



AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

Learning Objectives: The students will...

1. Identify reasons for and against specific proposed amendments to the Constitution.
2. Predict likely immediate results and long-term consequences of each proposed amendment.
3. Describe the purposes of amending the Constitution.

TEKS: 8.16A

Materials Needed: Copies of the Delegate's Convention Planning sheet, copies of the Decision Tree (LRE Blueprint), copies of the Amendment Process Notes sheet, and the PowerPoint on Amending the Constitution.

Vocabulary: constitution, amendment, consequence

Teaching Strategy:

1. Give each student a copy of the note page for them to use while discussing the purposes and the process for amending the U.S. Constitution as outlined in Article V. Students should be instructed to take notes on the notes sheet during the PowerPoint. At the conclusion, discuss the possible reasons the delegates to a Constitutional Convention made it so difficult to amend the document.
2. Distribute copies of the Delegate's Convention Planning Sheet. Explain to the students they are delegates to a constitutional convention. Their role is to first read the proposed amendments and discuss how the situation described is currently being done if that is the case, or if this is something new that would be added. If time, give the students the Constitutional citation and have the students read the Constitution to be sure they understand the current practice.
3. After all 5 proposed amendments have been discussed, have the students place "+" by the ones they would support, a "-" by the ones they would not support, and a "?" by the ones they are undecided. They should write a one sentence reason for their vote.
4. Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one of the proposed amendments. Using the Decision Tree (LRE Blueprint), have the group complete the analysis on their assigned amendment. On the tree, they should write the proposed amendment on the line designated. After listing the arguments, both pros and cons, they should brainstorm possible alternatives or changes to the amendment and write them on the lines in the trunk. At the bottom, they should make their recommendation as to whether they support, reject, or want to reword this amendment with their reasoning.
5. When all the groups have completed their analysis, have each group present their findings to the class. One person can be delegated as the spokesman for the group or the entire group can present. At the end, the group should share their recommendation for or against approval of the amendment.
6. After committee reports have been heard from all groups, allow the class to vote on each proposed amendment. Remind the class, it will take a 2/3 vote of the class for the amendment to be proposed to the states for ratification. At this point, it will take 3/4 vote of the states to ratify and make this amendment part of the Constitution. Ask how many of them changed their mind from the original impression of the amendment after hearing the analysis. Discuss the reasons why certain amendments were acceptable and others were not.

Delegate's Convention Planning Sheet Teacher Key

1. Rewrite the Preamble to begin with the phrase: "We the people of the States of New Hampshire and (listing all the others) do ordain, declare, and establish this constitution of the United States for ourselves and our posterity."

Currently the **Preamble** reads: "We the People of the United States in order to form a more perfect Union..., do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America." There is no mention of the government being created by the states. The purpose of this amendment would be to change something that is currently in the Constitution.

2. The President and Vice President should serve only one term of six years.

Currently **Article II, Section 1** reads: "He shall hold his Office during the term of four Years...: and Amendment XXII reads, "No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice...". The purpose of this amendment would be to change something that is currently in the Constitution. The original Constitution did set the term at four years, but there was no limit to the number of terms a President could serve. George Washington set the precedent by only serving two. This precedent held until FDR was elected to four terms during the Great Depression and World War II. Amendment 22 was an answer to this.

3. To be eligible to be President of the United States, one must be thirty-five years old, a resident and citizen of the United States for fourteen years.

Currently **Article II, Section 1, Clause 5** reads: "No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of the President; neither shall any person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States." The purpose of this amendment would be to change something in the Constitution by dropping the requirement of being a natural born citizen.

4. The number of members each state has in the U.S. Senate is to be determined by the population of the state.

Currently **Article I, Section 3, Clause 1** reads: "The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, for six Years; and each Senator shall have one vote." The purpose of this amendment would be changing something in the Constitution by making membership of the Senate based on the population of a state. It would negate the Great Compromise at the Constitutional Convention which had been crafted by Roger Sherman to settle the dispute over representation in Congress between the small and large states.

5. Once part of the United States, a state is expressly forbidden to secede from the Union.

Currently there is **nothing** in the Constitution that expressly forbids a state from withdrawing from the Union, so the purpose of this amendment would be to add something new. The argument over the right of secession had begun in the early years of the Republic, but no state had ever formally done so until the 1860s.

Delegate's Convention Planning Sheet

You are a member of a convention called to amend the Constitution of the United States. The following proposed amendments are under consideration. Place a "+" in front of those you favor, a "-" in front of those you oppose, and a "?" if you are undecided. Under each of the amendments, write the main reason for your position at this time.

1. Rewrite the Preamble to begin with the phrase: "We the people of the States of New Hampshire and (listing all the others) do ordain, declare, and establish this constitution of the United States for ourselves and our posterity."
2. The President and Vice President should serve only one term of six years.
3. To be eligible to be President of the United States, one must be thirty-five years old, a resident and citizen of the United States for fourteen years.
4. The number of members each state has in the U.S. Senate is to be determined by the population of the state.
5. Once part of the United States, a state is expressly forbidden to secede from the Union.

DECISION TREE

Proposed Amendment

PRO	CON
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES

DECISION