

VOCABULARY Guide to the Constitution

Amendment - A change in, or addition to, a constitution or law.

Anti-Federalists - Persons who opposed the adoption of the Constitution between 1787 - 1788; they were in favor of adopting the Bill of Rights as well as strong state governments.

Apportionment - The process of determining the number of representatives to which each state is entitled.

Bicameral - A two-house legislative body.

Bill - A proposed law.

Bill of Rights - The first ten amendments to the Constitution, dealing mostly with civil rights.

Checks and Balances - A system of overlapping the powers of the separate legislative, executive, and judicial branches of a government, to permit each branch to check (restrain) the actions of the others.

Congress - Consists of a bicameral, or two-house, legislature. The House of Representatives represents the people by population, and the Senate represents each state equally. The role of Congress is to translate public will into public policy in the form of laws.

Executive Branch - The office of the President and his cabinet; the President is responsible for assuring that the nation's laws are faithfully executed.

Federalism - Form of government with governmental powers divided between a central government and several state or regional governments.

Federalists - Persons who supported the adoption of the Constitution in 1787 - 1788. Most of them became members of the Federalist Party after the Constitution became adopted. They believed in a strong federal government.

House of Representatives - One of the two law-making bodies in Congress; its representation is based upon state population.

Judicial Branch - A government's court system; this body is responsible for interpreting the Constitution.

Legislative Branch - The law-making body of the government.

President of the Senate - In Congress, the Vice President of the United States. He governs over the Senate when it is in session.

Senate - One of the two law-making bodies in Congress; each state is represented by two senators.

Speaker of the House - The presiding officer of the House of Representatives, chosen by and from the party holding the majority of the seats in the House.

Veto - Refusal by the President to sign a bill into law.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of a constitutional government?
2. What is the Preamble to the Constitution? What is its purpose?
3. What is a federal system of government?
4. What are the three branches of government?
5. How do the three branches work within the system of checks and balances?
6. What is the Bill of Rights?
7. What are the two ways in which an amendment can be ratified?
8. What is the purpose of the other sixteen amendments other than the Bill of Rights?
9. According to the Constitution, what role do the people play in the country's political processes?
10. How does the Constitution and the Bill of Rights ensure the concept of "We the people"?

VIDEO QUIZ

Directions: For each of the following statements, circle true or false.

1. The Constitution is the set of rules or guidelines that organizes our government.

True False

2. A constitutional government limits the powers of the government.

True False

3. In a federal system of government, the federal government shares power and responsibility with the states.

True False

4. The Constitution is a permanent document which may never be changed.

True False

5. There are only ten amendments to the Constitution.

True False

6. The introduction to the Constitution is called the "Preamble."

True False

7. The name given to the individuals that created the Constitution is the "Founding Fathers" or the "Framers."

True False

8. All of the branches of government have equal power.

True False

9. The Constitution does not specifically state the powers of the branches of government.

True False

10. The Constitution can only be changed by the President of the United States.

True False