



## Lesson Plan: Planet Fourth Grade is Researching the U.S. Constitution

**Grade Level: 4th**

**Context of the unit:** This fourth grade lesson is within a unit involving the study of the U.S. Constitution, and the addition of the Bill of Rights, and why these documents are important in a democratic government.

**Context of the lesson:** Students have been working on dissecting the U.S. Constitution, reviewing the frameworks of a democratic government, and learning about the Bill of Rights. They have researched the purpose of the U.S. constitution, looked into who was involved in drafting and finalizing the constitution, and are beginning to learn how amendments to the constitution were made for the benefits of the individual people, after the constitution was written.

The students will understand that in order to create a “democracy” the U.S. Constitution, which is referred to as a “living document”, protects the rights of the United States. Also with the addition of the Bill of Rights, the Constitution establishes a democratic government protecting the individual people (Bill of Rights) within the United States.

**Standards Addressed in the Unit:**

**History and Social Science Standards addressed in the unit:**

4.5.1 Discuss what the U.S. Constitution is and why it is important.

4.5.3 Describe the similarities and differences among federal, state, and local governments.

4.5.4 Explain the structures and functions of state governments, including the roles and responsibilities of their elected officials.



## **English/Language Arts Standards addressed in the unit:**

### Structural Features of Informational Materials

2.1 Identify structural patterns found in informational text (e.g., compare and contrast, cause and effect, sequential or chronological order, proposition and support) to strengthen comprehension.

### Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

1.8 Clarify and enhance oral presentations through the use of appropriate props (e.g., objects, pictures, charts).

### Comprehension

1.1 Retell, paraphrase, and explain what has been said by a speaker.

1.7 Use various reference materials (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, card catalog, encyclopedia, online information) as an aid to writing.

## **Standards Addressed in *this* lesson:**

### **History and Social Science Standards Addressed in *this* lesson:**

4.5.1 Discuss what the U.S. Constitution is and why it is important.

### **English Language Arts Standards Addressed in *this* lesson:**

#### Writing

4.1.3 Use traditional structures for conveying information (*e.g. similarity and difference, posing and answering a question.*)

#### Speaking

4.2.3 Deliver oral summaries of articles and books that contain the main ideas of the event or article and the most significant details.

#### Comprehension

2.5 Compare and contrast information on the same topic after reading several passages or articles.



## Common Core State Standards for ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects K-5

### Craft and Structure

1. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

### Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

- **Objective(s):**

- Students will understand why the U.S. constitution is important.
- Students will show an understanding of the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, (Bill of Rights) and how they were added to the constitution to protect the rights of the individual.



## Lesson Plan: Planet Fourth Grade is Researching the U.S. Constitution

### Big Idea(s):

- The strength of a democracy is equal to the strength of its citizens. *(The Constitution expresses the rights of the governing body for the United States and the Bill of Rights expresses the protections of the individuals in the United States. They work together to form a strong democracy.)*
- *E Pluribus Unum*: out of many, one. *(From a variety of sources and experiences, we have developed a successful democracy.)*

### Essential Questions/Issues:

- What do you know about the U.S. Constitution?
- How does the Constitution and Bill of Rights protect you?
- How are democracy, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights related?
- How did the Bill of Rights improve the constitution?

### Higher Order Thinking Questions:

How might you feel if you were present during the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia?  
*(Evaluation)*

If you were present during the development of the constitution, what would you make sure was added to the “living document”? *(Evaluation)*

Is it important to have a Bill of Rights? Why or why not? *(Evaluation)*



## Lesson Plan: Planet Fourth Grade is Researching the U.S. Constitution

### Assessment:

Students will be evaluated through written assignments (both formal and informal) from beginning of unit to the end. (*Journal writing, note-taking, Venn diagram, outlining, creative art, and a formal writing task*)

Students will write a reflection response regarding the importance of the Constitution with the addition of the Bill of Rights. (*Formal evaluation*)

Students will create a poster highlighting a specific amendment in the Bill of Rights. (*Informal evaluation*)

### Quality Criteria:

**Rubric for Writing-** Constitution Writing Activity rubric (attached). This rubric was used for three different writing assignments.

**Rubric for Poster-** This is an informal evaluation based on report card standards using the scale of ES- Exceeding Standard, MS- Meeting Standard, AS- Approaching Standard.

### Assessment

Students will be given final writing assignment in which they will write about how the addition of the Bill of Rights has helped to strengthen the Constitution.

Students will also choose one of the 10 amendments and create a poster highlighting the specific right of the amendments and how it relates to the individual student.



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## Urban Discovery Academy Constitution Writing Activity



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

<i>Criteria</i>					<i>Points</i>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Content</b>	No reference to constitution or learned material. Information shows little or no understanding.	Uses somewhat developed use of constitutional references but is somewhat inaccurate.	Student shows deep evidence of understanding through accurate use of detail and support. References of constitution are evident.	Student provides extreme understanding, engages audience, provides constant support and detail.	
<b>Organization</b>	Writing shows no organization or order.	Writing shows the beginning pieces of a strong entry but is very disorganized.	Writing is logical and shows a beginning, middle, and end.	Writing has strong supporting evidence, with a logical beginning, middle, and end.	



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	<i>Criteria</i>				<i>Points</i>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Vocabulary and Mechanics</b>	Careless misspellings, no use of punctuation, and little or no use of vocabulary	Writing shows the signs of vocabulary introductions, but does not elaborate. Some misspellings and inaccuracies are found throughout the writing.	Uses a variety of word choices connecting to the vocabulary. Uses editing and punctuation with minor errors.	Student uses vocabulary and editing processes throughout. Also supports writing with effective vocabulary and mechanic use.	
<b>Effort/ Quality</b>	Writing is limited in length and has no sign of detail.	Writing shows signs of order, detail, and effort.	Student response is detailed and shows signs of understanding throughout.	Writing is extremely detailed and thorough.	
				<b>Total----&gt;</b>	

**Teacher Comments:**



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title: Amendment Poster

Teacher(s): \_\_\_\_\_

## Amendment Poster



Process	Approaching Standard	Meeting Standard	Exceeding Standard
1. Has clear vision of amendment			
2. Properly organized to complete project			
3. Managed time wisely			
4. Acquired needed amendment knowledge			
5. Communicated efforts with teacher			

Product (Project)	Approaching Standard	Meeting Standard	Exceeding Standard
1. Format			
2. Mechanics of writing			
3. Organization and structure			
4. Creativity			
5. Demonstrates knowledge of amendment			
6. Other: Proper connect to self			

Standard: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher(s) Comments: \_\_\_\_\_





## Lesson Plan: Planet Fourth Grade is Researching the U.S. Constitution

**Lesson Activity Steps:** The lesson can be divided into two or three days (during social studies) depending upon time allotted, or over the course of one day.

### Hook: Planet Fourth Grade

Imagine you've landed on a newly discovered planet for fourth graders. You and your crew are responsible for establishing order amongst your population. You have to establish rules and rights of the new *Planet Fourth Grade*. You are to report back to Earth to send more fourth graders when you have produced a document that establishes the order and rights for the planet.

### Student Intro Activity After the Hook:

1. Students will be grouped into tables of 4 called "crews."
2. At each table will be a 6 x 4 note card, a writing notebook, and a list of 10 items to place into sequential order of importance.
3. Each group is responsible for choosing one "delegate" from their crew who is responsible, dependable, and fair to others. This delegate will represent the crew on all matters of business and "conventional" meetings to establish the order and rights of its people.
4. "Delegates" from each crew will be given names, tags, yarn. They will be instructed to identify themselves by wearing the "state" name.
5. Have students look at 10 items list and with their crews, order the items from 1- most important to 10-least important. (10 minutes)
6. Crews must choose a recorder to write down the list from 1 to 10.
7. Once each crew has completed their list, have a class discussion about each item and how it is viewed by each group as important.
8. On the whiteboard, the teacher, asking each "delegate" for a group consensus, orders the items on a "class list" of 1 to 10 (by raise of delegate hand, asking who had items of the top (1) to bottom (10) of the list).

### Lesson Activity:

This activity comes after students have begun learning about the basics of the Constitution. The students are aware that the foundation of the Constitution begins with a democracy (vs. Great Britain's autocracy). Students also know that the Constitution was written to establish the federal rights and two years after its inception, amendments were created to establish individual rights.



This activity is to engage students in the process of creating individual rights and compare it to the importance of the U.S. constitution's Bill of Rights.

## CONSTITUTION LESSON #1

1. Delegates from each crew of Planet Fourth Grade meet at a convention with their list of 10 items to discuss the rights of each crew and establish a Planet Four Grade Constitution.
2. Each delegate is given their time to speak on behalf of their crew to represent their colony. 20-30 minutes
3. During this time, additional crew members sit as the audience during the convention.
4. The conventional "president" (teacher) is in charge of delegating, organizing, and writing Planet Fourth Grade Constitution on a large piece of lined construction paper. The items will be arranged from 1 to 10 as the delegates decide as a group, which items should be listed in which order.
5. A finished Planet Fourth Grade Constitution will be displayed in the classroom at the end of the meeting.
6. Each delegate will then sign the Planet Fourth Grade Constitution.
7. Students will then review the history of the U.S. constitution by watching a U.S. Constitution power point.
8. We will then have a class discussion about the important points of the Constitution.
9. After the discussion, students will create a basic outline of the articles of the constitution in their writing notebooks. Discussing with the teacher, a brief summary of what each article implies.
10. The students will then complete the, *What Do You Know About the Constitution?* Worksheet (See grading rubric)
11. Students then join their crew again for a wrap-up discussion.



## BILL OF RIGHTS LESSON #2

*Match the Bill of Rights. (This can be done in a separate lesson on day 2 or as an addition to the lesson if time permits.)*

12. Ask students why they have rules at school and home and have laws in their community. Explain that rules and laws are important because they protect each citizen's rights. These rights prevent the government from interfering in their lives too much. These rights cannot be taken away.
13. As a class, discuss how the United States Constitution contains the main laws of our country and the first ten amendments of the Constitution guarantee certain freedoms and individual rights. They are known as the Bill of Rights.
14. Display the first 10 amendments on the board or use an overhead projector transparency. Review each amendment with students, clarifying terms and/or concepts as needed.
15. Divide students into groups. Give each group a set of the *Bill of Rights Amendment Cards*. Assign any of the following activities:
  - As with the constitution list, challenge crews to rank amendments from most important amendment(1) to the least important (10).

or

  - Cut the Bill of Rights Amendment Cards apart. Challenge students to match the pictures with their descriptions (Handout 1).

or

  - Cut the Bill of Rights Amendment Cards apart. Have students play concentration by matching the amendment with the appropriate picture/description (Handout 2).
16. Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast the Constitution and Bill of Rights.
17. Debrief by discussing the following questions:
  - Is it important for us to have a Bill of Rights? Why or why not?
  - Give an example of how the Bill of Rights protects you?
  - How would your life be different if you didn't have the Bill of Rights?
  - If you could add an amendment to the Bill of Rights, what would it be? Why?



**Special Needs of students are considered in this lesson:**

This lesson involves activities that reach multiple modalities of learning such as written work, creative art, hands-on learning, and group work strategies. It also allows the teacher to give the group a variety of exercises to learn the Big Ideas and Objectives. Students may also complete the extension ideas and use word processing to complete assignments.

**Extension Ideas:**

Students will complete a computer research activity in the computer lab. (Handout developed, designed, and implemented by the teacher.)

Students will work in the computer lab to create a power point presentation that outlines the constitution (and the Bill of Rights).

Students will complete a brochure outlining the three branches of government, the articles of the constitution, or the Bill of Rights.

Using the internet, have students go to the following website:

[http://pbskids.org/stantonanthony/bill\\_of\\_rights.html](http://pbskids.org/stantonanthony/bill_of_rights.html) This website contains ideas from kids from all over the country concerning their suggestions for a Kids' Bill of Rights. Have students evaluate one or more of the submitted rights and explain why they agree or disagree with the statement.



## Lesson Plan: Planet Fourth Grade is Researching the U.S. Constitution

### Materials and Resources Needed:

Writing workbooks for each student (spiral notebooks work great)  
A 6x4 index card for each student or 1 per group (3 x 5 will also work)  
Yarn (to make “delegate lanyards”)  
Poster board paper with lines  
*What do you know about the constitution?* Worksheet  
*Bill of Rights* Amendment cards  
*Bill of Rights* Answer card (can be given to each student or presented on a transparency.)  
Computer (for both power point presentation and additional research and extension support activities)  
Projector  
U.S. Constitution power point presentation  
Scroll paper for constitution writing activity (final activity)  
Venn Diagram paper

### References:

History/Social Studies framework  
Constitution Translated for Kids: Travis, Cathy  
A Kids’ Guide To America’s Bill Of Rights Krull, Kathleen  
We the Kids Catrow, David  
Shh! We’re Writing the Constitution Fritz, Jean Penguin Putnam, New York, 1987  
We the People; The Citizen & The Constitution Center for Civic Education, New York 2003



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[www.usconstitution.net/constkids4.html](http://www.usconstitution.net/constkids4.html) The Constitution For Kids Online

[www.usconstitution.net/xconst.html](http://www.usconstitution.net/xconst.html) Outline of the U.S. Constitution

[www.socialstudiesforkids.com/www/us/billofrightsdef.htm](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/www/us/billofrightsdef.htm) List of Individual Bill of Rights

[www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution\\_history.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_history.html) History of the Constitution

[www.billofrightsinstitute.org/OnDemand/ConstitutionDay/FinalConDayTab.pdf](http://www.billofrightsinstitute.org/OnDemand/ConstitutionDay/FinalConDayTab.pdf) Bill of Rights

[www.teach-nology.com/cgi-bin/rubric.cgi](http://www.teach-nology.com/cgi-bin/rubric.cgi) Rubric for writing activity Civics Webpages

[www.learncalifornia.org/doc.asp?id=805](http://www.learncalifornia.org/doc.asp?id=805) Learn California Levels of Government

[www.assembly.ca.gov/acs/acsframeset16text.asp](http://www.assembly.ca.gov/acs/acsframeset16text.asp) Ideas becoming a law

[www.usconstitution.net/constkids4.html](http://www.usconstitution.net/constkids4.html) The Constitution for Kids

[www.usconstitution.net/xconst.html](http://www.usconstitution.net/xconst.html) Outlined Constitution by Articles and Amendments

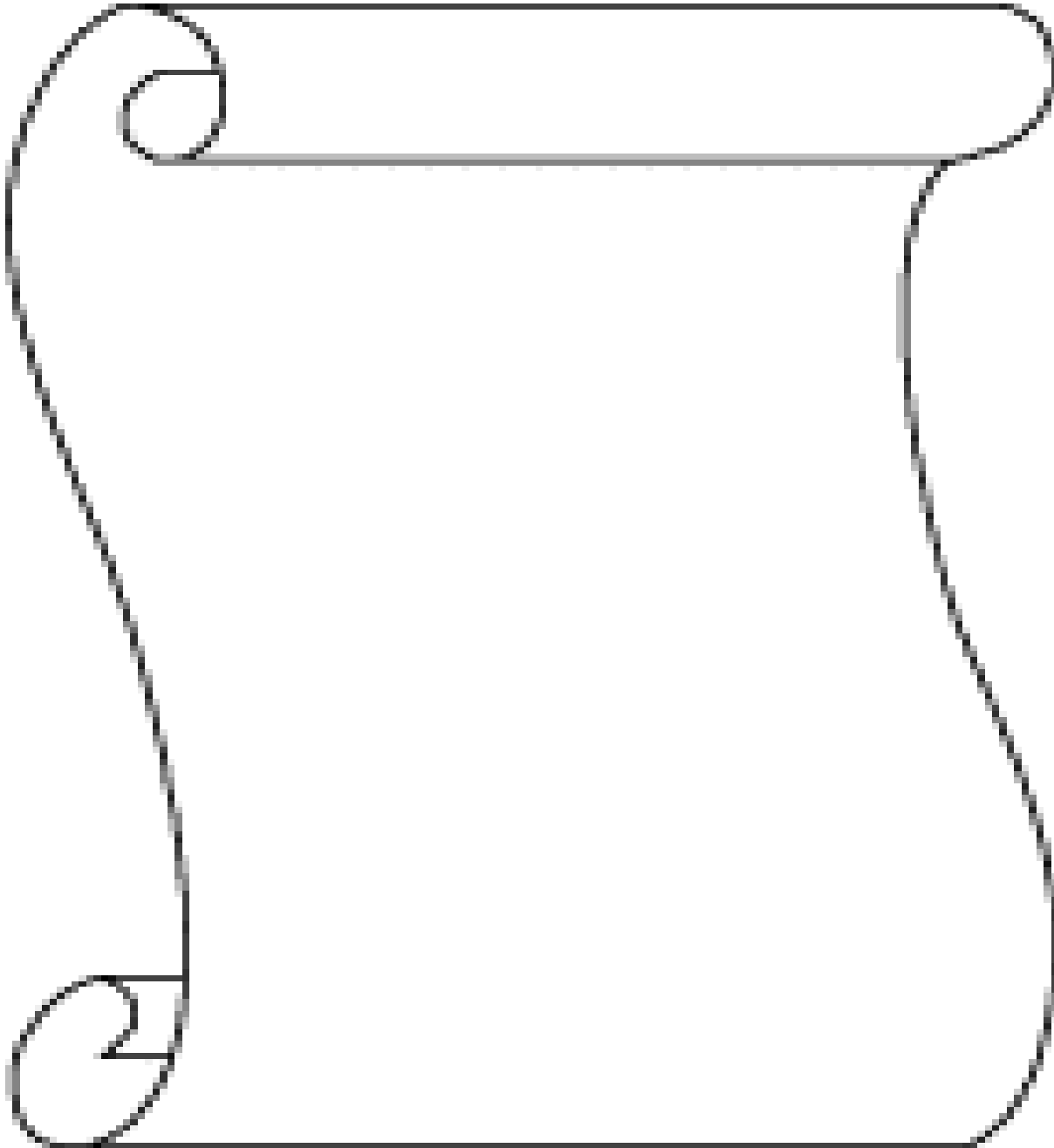
[www.congressforkids.net/games/billofrights/2\\_billofrights.htm](http://www.congressforkids.net/games/billofrights/2_billofrights.htm) Bill of Rights

[www.socialstudiesforkids.com/www/us/billofrightsdef.htm](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/www/us/billofrightsdef.htm) Bill of Rights Individually listed

[www.texaslre.org/downloads/092006\\_cdlp\\_k-2.pdf](http://www.texaslre.org/downloads/092006_cdlp_k-2.pdf) lesson plan idea with picture cut-outs of amendments

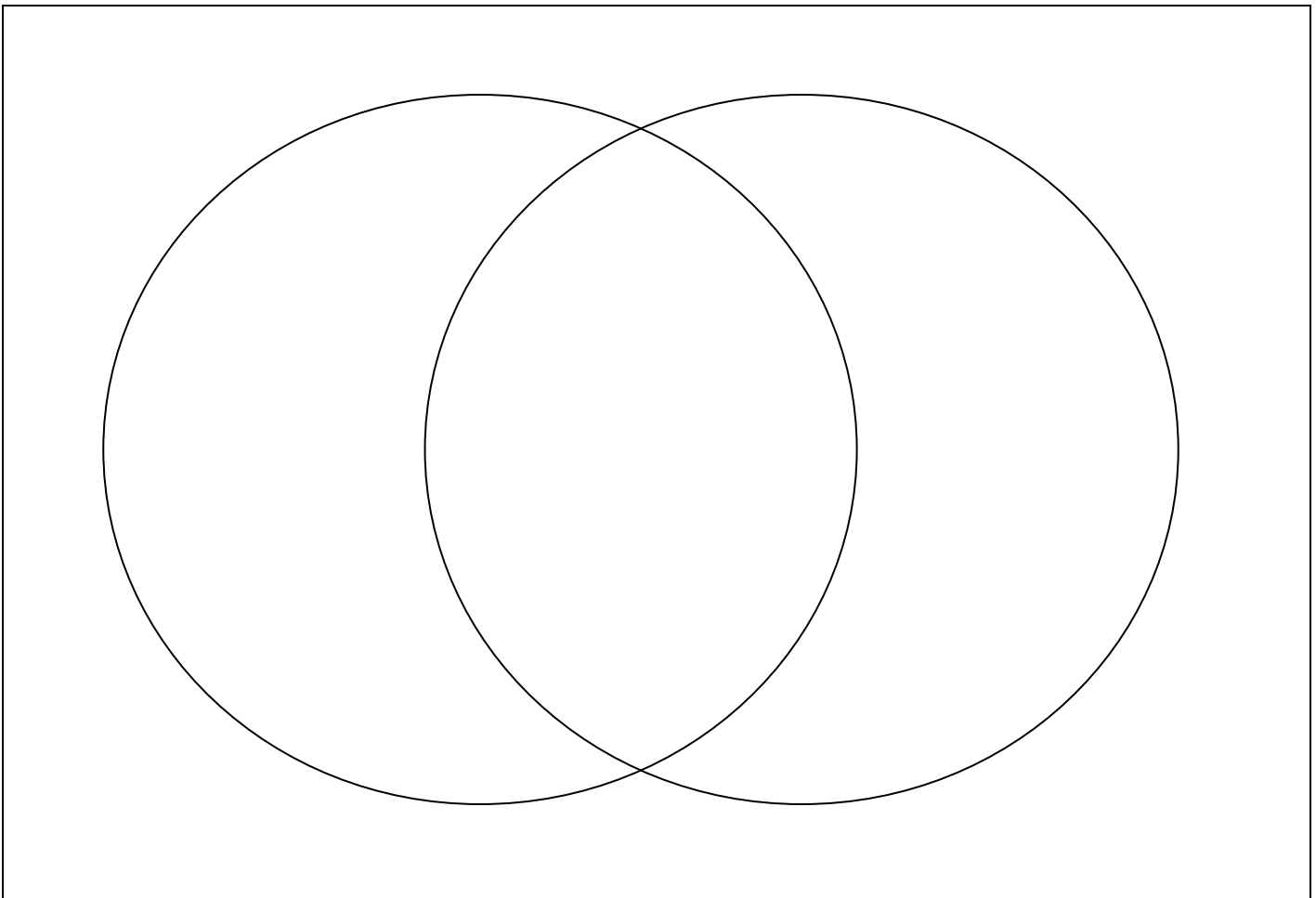


**How Does the Bill of Rights Help to Improve the Constitution?**





**Compare and Contrast**







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Constitution

Bill of Rights

Similarities



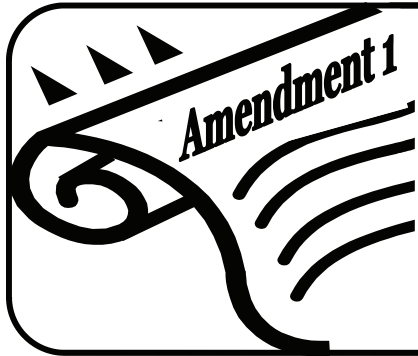
# CALIFORNIA ON MY HONOR

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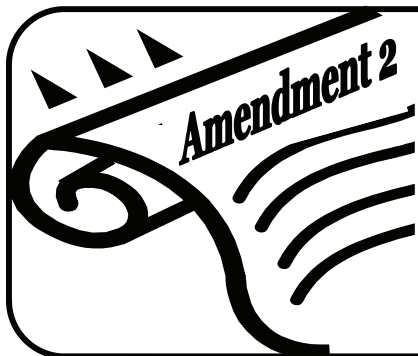
What do you know about the Constitution?

**BILL OF RIGHTS CHART**  
AMENDMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION  
ELEMENTARY VERSION



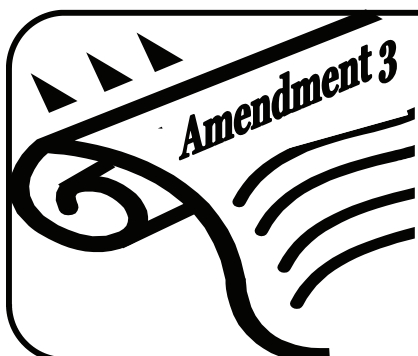
**Amendment 1**

Congress cannot make a law that limits freedom of religion, free speech, free press, or the right of people to get together in groups, or the right of people to ask the government to correct things they don't like.



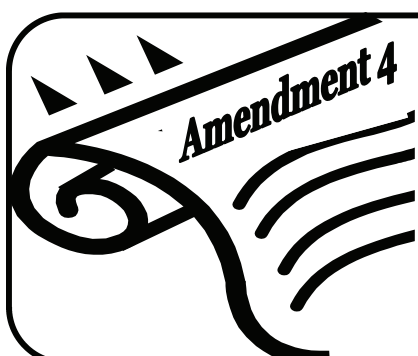
**Amendment 2**

The government cannot stop citizens from keeping guns because the military is necessary to keep peace.



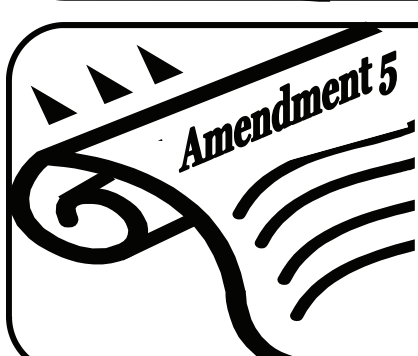
**Amendment 3**

No soldiers can be kept in people's homes in time of peace, without the permission of the owner; if in time of war, certain laws have to be followed.



**Amendment 4**

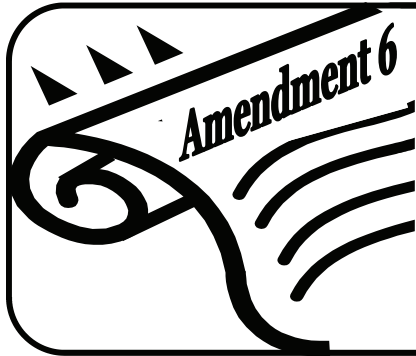
Citizens have the right to be safe in their houses, their belongings, and their persons against unreasonable searches and seizures. If the government wants to search anything, they must have a search warrant which tells what they are looking for and where they can search.



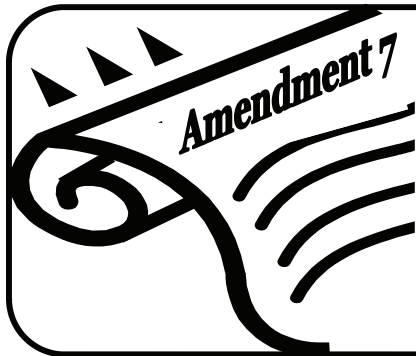
**Amendment 5**

No person can be charged with a crime unless the charges have been brought by a grand jury. A person cannot be charged with the same crime twice. A person does not have to testify against himself/herself. A person can't have his or her life, his or her property, or his or her freedoms taken from him or her without being treated fairly by the law. A person's property can't be taken from him or her without receiving money for the property.

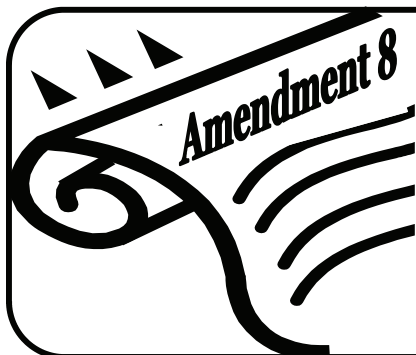
**BILL OF RIGHTS CHART**  
**AMENDMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION**  
**ELEMENTARY VERSION**



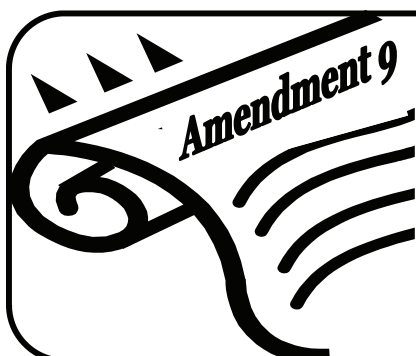
When a person is accused of a crime, he or she will have a quick and public trial. The jury will be fair. The accused will be told what the charge is and can face the people who say he or she broke the law. The accused can have a lawyer to help him or her with the case.



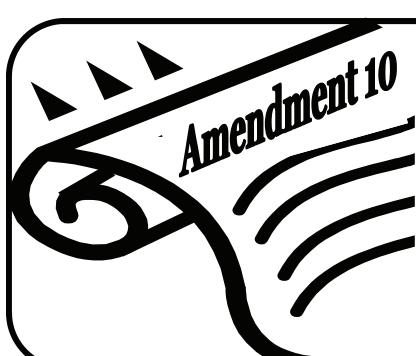
When a person sues another person and the amount of money is over \$20.00, the case may be decided by a jury, and the decision will be final.



Excessive bail or fines cannot be required. No cruel or unusual punishment is allowed.



People have other rights that are not listed here.



The powers not given to the national government are given to individual states.



# **US Constitution**

**A Quick Study Guide**

# **In the Beginning.....**



## **Constitutional Convention**

- **Held in Independence Hall in Philadelphia**
- **George Washington was president of the Convention**
- **Wanted to improve the WEAK Articles of Confederation**

# Independence Hall

**Constitutional Convention was  
held here**



# **George Washington** **Constitutional Convention** **President**

**President of Constitutional Convention, and later 1<sup>st</sup>  
President of USA**





# **Quick Review**



**What? The Constitutional Convention**

**Where? Independence Hall-Philadelphia**

**Who? George Washington was president**

**When? 1787**

**Why? The Articles of Confederation were too WEAK!!**

# Quick Info



## Preamble

- Explains goals of the Constitution

## Branches of Government

- Legislative-MAKES laws
- Executive-ENFORCES laws
- Judicial-INTERPRETS laws

## Bill of Rights

- Written by James Madison
- 1<sup>st</sup> 10 amendments
- Protects individual rights

# Large States vs. Small States

## Virginia Plan (Large States)

- Wanted 2 houses of Congress
- Both houses based on population
- Large states would control government because they have MORE people

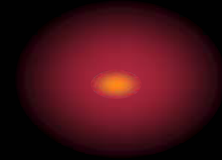


# Large States vs Small States (continued)



## **New Jersey Plan (Small states)**

- **Wanted 1 house of Congress**
- **States represented equally**
- **Did not care about population**



# **Large States vs. Small States (again)**



## **THE GREAT COMPROMISE**

- **2 house of Congress**
- **House of Representatives  
(based on population)**
- **Senate  
(equal representation)**

# Large States vs. Small States Review



**Can't We All Just Get Along???**

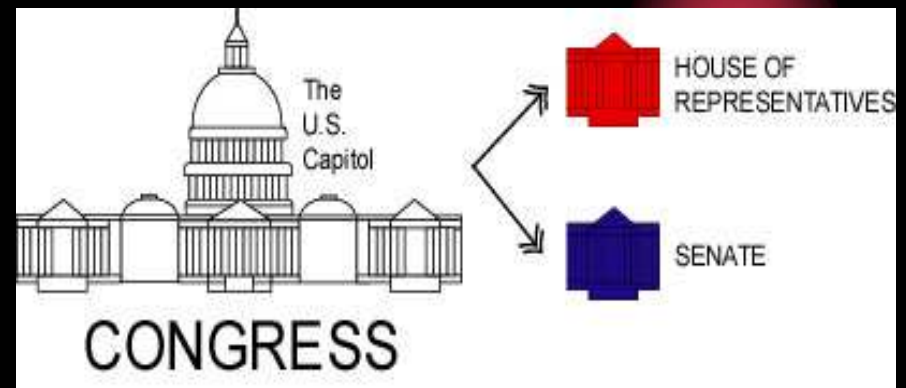
**Virginia Plan  
(Large States)  
(Population)**

**New Jersey Plan  
(Small States)  
(Equal Representation)**

**THE  
GREAT COMPROMISE**

# LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

- **Described in Article I**
- **Main duty is to MAKE LAWS**
- **Consists of Congress**



# Congress



- **Main body of Legislative Branch**
- **Made up of the Senate and House of Representatives**
- **Term begins on January 3<sup>rd</sup> of odd-numbered years (2009, 2011, 2013 etc)**
- **Meets in the Capitol Building in Washington DC**



# Congress

**US Capitol Building in Washington DC**  
**Both Houses of Congress meet here**



# House of Representatives



- **Discussed in Article I, Section 2**
- **Has 435 members**
- **Representatives have 2 year terms**
- **Elected by state districts**
- **Speaker of the House is presiding officer**

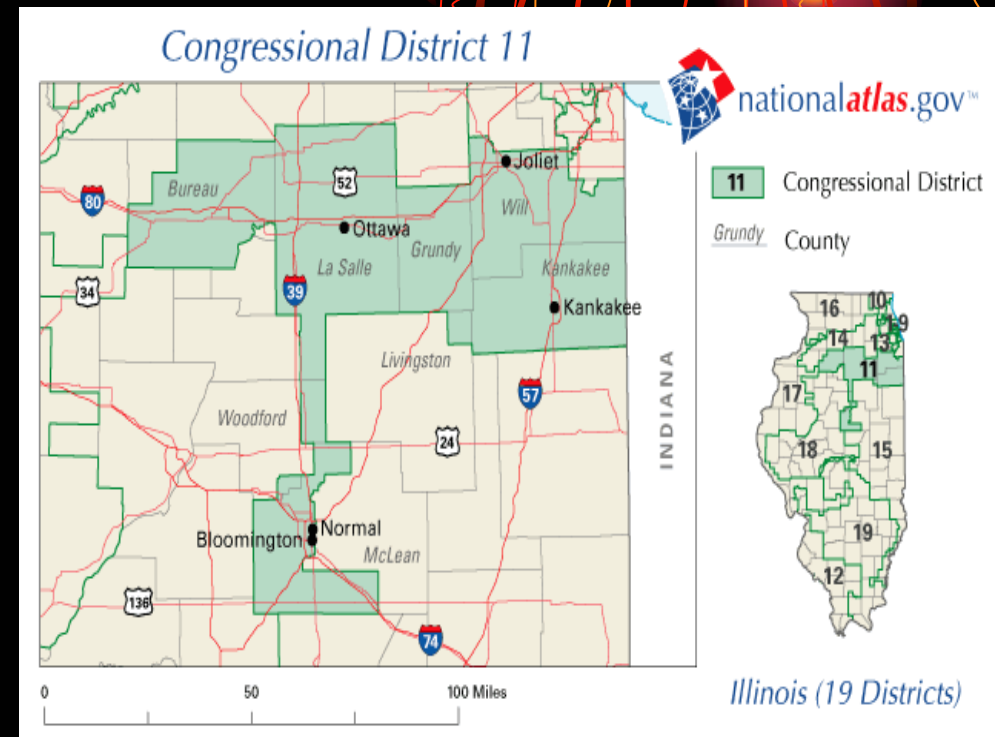
# Representatives Qualifications

- **At least 25 years old**
- **US citizen for 7 years**
- **Live in state representing**



# Important Info from Our Area

- **11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District**
- **Debbie Halvorson from Crete, IL is our representative**



# Debbie Halvorson

**11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Representative**



*Debbie Halvorson*



# Duties of Representatives



- **Passes bills (laws)**
- **Starts all revenue (money) bills**
- **Sole power of impeachment**
- **Selects President if no candidate had majority of Electoral College**

# Senate



- **Discussed in Article I, Section 3**
- **Has 100 members**
- **Senators serve 6 year terms**
- **Vice President of US is President of the Senate**
- **Elected by the entire state**

# Senator Qualifications



- **At least 30 years old**
- **US citizen for 9 years**
- **Live in state representing**



# Illinois Senators

**Richard Durbin**



# Illinois Senators

**Roland Burris**



# Duties of Senate



- **Passes bills**
- **Approves treaties**
- **Approves presidential appointments**
- **Jury in impeachment cases**

# Executive Branch



- **Discussed in Article 2**
- **Main duty is to ENFORCE laws**
- **Consists of President, Vice President, and Cabinet**

# Qualifications of President



- **At least 35 years old**
- **Natural born citizen**
- **Lived in US for at least 14 years**

# President of the USA

**Barack Obama**



# The White House

**Residence and Office  
of the President**



# Duties of the President



## Foreign Affairs

- **Makes treaties with Senate**
- **Nominates ambassadors**

## Domestic Administration

- **Commander in Chief of armed forces**
- **Prepares budget for Congressional approval**



# Duties of President (continued)



## Legislation

- **Can call both Houses of Congress in for a special session**
- **Vetoes bills**
- **Gives State of the Union address**

## Appointment

- **Appoints judges, Cabinet members, & advisors**

## Judicial Functions

- **Grants pardons**

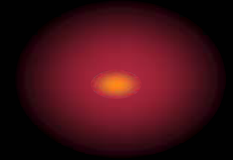
# Duties of Vice President



- **First person in line of presidential succession**
- **President of the Senate (casts vote in event of a tie)**

**Vice President of US**

**Joe Biden**



# President's Cabinet



- **Senior officers of the Executive Branch**
- **Assists President with his duties**
- **Nominated by President, but confirmed by Senate**

# The Cabinet (continued)



## **President Obama's Cabinet Members**

### **Secretary of State**

- **Hillary Rodham Clinton**

### **Secretary of Treasury**

- **Timothy Geithner**

### **Secretary of Defense**

- **Robert Gates**

### **Attorney General**

- **Eric Holder**

### **Secretary of Interior**

- **Ken Salazar**

### **Secretary of Agriculture**

- **Tom Vilsack**

# The Cabinet (some more)



## Secretary of Labor

- **Hilda Solis**

## Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

- **Shaun Donovan**

## Secretary of Transportation

- **Ray LaHood**

## Secretary of Energy

- **Steven Chu**

## Secretary of Education

- **Arne Duncan**

## Secretary of Veteran's Affairs

- **Eric Shinseki**

## Secretary of Homeland Security

- **Janet Napolitano**

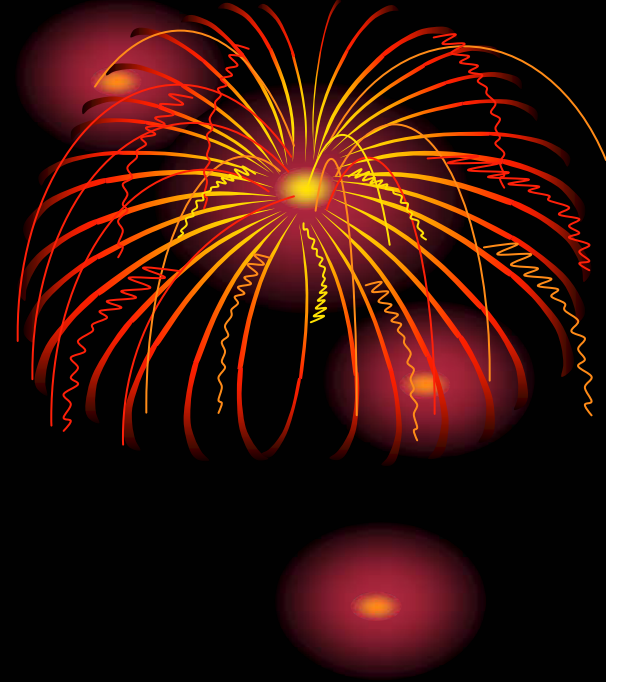
# Judicial Branch



- **Discussed in Article 3**
- **Main duty is to INTERPRET law (judicial review)**
- **Consists of federal courts:**
  - Supreme Court**
  - Court of Appeals**
  - District Courts**

# Supreme Court

- **1 court**
- **9 justices**
- **Decides if laws are unconstitutional**
- **Hears cases from lower courts**
- **Meets in Washington DC**



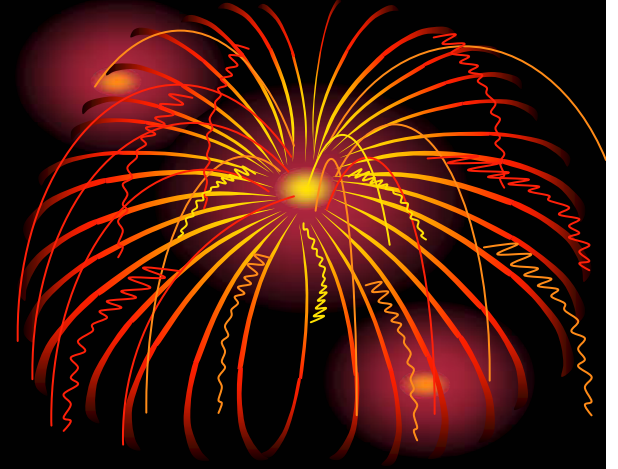


# Supreme Court Building

Where the Supreme Court meets



# Court of Appeals



- **13 courts**
- **Has 3-9 judges in each court**
- **Hears cases from lower courts**

# District Courts

- **94 district courts**
- **1-24 judges in each court**
- **Trial courts of federal system**

