
Does the Constitution Need to Be Amended?

Segment Length: 6:36 minutes

Lesson Description:

Does the Constitution still serve us today? Should it be updated? If so, how? In this video, individuals share their thoughts on the United States Constitution and whether or not it needs to be changed. This lesson explores varying perspectives on the Constitution's relevance and the possibility of amending it to better serve the nation's evolving needs.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Summarize the historical significance of the United States Constitution in shaping the nation's governance.
- Explain diverse perspectives held by individuals regarding the Constitution, including its strengths and potential shortcomings.
- Analyze proposed changes to the Constitution, such as term limits, amendments, and limitations on government power and evaluate the merits of these proposals.

Concepts & Key Terms:

Commerce Clause: A clause in the United States Constitution that grants Congress the power to regulate commerce with foreign nations, among the states, and with Indian tribes.

Eminent Domain: The legal authority of the government to take private property for public use, provided that the owner is justly compensated.

Prohibition: A period in U.S. history when the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages were banned by constitutional amendment.

Term Limits: Legal restrictions on the number of terms an elected official can hold a particular office.

Preview Activity and Questions:

Distribute copies of the K-W-L worksheet to the class. Have students fill in the K and W sections. After showing the video, have students complete the L section and answer the questions at the bottom of the worksheet.

Viewing Guide:

We recommend that teachers show the video segment twice: first to allow students to view the video and focus on the issues presented, and second, to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs to share and verify answers.

Answers to Viewing Guide:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1. change | 5. harm |
| 2. bankrupting | 6. state |
| 3. unlimited | 7. beautiful |
| 4. individual | |

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Viewing Guide

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Per _____

Teacher _____

Directions: As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.

1. Yes, this did accept slavery. Fortunately, the people who wrote this...also made it possible to _____ it.
2. Would that stop politicians from _____ us? One reason they spend so much is to get re-elected, endlessly. Could we change that?
3. It's been interpreted to grant the government virtually _____ power over the economy.
4. The main point of the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, was to protect the rights of the _____.
5. So as long as there's no action to physically _____ somebody, keep the free speech.
6. Micro governments. I like that, and if we need people governing us, maybe _____ governments have better ideas.
7. The people got the power in this country and that's what makes it so _____.

Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer the questions below:

By what authority does the government currently have virtually unlimited power over the economy? _____

Should the protection of Americans' right to free speech be removed or limited? Why or why not? _____

Do you think most Americans understand the Constitution? _____ Explain. _____

Discussion and Analysis:

1. What is the Constitution and why is it significant to the United States?
2. What does the phrase "the Supreme Law" mean?
3. What do you think about some people John interviewed had no opinion about the Constitution? Why do you think that is?
4. Why slavery was included in the Constitution?
5. What are amendments in the context of the Constitution and why are they important?
6. What was Prohibition? Why were there two amendments regarding Prohibition?
7. What is the role of the Supreme Court regarding the Constitution?
8. What were some changes people suggested? Why did they think those changes would improve the Constitution? Which suggestions did you like? Which did you not like?
9. The Framers believed in "natural rights," meaning the Bill of Rights provides protection of rights Americans already have. Natural rights proponents say that rights are not granted by the Constitution; rather, they are protected by the Constitution. Why is that an important distinction to understand?
10. Should the protection of Americans' right to free speech be removed or limited? Why or why not?
11. What about hate speech? Do you agree with the man who said that so as long as there's no action to physically harm somebody, we should keep free speech? If not, who gets to decide what hate speech is or is not?
12. In the video, Michael Malice said that if you look at the First Amendment, it says that the right of people to peaceably assemble shall not be infringed. He pointed out that almost no one bothered to invoke clause to fight the lockdowns and quarantining. Should government—which is supposed to be limited by the Constitution—be allowed to declare emergencies and take away our rights?
13. One of the people interviewed said that because we have police and military, we no longer need the right to own guns. Do police protect us or deal with criminals after crimes have been committed? Is the right to bear arms to protect us from criminals?
14. While the authors of the Constitution did provide us with a way to change it, they made it a challenging process. Why do you think they made it difficult?
15. The Tenth Amendment says that any powers not specifically given to the federal government are reserved to the States or to the people. Why is that important? Does our government today respect those boundaries or has the federal government grown beyond its constitutional scope? Why does that matter?

Discuss These Lines from the Video:

1. It's the best constitution on the earth.
2. I think the forefathers knew what they were doing.
3. The idea was right for the time that it was made in. It could use some changes.
4. Yes, this did accept slavery. Fortunately, the people who wrote this...also made it possible to change it.
5. Probably add a balanced budget amendment.
6. Would that stop politicians from bankrupting us? One reason they spend so much is to get re-elected, endlessly. Could we change that?
7. There's no reason government should have any authority over commerce whatsoever. I don't know why it's in there. It's gotta go.
8. How did government grow to have so much power over... everything? This was designed to limit government's power. Sadly, its often ignored.
9. If you hate it, somebody else might love it. So as long as there's no action to physically harm somebody, keep the free speech.

Quotes for Discussion:

I believe marriage is between a man and a woman. I am not in favor of gay marriage. But when you start playing around with constitutions, just to prohibit somebody who cares about another person, it just seems to me that's not what America's about. Usually, our constitutions expand liberties, they don't contract them.

– Barack Obama

The United States Constitution has proved itself the most marvelously elastic compilation of rules of government ever written.

– Franklin D. Roosevelt

All the rights secured to the citizens under the Constitution are worth nothing, and a mere bubble, except guaranteed to them by an independent and virtuous Judiciary.

– Andrew Jackson

To live under the American Constitution is the greatest political privilege that was ever accorded to the human race.

– Calvin Coolidge

Our Constitution works; our great republic is a government of laws and not of men. Here, the people rule.

– Gerald R. Ford

Being a patriot doesn't mean prioritizing service to government above all else. Being a patriot means knowing when to protect your country, knowing when to protect your Constitution, knowing when to protect your countrymen, from the violations of and encroachments of adversaries. And those adversaries don't have to be foreign countries.

– Edward Snowden

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember, or overthrow it.

– Abraham Lincoln

Activities:

1. Have students complete the K-W-L chart in class or for homework.
2. Have students complete the PMI chart after viewing the video.
3. Have students complete the political cartoon activity prior to or after viewing the video.
4. How do we amend the Constitution? Have students research the process then create an infographic on the process to amend the Constitution.
5. Create either a class presentation or write a paper exploring the most recent constitutional amendments. What are the significant changes? What were some of the quotes in the arguments for and against the change? How would you have sided? Why?
6. Write a reflection on whether you agree or disagree with the statement "The Constitution is the best on earth" and explain your reasoning. Research another country's constitution and compare/contrast.
7. Research one of the amendments (excluding those in the Bill of Rights) and write a short essay explaining its importance, the historical context, and its impact on American society. Conclude with your assessment of whether the amendment remains relevant to today's society.
8. Research the various Supreme Court interpretations of the Second Amendment throughout history.
9. Show the class [Unintended Consequences-Eminent Domain](#). What is eminent domain? What was the purpose of it? Did the Supreme Court's decision in the Kelo case follow the Constitution or ignore the meaning of eminent domain?
https://izzit.org/products/detail.php?video=eminent_domain
10. Conduct a classroom debate on whether to add a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. Before the debate, make sure students fully understand the concept, and brainstorm what the penalties might be for those who are in office.
11. Research and create a slideshow about the writing of the Constitution. Have students research what amendments were highly debated. Have them describe the pros/cons of each amendment and which are most meaningful to them.
12. Watch [Stossel: The Best Part of the Constitution](#), then research the Constitution and its amendments and write down your two favorite parts of the Constitution. Explain why those parts appeal to you. Have a classroom discussion with students each sharing their favorites and reasoning.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HffqhMHW1fA>
13. Produce a man-on-the-street video in which you ask people the same questions that were in the video, such as, Have you read the Constitution, What is the Constitution, and What would you change about the Constitution?

Name _____
Class _____ Period _____

Date _____
Teacher _____

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- P = Plus:** What might be some positive effects of amending the Constitution?
M = Minus: What might be some negative effects of amending the Constitution?
I = Interesting: What are some interesting aspects of amending the Constitution?

+ Plusses +	- Minuses -	I

Is changing the Constitution necessary? _____ Why/Why not? _____

Who do you think should be involved if the Constitution was to be amended? _____

Why would some consider our Constitution the best on earth? Provide examples from the video. _____

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Period _____

Teacher _____

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K-W-L Chart

Directions: Complete the **K** and **W** sections prior to watching the video. After you have seen the video, complete the **L** section and answer the questions below the K-W-L chart.

K	W	L
What I know about the Constitution...	What I want to know about the Constitution...	What I've learned about the Constitution...
How does the Constitution affect our everyday life?	Does the Constitution do a good job of serving us today? Why/Why not?	Is there something you would consider changing about the Constitution? If so, what and why?

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Political Cartoon Activity

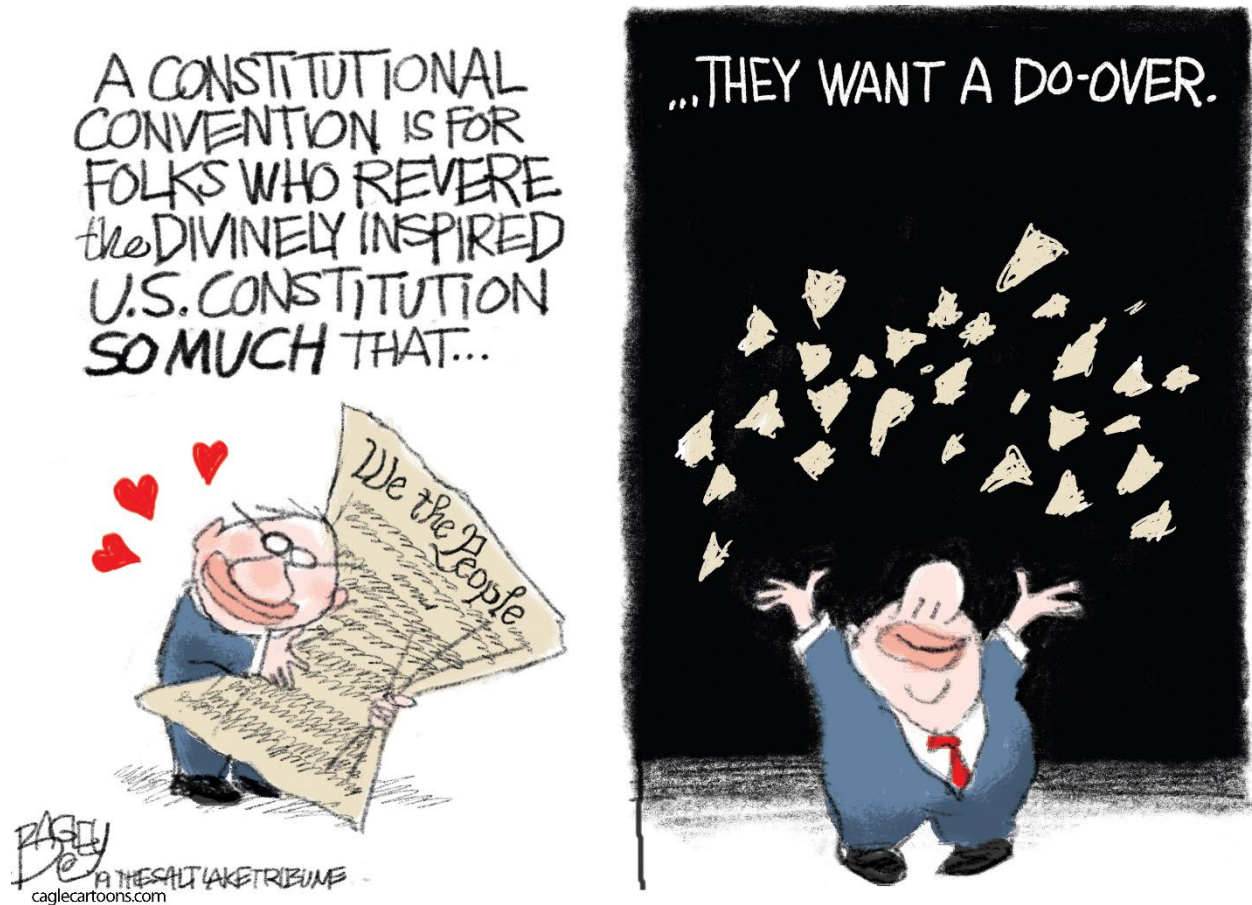
Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Period _____

Teacher _____

Directions: Use the political cartoon to answer the questions below.



What is happening in the political cartoon? _____

What do the hearts and ripped up paper represent? _____

What is the message the cartoonist is trying to get across? _____
