

Just the Facts . . . U. S. Government

7 Principles of the Constitutions

Popular sovereignty - political power rests with the people who can abolish or alter government as they see fit.

Republicanism - people elect representatives to make laws for them

Limited government - people in government positions are subject to the same laws as other citizens.

Federalism - the sharing of power between the state and national government, ex: taxes

Separation of Powers - each branch of government has a specific function, ex.: Legislative branch makes laws; Executive branch carries out laws; Judicial Branch interprets laws.

Checks and Balances - each branch of government can "check" the other two to ensure that no branch holds too much power.

Individual rights - rights all citizens possess; found in the Bill of Rights

Branches of the Government

Legislative-branch of government that is responsible for making laws; called Congress: made up of two houses (bicameral) Senate and House of Representatives.

Executive Branch - Headed by the President of the United States, this branch of the government carries out the laws. President can veto congressional legislation. President appoints Supreme Court Justices.

Judicial Branch - branch of government that interprets (reviews) laws. The Courts: Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal & District Courts. JB can declare a law unconstitutional. Supreme

Court is the highest court in land with 9 Justices.

Important Amendments

13th Amendment - abolished slavery

14th Amendment - gave citizenship to all citizens regardless of race

15th Amendment - gave African American *men* the right to vote

Political Points of View

Federalism - is the sharing of power between a central government and its political subdivisions, in this case the states.

Federalist - person who supported the ratification of the Constitution

Anti-Federalist - person who wanted a Bill of Rights added to the Constitution before it could be ratified

Federalist Party - political party founded by Alexander Hamilton. They wanted an industrialized economy and a strong national (or central) government.

Democratic-Republican Party - political party founded by Thomas Jefferson. They wanted strong state governments and an agricultural economy.

Democratic Party - political party started by Andrew Jackson - the party of the "common man". This is the present day Democratic Party.

Republican Party - political party founded in 1854. They were founded as an anti-slavery party. Abraham Lincoln was the first Republican president.

Articles of Confederation

The first constitution of the U.S. (1781-1787)

Weaknesses (5 - think of your hand):

1. Too weak national government
2. Inability to collect taxes
3. Many disputes among states
4. Requests for army denied
5. Poorly thought of by foreign nations

What pointed out weaknesses?

Shays' Rebellion

One lasting feature of Articles:

Northwest Ordinance: a system for bringing new states into the Union

Forming a New Constitution

The Constitutional Convention: In May, 1787, the leaders of our nation met to revise the AoC. After much debate, they decide to create a new constitution.

James Madison is known as the "Father of the Constitution" because of his careful note taking during the Constitutional Convention.

The Plans & Compromises:

The Virginia Plan - Large state plan.

Created a national government with three separate branches: legislative, executive, and judicial.

The New Jersey Plan - Small state plan.

One house; equal representation in congress. This plan was rejected.

The Great Compromise: by Roger Sherman

Created a two house (bicameral) legislature. Representation in the lower house would be based on population. Representation in the upper house would be based on statehood.

The Three-fifths Compromise

Slaves would be counted as three-fifths of a person for representation in the lower house.

The Struggle for Ratification:

Federalists were those in favor of the ratification of the Constitution.

Antifederalists were opposed to its ratification because it had no bill of rights. The Federalists wrote a series of articles known as the **Federalist Papers** to convince citizens to ratify the Constitution. Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay were its authors. George Mason and Patrick Henry of Virginia were the most outspoken of the Antifederalists.

The Constitution

- It was drafted (written) in **1787** and ratified (approved) when 9 of the 13 states gave approval.
- The Preamble: It is the introduction to the Constitution. It begins... "*We the people...*"
- Articles 1 - 7 are the sections of the Constitution.
- Bill of Rights (1st 10 Amendments)
- Additional Amendments (11 - 27)

Bill of Rights

First 10 amendments to the Constitution

1st Amendment - 5 freedoms: religion, assembly, petition, press, and speech.

2nd Amendment - right to bear arms

3rd Amendment - quartering of soldiers

4th Amendment - search & seizure

5th Amendment - rights of the accused

6th Amendment - right to a speedy trial

7th Amendment - right to a trial by jury

8th Amendment - no cruel or unusual punishment

9th Amendment - rights kept to the people

10th Amendment - powers of the States and the people