

The Constitution of the United States of America

Mr. Zindman's Class

Please study your class notes and slides!

The Preamble is the mission statement of the United States Constitution.

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| To form a more perfect union | The states work together as one unified nation, not as separate nations. |
| To establish justice | The justice system requires that the law be applied fairly to every American. |
| To ensure domestic tranquility | The government can ensure domestic tranquility or peace and order at home. |
| To provide for the common defense | To protect citizens against foreign attack, the national government can raise armies and navies. However, the military is under civilian , or nonmilitary, control. |
| To promote the general welfare | The national government promotes the general welfare , or the well-being of all its citizens. |
| To secure the blessing of liberty | A major goal of the Constitution is to protect the liberty , or freedom, of Americans. |

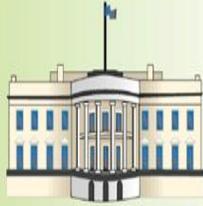
Principals of the Constitution

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|----------------------|---|
| Popular Sovereignty | The principle that government gets its authority from the people, therefore people have a right to change or abolish their government. |
| Limited Government | The principle that government has only the powers that the Constitution gives it. Everyone, no matter how important, must obey the law. |
| Separation of Powers | The idea of limiting government power by dividing it among different branches of government. |
| Checks and Balances | Each branch of government has power to check, or limit, actions of the other branches. |
| Federalism | The principle of dividing power between the federal government and the states. |
| Republicanism | A form of government in which citizens elect representatives to carry out their will. |
| Individual Rights | Individual rights include freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the right to trial by jury. |

Checks and Balances

Executive Branch

(President carries out laws)



Checks on the Legislative Branch

- Can propose laws
- Can veto laws
- Can call special sessions of Congress
- Makes appointments
- Negotiates foreign treaties

Checks on the Judicial Branch

- Appoints federal judges
- Can grant pardons to federal offenders

Legislative Branch

(Congress makes laws)



Checks on the Executive Branch

- Can override President's veto
- Confirms executive appointments
- Ratifies treaties
- Can declare war
- Appropriates money
- Can impeach and remove President

Checks on the Judicial Branch

- Creates lower federal courts
- Can impeach and remove judges
- Can propose amendments to overrule judicial decisions
- Approves appointments of federal judges

Judicial Branch

(Supreme Court interprets laws)



Check on the Executive Branch

- Can declare executive actions unconstitutional

Check on the Legislative Branch

- Can declare acts of Congress unconstitutional

Roles of the Three Branches

Legislative Branch (Congress)



Passes Laws

- Can override President's veto
- Approves treaties and presidential appointments
- Can impeach and remove President and other high officials
- Creates lower federal courts
- Appropriates money
- Prints and coins money
- Raises and supports the armed forces
- Can declare war
- Regulates foreign and interstate trade

Executive Branch (President)



Carries Out Laws

- Proposes laws
- Can veto laws
- Negotiates foreign treaties
- Serves as commander in chief of the armed forces
- Appoints federal judges, ambassadors, and other high officials
- Can grant pardons to federal offenders

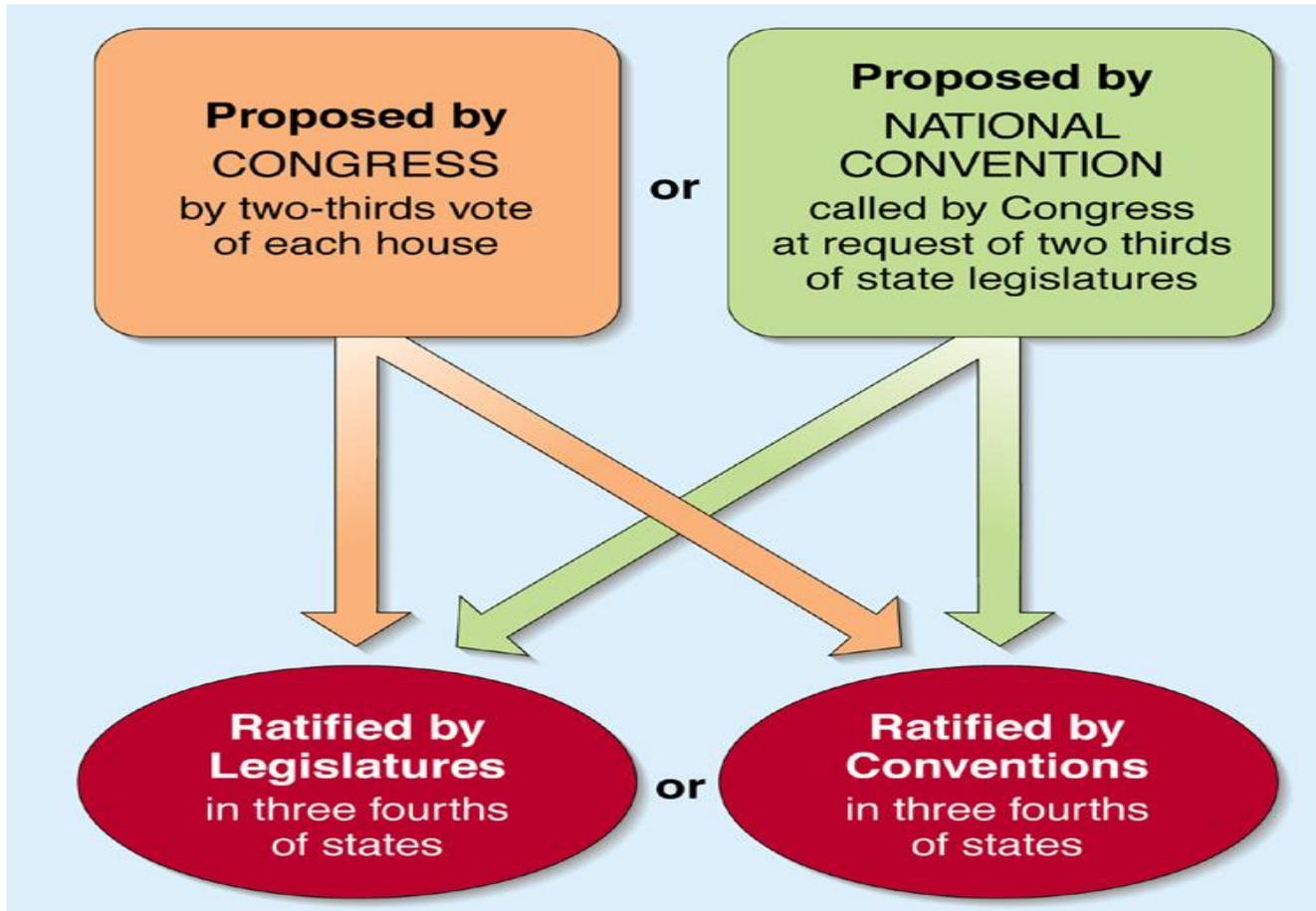
Judicial Branch (Supreme Court and Other Federal Courts)



Interprets Laws

- Can declare laws unconstitutional
- Can declare executive actions unconstitutional

The Amendment Process



The Bill of Rights and Other Important Amendments

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| 1 | Safeguards individual rights—freedom of religion, speech, the press, the right to assemble peacefully, the right to petition the government to change its policies. |
| 2 | “A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.” |
| 3 | Congress may not force citizens to put up troops in their homes. |
| 4 | Citizens are protected from unlawful searches of their homes and property. |
| 5 | People cannot be forced to incriminate , or give evidence against, themselves. |
| 6 | People are guaranteed the right to a speedy and public trial by a fair jury. The accused have a right to know the charges against them and who is making the charges |
| 7 | Provides for juries in civil, or non criminal, trials. |
| 8 | Forbids excessive bail or fines and “cruel and unusual punishments.” |
| 9 | Citizens’ rights are not limited to those listed in the Constitution. |
| 10 | All powers not given to the national government or denied to the states are reserved for the states or for the people. |
| 13 | Abolished slavery. |
| 14 | Guaranteed citizenship to former slaves. |
| 15 | Declared that states may not deny the vote to any citizen on the basis of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” |
| 19 | Gave women the right to vote. |
| 26 | Lowered the minimum voting age from 21 to 18. |

