a long winter.

Think about and discuss

- ✪ Why is it important that the large and small states are united into one government?
- ✪ Why are some people suspicious of a strong central government?
- ✪ Why did Congress amend the Constitution at its first meeting?
- ✪ Why is it important to have "checks and balances" in a government's structure?

Congress



The United States Capitol on Capitol Hill, DC, where the Congress meets



The south wing of the Capitol where the House of Representatives meets



The north wing of the Capitol where the Senate meets

The members of Congress have offices in the separate House and Senate Office Buildings. The Legislative Branch in DC is often referred to as "Capitol Hill" and "the Hill."

Key Words

primarily	majority	to initiate	to override
contingent	to elect	to approve	authority
to participate	responsibility	to veto	to impeach
	wrongdoing		

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Congress

Article 1 of the Constitution establishes the basic features of the legislative branch of the government. The legislature has two chambers: a House of Representatives and a Senate. The number of representatives in the House is based on the populations of the states. There are 435 representatives in the House. Each state must have at least one representative. The largest state, California, has 53 representatives; seven states have just one each (See Appendix 5 on page 58). The members of the House are **primarily** from two parties, Republican and Democrat.

After each census, the numbers of representatives may change as state populations change. The very first House had 105 members. The three largest **contingents** were Virginia (19), Massachusetts (14), and Pennsylvania (13). As states were added and populations increased, the number of representatives grew until 1910, when it was fixed at 435. In addition, there are five non-voting representatives from the US territories and Puerto Rico and one from the District of Columbia. They can **participate** in many ways, but they cannot vote on legislation.

There are two senators from each state: 100 in all. This means the US Congress is not a purely democratic institution. If it were, California would have 12 of the 100 senators. The **majority** of the states would have only one senator. Representatives are **elected** every two years, whereas senators are chosen for six-year terms. One-third of the Senate is up for election every two years. The District of Columbia, the territories, and Puerto Rico do not have senators.

The major **responsibility** of the congress is to **initiate** legislation. When a bill is **approved** by congress, it is presented to the President, who may sign it into law or **veto** it. To **override** a veto, two-thirds of each chamber must vote to do so. This happens only about once every ten years. Another important duty of congress is to have the **authority** to declare war. Since 1942, however, presidents have found other ways of going to war without a formal declaration of war.

There is a way in which the House has power over the President. The House has the right to **impeach** any government officer, including the President, to remove them from office. This is done if there is suspected crime or other **wrongdoing**. If the House impeaches an officer, the Senate carries out the trial. A two-thirds vote in the Senate is necessary to remove the person from office.

(407 words)

We the People ☆ *The Government and Politics of the USA* ☆ Unit 3

A. Match the words or phrase in Column A with a phrase in Column B.

A

B

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The purpose of congress is ____ 2. The contingent from Illinois is ____ 3. The contingent from the territories ____ 4. The majority vote in the Senate ____ 5. Senators are elected ____ 6. It is Congress' responsibility ____ 7. When Congress approves a bill ____ 8. Overriding a veto requires ____ 9. Congress has the authority ____ 10. Impeachment ____ 11. The President may be impeached ____ | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. is 51 votes. b. to a six-year term. c. to initiate legislation. d. it goes to the President. e. a two-thirds vote in the Senate. f. participates, but does not vote. g. to declare war. h. is not done very often. i. primarily to make and change laws. j. for wrongdoing. k. two senators and 18 representatives. |
|---|--|

B. Fill in each blank with the correct word.

primary	majority	initiate	override	contingent
elected	approval	authority	participation	responsibility
veto	impeached	wrongdoing		

1. It is not easy to _____ a veto.
2. The _____ to declare war is with Congress.
3. One-third of the Senate is _____ every two years.
4. A simple _____ in the House is 218 out of 235 votes.
5. The President can _____ legislation.
6. The _____ of Congress is to legislate.
7. A _____ of state politicians visited the House.
8. President Clinton was _____.
9. Is _____ a crime?
10. Voter _____ in the last election was very high.
11. *Begin* is similar in meaning to _____.
12. We need your _____ for this new law.

C. Choose the best word.

1. You need a (majority, approval, contingent) to make this a law.
2. The (impeach, impeachable, impeachment) process is complicated.
3. The members of Congress are (primary, prime, primarily) men.
4. Our representative lost in the recent (election, electorate, electability).
5. Congress (initiates, vetos, approves) legislation, and the President (approves, initiates, legislates) it.
6. "You are not (authority, authorized, authored) to do that."
7. It is almost certain he will (veto, vetos, vetoed) that bill.
8. A (responsibility, responsive, responsible) citizen votes in every election.
9. The (contingency, congress, contingent) from New Jersey voted "no."
10. The representative from Guam (vetoed, participated, voted) in the discussion.
11. The President's veto was (overridden, overrode, overridden).

D. Fill in each blank with a key word.

1. My proposal was _____ by the committee.
2. The _____ have established new parking rules.
3. I am sorry, 40% is not a _____.
4. A _____ can be an _____ offense.
5. The voters _____ Senator Dogood to another six-year term.
6. My friend is not going to _____ in tonight's meeting.
7. If you drink, do so _____.
8. The _____ reason for his re-_____ is that he had a lot of money.
9. Angrily, the President said he would _____ this legislation.
10. _____ can also mean *first*, and *begin* can mean _____.
11. As an adjective, _____ *on* means *dependent on*.

Think about and discuss

- ✪ Do you know the members of congress from your state?
- ✪ Why did the founders decide to have only two senators from each state?
- ✪ Is the "balance of power" still balanced?
- ✪ What does "the power of the purse" mean? Is it an important power?

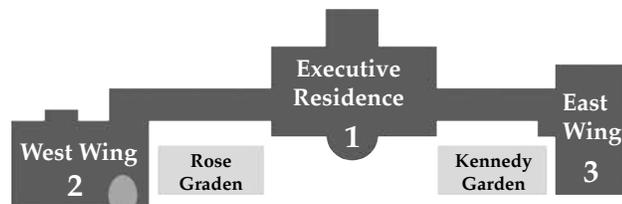
This is just the first page of Unit 4.

Unit 4

The Executive Branch



The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC.



The President's family lives in the Executive Residence 1; there are also guest rooms and reception and dining facilities. The President's Oval Office, the Vice President's office, and other executive and staff offices are in the West Wing 2. The East Wing 3 houses the offices of the President's spouse and staff.

Key Words

role
to serve
tie vote

framer
to define
balance of power

upset
term
to oversee

to appoint
to fire
commander

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We the People 🌟 *The Government and Politics of the USA* 🌟 Answers

Unit 1 **The Beginnings** 1

A.

- 1. g 7. a
- 2. k 8. i
- 3. b 9. e
- 4. d 10. c
- 5. j 11. h
- 6. f

B.

- 1. bill
- 2. confederation
- 3. delegates, unification
- 4. hostile
- 5. declaration
- 6. amended
- 7. eventual, establishment
- 8. inevitably
- 9. revolt
- 10. conventioners

C.

- 1. delegates
- 2. declared
- 3. inevitable
- 4. Bill, amended
- 5. hostility
- 6. established, convention
- 7. unified
- 8. revolution

D.

- 1. revolution
- 2. bill
- 3. convention, unified
- 4. Eventually
- 5. delegates, established
- 6. Revolution
- 7. amend
- 8. declared
- 9. hostility
- 10. inevitable

Unit 2 **The Constitution and the Bill of Rights** 5

A.

- 1. h 4. k 7. a 10. i
- 2. g 5. b 8. d 11. f
- 3. j 6. c 9. e

B.

- 1. allotted
- 2. especially
- 3. dominate
- 4. According to, census
- 5. ratify
- 6. aristocratic
- 7. revision
- 8. resolution
- 9. abolish
- 10. compromise
- 11. confident

C.

- 1. ratification
- 2. confident
- 3. revised
- 4. allotment
- 5. dominate
- 6. compromise
- 7. resolution
- 8. aristocrat
- 9. especially
- 10. abolition

D.

- 1. especially
- 2. revise
- 3. compromise
- 4. confident
- 5. domination
- 6. allotted
- 7. census
- 8. Ratification
- 9. resolution
- 10. aristocracy
- 11. Abolitionists
- 12. According

Unit 3 **Congress** 9

A.

- 1. c 4. a 7. d 10. h
- 2. k 5. b 8. e 11. j
- 3. f 6. i 9. g

B.

- 1. override
- 2. authority
- 3. elected
- 4. majority
- 5. veto
- 6. primary, responsibility
- 7. contingent
- 8. impeached
- 9. wrongdoing
- 10. participation
- 11. initiate
- 12. approval

C.

- 1. majority
- 2. impeachment
- 3. primarily
- 4. election
- 5. initiates, approves
- 6. authorized
- 7. veto
- 8. responsible
- 9. contingent
- 10. participated
- 11. overridden

D.

- 1. approved
- 2. authorities
- 3. majority
- 4. wrongdoing, impeachable
- 5. elected
- 6. participate
- 7. responsibly
- 8. primary, election
- 9. veto
- 10. *Primary, initiate*
- 11. *contingent*