

Lesson Plan: Constitution Day Glossary and Facts

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Term	Definition
amendment	Addition to or deletion from a constitution or law
Articles of Confederation	The first constitution of the newly independent American States. 1777
bicameralism	The principle of the two-house legislature
Bill of Rights	The first ten amendments to the Constitution
checks and balances	Constitutional grant of powers that ensures each of the three branches of government a sufficient role in the actions of the others so that no one branch may dominate the others. These three branches must work together if governmental business is to be performed.
citizens	community members who owe loyalty to the government and are entitled to protection from it
civil liberties	freedoms to think and act without government interference or fear of unfair legal treatment
civil rights	the rights of full citizenship and equality under the law
Connecticut Compromise	a compromise between the Virginia and New Jersey Plans that called for one house in which each state would have an equal vote, and a second house in which representation would be based on population and all bills for raising and appropriating money would originate
Constitution	The fundamental rules that determine how those who govern are selected, the procedures by which they operate, and the limits to their powers
Constitutional Congress	The convention in Philadelphia in 1787 (May 25 to September 17) that framed the Constitution of the United States
delegate	a representative to a meeting
democracy	Government by the people, either directly or indirectly, with free and frequent elections
Electoral college	In general, the procedure established by the Constitution for the election of the president and Vice President
executive branch	the branch of government that carries out the laws
federalism	a form of government in which power is divided between the federal, or national, government and the states
judicial branch	the branch of government that interprets the laws
legislative branch	the branch of government that makes the laws
New Jersey Plan	a series of resolutions that called for a confederation around powerful state governments
ratify	to vote approval

reserved powers	powers that the Constitution does not give to the national government that are kept by the states
separation of powers	the split of authority between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches
Three-fifths Compromise	agreement providing that enslaved persons would count as three-fifths of other persons in determining representation in Congress
Virginia Plan	a series of resolutions that called for a strong central government

10 Fast Facts on the Constitution

1. The U.S. Constitution was written in the same Pennsylvania State House where the Declaration of Independence was signed and where George Washington received his commission as Commander of the Continental Army. Now called Independence Hall, the building still stands today on Independence Mall in Philadelphia, directly across from the National Constitution Center.
2. Written in 1787, the Constitution was signed on September 17th. But it wasn't until 1788 that it was ratified by the necessary nine states.
3. The U.S. Constitution was prepared in secret, behind locked doors that were guarded by sentries.
4. Some of the original framers and many delegates in the state ratifying conventions were very troubled that the original Constitution lacked a description of individual rights. In 1791, Americans added a list of rights to the Constitution. The first ten amendments became known as The Bill of Rights
5. Of the 55 delegates attending the Constitutional Convention, 39 signed and 3 delegates dissented. Two of America's "founding fathers" didn't sign the Constitution. Thomas Jefferson was representing his country in France and John Adams was doing the same in Great Britain.
6. Established on November 26, 1789, the first national "Thanksgiving Day" was originally created by George Washington as a way of "giving thanks" for the Constitution.
7. Of the written national constitutions, the U.S. Constitution is the oldest and shortest.
8. At 81, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania was the oldest delegate at the Constitutional Convention and at 26, Jonathon Dayton of New Jersey was the youngest.
9. The original Constitution is on display at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, it was moved to Fort Knox for safekeeping.
10. More than 11,000 amendments have been introduced in Congress. Thirty three have gone to the states to be ratified and twenty seven have received the necessary approval from the states to actually become amendments to the Constitution.

Source: <http://constitutioncenter.org/constitution-day>