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Ratification

The convention adjourned on September 17, 1787, with 39 of the 55 delegates signing the new document. The fight for ratification has begun. The Constitution would take effect once it was approved by nine of the thirteen state Legislatures.

The battle was a bitter one. The Federalists supported the Constitution. Leading Federalists Hamilton, Jay, and Madison published the *Federalist Papers*. These papers were essential in convincing people that the Constitution was of value. The *Anti-Federalists* fought against the Constitution but were not successful.

On June 21, 1788, the Constitution took effect when New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify it. The remaining four states joined by 1790. The Federalists and Anti-Federalists continued their battle over the Constitution and became two separate political forces under the new government.

On January 7, 1789, the United States, having recently adopted its Constitution, held its first presidential election. Only white men who owned property voted. They choose electors who, in turn, voted for the candidates. As it did in 1789, the United States still uses the Electoral College system established by the U.S. Constitution.

Our First President

As expected, George Washington won the election and was sworn into office on April 30, 1789, as the first president of the United States and the “Father of Our Country.” Washington was a Virginia landowner who had led the patriotic forces in the war against the British. His accomplishments matched his popularity. Washington was a delegate to both Continental Congresses. He was unanimously named both as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War and as president of the Constitutional Convention that drafted the Constitution.



George Washington

Washington finished first with 69 votes, followed by his fellow Federalist John Adams of Massachusetts, whose 34 votes propelled him into the vice presidency. (Before the ratification of the 12th Amendment in 1804, the candidate who received the most electoral votes became president while the runner-up became vice president.)

Citizenship and Becoming President







The members of the Constitutional Convention envisioned a president born in the good, old United States of America. In Article 2, Section 1, they wrote that “No person except a natural-born citizen... shall be eligible to the office of president.” The convention delegates did not want to take the chance of a foreign country sending someone to run for our highest political office. Immigrants can become citizens, thus becoming *naturalized* citizens. But naturalized citizens cannot become president; only natural-born citizens are eligible.

QUESTIONS

TRUE OR FALSE? Write a *T* or *F* in the space provided.

- ___ 1. Six states had to approve the Constitution before it was effective.
- ___ 2. The Federalists were against the Constitution.
- ___ 3. The authors of the Constitution wrote a document that was easily adapted to change.
- ___ 4. The small states wanted each state to have the same number of representatives.
- ___ 5. The Constitutional Convention adopted the Virginia Plan.
- ___ 6. Fortunately, the Constitution outlawed slavery.
- ___ 7. The Electoral College showed that the Constitutional Convention trusted the people.
- ___ 8. The New Jersey Plan suggested only one house of Congress.
- ___ 9. The New Jersey Plan favored the small states and the Virginia Plan favored the large states.
- ___ 10. Each state gets the same number of votes in the Electoral College.
- ___ 11. Article 2 of the U.S. Constitution includes a provision that only “natural-born” citizens are eligible to become president.
- ___ 12. Immigrants can become citizens.

MATCH THE PERSON TO THE STATEMENT. Write the letter of the statement that matches the person.

	Benjamin Franklin ___	Patrick Henry ___	
	James Madison ___	John Adams ___	
	Robert Morris ___	Alexander Hamilton ___	

- a. First Vice President
- b. Submitted Virginia Plan
- c. NY Delegate & Federalist
- d. Financier of the Revolution
- e. “Smelt a Rat”
- f. Oldest Delegate at Convention

SHORT ANSWER / FILL IN THE BLANKS

- 1. Write a definition of democracy. _____

- 2. Number of the amendment that changed the way we elect U.S. senators. _____
- 3. Name three of the original 13 colonies. _____

- 4. The Constitutional Convention adjourned on what date? _____
- 5. How many states had to ratify the Constitution before it went into effect? _____

Listed below is a sampling of the events that led to America's independence and the adoption of a new constitution. You will find the years and the significant events that happened during that time.

1763 - 1765
Protests Against
British Rule



England decides on a program of taxation and control of the colonies. The American colonists begin organized protests against British rule. Patriotic groups such as the *Sons of Liberty* are formed. Laws such as the *Quartering Act*, *Stamp Act*, and *Sugar Act* anger the colonists, who are forced to pay unjust taxes and provide supplies to British troops.

1770 - 1773
Uprisings in
Boston



Colonists reduce their boycott of British goods when they withdraw all of the *Townshend Act*, except the tax on tea. *Boston Massacre* (March 5, 1770) occurs when an angry crowd of citizens surrounds a group of soldiers, causing them to open fire. With the American colonists and merchants still angry over British tax policies, an uprising called the *Boston Tea Party* occurs (December 16, 1773).

1774
First Continental
Congress



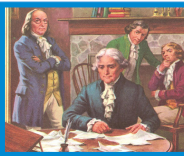
In response to the Boston Tea Party, the Parliament passes several acts to punish Massachusetts. Twelve of the 13 colonies name delegates to *The First Continental Congress*. On September 5th, they convene at *Carpenters Hall* in Philadelphia to deal with Britain's actions.

1775
The American
Revolution



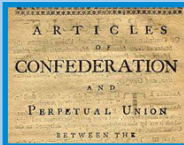
When the Americans learn the British plan to seize their guns and ammunition, *Paul Revere* is sent to alert the countryside and gather the *Minutemen*. An unidentified shot triggers the Battle at Lexington. This starts the *American Revolution* and also leads to another famous battle, *Bunker Hill*. In May, the *Second Continental Congress* meets in Philadelphia.

1776
The
Declaration of
Independence



On July 4th, The Second Continental Congress adopts the *Declaration of Independence* (written by *Thomas Jefferson* and committee). The Declaration was debated by 56 courageous men and signed at *Independence Hall*. A few days later, church bells are rung across Philadelphia to call people to the first public reading of the Declaration.

1777 - 1781
The Articles of
Confederation



After considerable debate and alteration, the *Articles of Confederation* were adopted by the Continental Congress on November 15, 1777. However, the document was not fully ratified by the states until March 1, 1781. This document served as the United States' first constitution. In October of 1781, British forces surrender at Yorktown.

1787 - 1788
The Constitution
is Ratified



On May 14th, 1787, *The Constitutional Convention* met in Philadelphia. Here the delegates reviewed and approved the *Constitution*. In 1788, nine states ratified the Constitution, and it is put into effect (the remaining four states will ratify by 1790). America prepares to operate under this new document.

1789
Our New
Government



On March 4th, the new federal government is inaugurated in New York. In April, the first House of Representatives is organized. *George Washington* is elected the first president on April 6th. He is inaugurated on April 30th. On September 25th, the first 10 amendments (*Bill of Rights*) are adopted by Congress.

QUESTIONS

PUT THE EVENTS IN ORDER. For each question group, write the numbers **1, 2, or 3**, to indicate which event happened first, second, and third.

Group 1. Boston Massacre _____, Adopted Declaration of Independence _____, Washington becomes president _____

Group 2. Articles of Confederation _____, Boston Tea Party _____, Constitution ratified by nine states _____

Group 3. England sets taxation policy for colonies _____, Constitutional Convention _____, Battle of Bunker Hill _____

Group 4. Paul Revere alerts colonists _____, Stamp Act is law _____, First House of Representatives organized _____

Group 5. Bill of Rights adopted _____, First Continental Congress _____, Declaration is read to the public _____

Group 6. Second Continental Congress meets _____, Sons of Liberty forms _____, American Revolution ends _____

THE CONSTITUTION SETS UP THREE BRANCHES

**Article One
Legislative Branch**
make the laws



**Article Two
Executive Branch**
enforce the laws



**Article Three
Judicial Branch**
interpret the laws



Senate

100 members,
2 from each state

House

435 members,
based upon state
population

Agencies that provide support services:
Government Printing Office, The Library
of Congress, The General
Accounting Office, etc.

The President

**Vice
President**

Agencies that
provide services:
Nat'l Security
Council, Executive
Office of the
President, etc.

The Supreme Court

**U.S.
Court of
Appeals**

**District
courts and
all other
courts**

The Cabinet (15 departments)

Department of Agriculture

Department of Commerce

Department of Defense

Department of Education

Department of Energy

Department of Homeland
Security

Department of Health and
Human Services

Department of Housing
and Urban Development

Department of Interior

Department of Justice

Department of Labor

Department of State

Department of
Transportation

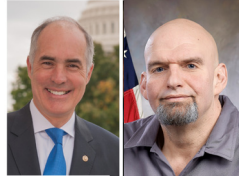
Department of Treasury

Department of Veterans
Affairs

The Senate

The Senate of the United States is discussed in Article 1, Section 3, of the Constitution.

The Senate has 100 members: two from each of the 50 states. As you recall, there was a dispute between the small and large states at the Constitutional Convention. The Senate was designed to calm that debate by making all states equal. Every state, regardless of size, has two members. Pennsylvania's two Democratic senators are Bob Casey (term expires 2025) and John Fetterman (term expires 2029), who replaced Republican Pat Toomey after retiring from the Senate. Fetterman defeated Republican Mehmet Oz in the 2022 midterm election.



Bob Casey John Fetterman

Of the 100 senators, one-third are elected every two years for six-year terms. Terms are staggered this way, so only one-third of the Senate goes out of office at any one time. This assures the Senate will have experienced members at all times. Each one-third of the Senate is called a class. All senators serve six-year terms.

U.S. Senate Chart of Election			
class	have served	years to serve	comments
1	0	6	just elected
2	2	4	elected 2 years ago
3	4	2	elected 4 years ago
	6	0	were just up for re-election and were re-elected or replaced by class 1

Senators may be re-elected for an unlimited number of terms. This is not uncommon; many have had long careers.

Senate Salary, Qualifications, & Vacancy

A senator receives a salary of \$174,000 and an expense allowance. A senator must be at least 30 years old, a United States citizen for at least nine years, and a resident of the state he/she represents in the Senate.

If a Senate vacancy occurs, the governor of the state affected makes a temporary appointment until the next election. This appointment is a very important duty for the governor.

Officers of the Senate

The Vice President of the United States is the *president of the Senate*. This is established by the Constitution. Since the vice president is the second highest official in the executive branch of government and the Senate is part of the legislative branch, this is one way in which the two branches are drawn closer.

Although the vice president is the presiding officer of the Senate, this official may not debate or vote except in the case of a tie. The Senate also elects one of its members to be *president pro tempore*. The president pro tempore serves in the absence of the vice president. There are also Senate *majority* and *minority leaders*. The Senate majority and minority leaders and the president pro tempore receive a salary of \$193,400.

Senate Duties

The Senate passes *bills* (a term for proposed laws) it hopes will become laws according to a plan you will read about shortly. According to this plan, the House of Representatives must also pass the bill before it is sent to the president for approval.

This group also has the vital role of approving treaties made by the president. It also approves the selection of certain federal officers by the president.

The Senate is the jury in cases of *impeachment*. Impeachment is the political process of leveling charges against public officials of wrongdoing from office. The impeachment process was included in Article 2, Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution: "The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors." The purpose is to protect the public from officials who are unfit to wield power. If a president is tried for impeachment, the chief justice of the Supreme Court presides over the trial.

Impeachment of U.S. Presidents

Our founding fathers wanted impeachment to be a lengthy and complicated process. So it is hard to remove any official from office, and that is by design. Impeachment has only been used five times against a sitting president. While many U.S. presidents have been threatened with impeachment, Congress has only conducted four presidential impeachment trials, *Andrew Johnson (1868)*, *Bill Clinton (1998)*, and *Donald Trump (2019 and 2021)*. They were all acquitted after trials in the Senate. *Richard Nixon (1974)* resigned before facing a House impeachment vote.

Electing Senators

The 17th Amendment changed the way we elect senators. If you look at Article 1, Section 3, of the Constitution, you will see state legislatures originally had the power to elect senators. A look at the 17th Amendment will show that the people of the states now have that power. Senators are not elected by district since they represent the entire state.

continued

U.S. Congress vs. State Legislature

It is easy for students to confuse the elected officials in the state legislature with those who work for them in the U.S. Congress (Washington, D.C.). The table below further explains the differences, many of which will be covered in the federal and state sections of this book. Both Congress and your state legislature have a two-body system referred to as a *bicameral system*. The only exception is the Nebraska Legislature, which is *unicameral* (one body).

Topic	U.S. Congress	State Legislature
Lawmaking Scope	Federal level - creating laws for all 50 states	State level - creating laws for only Pennsylvania
Lawmaking Bodies	U.S. Senate & U.S. House of Representatives	PA Senate & PA House of Representatives
Number of Members	100 U.S. Senators (2 from each state) & 435 U.S. Representatives (17 from Pennsylvania)	50 members of the state Senate and 203 members of the state House of Representatives
Meeting Place	Washington, D.C.	State Capital (Harrisburg) and in their legislative district
Examples of Scope	National defense, federal tax policies, immigration laws	Funding schools, state environmental issues, state taxing
Speed of Legislation	More formal process, taking on larger issues, longer legislative sessions	Generally quicker passage, shorter legislative sessions

The Two Chambers

The two-chamber design of the U.S. Congress is consistent with the basic principle of government used by the framers of our Constitution: that the government must be divided into units which share power. The two chambers are considered equal, although they differ from one another in many respects. The Senate has sometimes been called the *upper body* and the House the *lower body*. These are popular misnomers that started when Congress first met in New York City; the Senate chamber was on the floor above the House. As we know, both legislative bodies are equal.

QUESTIONS

TRUE OR FALSE? Write a *T* or *F* in the space provided.

- ___ 1. Coining and printing money are the responsibilities of the Treasury Department.
- ___ 2. An ex post facto law is a law that makes an act illegal after the act has been committed.
- ___ 3. Only federal officials may have titles of nobility.
- ___ 4. Congress cannot tax goods being exported from a state, even if the goods are going to a foreign country.
- ___ 5. Article 1 of the U.S. Constitution outlines the legislative branch and the powers of Congress.
- ___ 6. Any of the three branches of government may declare war.

- ___ 7. The Senate and the House are prohibited from adjourning without the consent of the other.
- ___ 8. Congress does not govern the independent region of the District of Columbia.
- ___ 9. Although the state legislature meets in the state capitol, it makes laws for all 50 states.

IMPLIED, EXPRESSED, OR DENIED? Identify each of the following as an implied (*IM*), expressed (*EX*), or denied (*DN*) power of Congress in the space provided.

- ___ 1. Collect taxes.
- ___ 2. Declare war.
- ___ 3. Regulate the Internet.
- ___ 4. Provide for punishment of counterfeiters.
- ___ 5. Grant patents and copyrights.
- ___ 6. Regulate satellite communications.
- ___ 7. Grant titles of nobility.
- ___ 8. Establish post offices.
- ___ 9. Pass ex post facto laws.

DEFINE

- 1. expressed powers _____
- 2. implied powers _____
- 3. prohibits _____
- 4. bill of attainder _____
- 5. export _____
- 6. bicameral _____

FILL IN THE BLANKS

- 1. The Senate is referred to as the _____ body, and the House is called the _____ body.
- 2. Revenue bills must begin in the _____.
- 3. The _____ has been used by Congress in writing laws about things not directly mentioned in the Constitution.
- 4. Congress' power can be roughly divided into three groups: _____

SEQUENCE OF A BILL - Put the lawmaking events in sequence from first to last as they relate to a proposed bill.



- a. president acts on the bill and approves
- b. bill is a law and is communicated to the public
- c. bill is submitted to first house for review
- d. sponsor introduces bill
- e. bill passes both houses of Congress
- f. referred to and discussed in committee

Perhaps the most prolonged debate at the Constitutional Convention concerned the method of selecting the president. An early suggestion was to give this power to Congress. But that would have destroyed the idea of the separation of powers. How could we have three branches of government, each checking the other if the legislative branch (the Congress) picked the head of the executive branch (the president)?

The writers of the Constitution also weren't ready to give the selection of the president to the people or the "common man." So they wrote a compromise into Article 2, Section 1 of the Constitution. The compromise set up a system of electors to select the president. These electors came to be known as the *Electoral College*, but the Constitution itself does not mention the term "Electoral College."

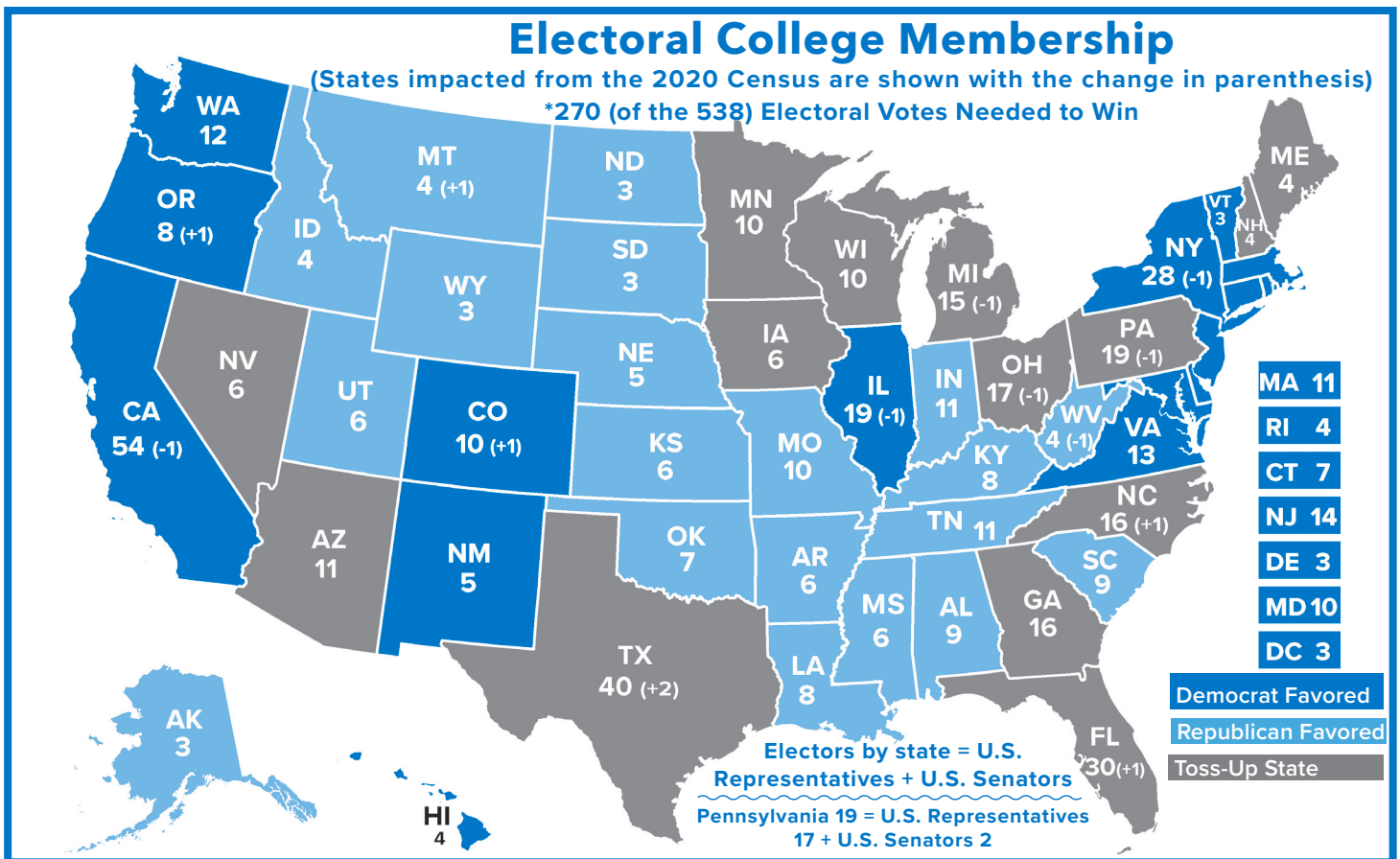
This unique election method was modified by the 12th and 23rd Amendments. Before 1961, the voters in Washington, D.C., didn't get to vote for the president at all. This was not considered fair in the capital of our country. The 23rd Amendment was added in 1961, giving three electoral votes for Washington, D.C. That made a total of 538 electors (electoral votes for each state equals the number of representatives plus two for the senators). A majority of 270 or more would be necessary to select the president. The map below shows the distribution of the electoral votes based on the 2010 reapportionment and will reflect additional changes from the 2020 census.

To summarize, if a candidate gets the most popular (people) votes in the state, the "electors" will then cast their votes the same way. All the electoral votes for the state (except for Maine and Nebraska) will go to the winner of the state. The writers of the Constitution also thought that the Electoral College gave states with a small population more equal weight in the presidential election.

One of the problems political scientists see in the Electoral College is that it allows a person to be elected president who has not won the popular vote in the country. In our growing beliefs in the power and rights of democracy in our nation, that could be a problem. Because all the electoral votes of a state go to the candidate who wins the election in that state, whether the candidate wins by a single vote or a million votes, it is possible to be elected president without having the most votes.

That has not happened very often, but it did occur in 2000 when George W. Bush became president and again recently in the 2016 election. Donald Trump became president even though Hillary Clinton won a majority of the popular votes. And, because this has happened so recently, Americans are debating the Electoral College's pros and cons. Since a change in the electoral vote would require a constitutional amendment, the change will not come quickly. Supporters of the current system say that it has served the nation well and forces candidates to gain broad geographic support rather than concentrating only on large metropolitan areas.

continued



The following test will help you prepare for your final Constitution test. It has questions similar to ones you will find on your final. It is suggested you write your answers on a piece of paper so you can take the test multiple times. You will find the correct answers at the bottom of Page 54.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Write the letter of the correct answer in the space provided.

1. _____ The president may serve how many terms? a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4
2. _____ What is NOT a rule of the flag code?
 - a. worn flags should be thrown in trash
 - b. should be in the front of a parade
 - c. should be displayed on national holidays
 - d. exact likeness should not be used in ads
3. _____ How many amendments have been added to the Constitution? a. 10 b. 21 c. 27 d. 41
4. _____ How many years is the president's term of office? a. 2 b. 4 c. 6 d. 9
5. _____ What is the age requirement to become president? a. 18 b. 21 c. 35 d. 45
6. _____ After a bill has gone through both houses of Congress successfully, it is sent to:
 - a. the President
 - b. the States
 - c. the Speaker of the House
 - d. the Supreme Court
7. _____ Which amendment gave women who are citizens the right to vote in all elections?
 - a. 17th
 - b. 19th
 - c. 22nd
 - d. 27th
8. _____ How many U.S. senators come from each state? a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4
9. _____ Each state receives at least _____ representative(s) in the U.S. House of Representatives.
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
10. _____ Who may veto a bill proposed by Congress?
 - a. the President of the United States
 - b. the Secretary of State
 - c. the Vice President
 - d. all Cabinet members
11. _____ The president of the Senate is:
 - a. the President of the United States
 - b. the Speaker of the House
 - c. the Secretary of State
 - d. the Vice President
12. _____ Which of these rights is NOT an unalienable right from the Declaration of Independence?
 - a. liberty
 - b. education
 - c. pursuit of happiness
 - d. life
13. _____ The Declaration of Independence was written largely by:
 - a. Hamilton
 - b. Washington
 - c. Jefferson
 - d. Adams
14. _____ The national budget is presented annually to Congress by the:
 - a. the Vice President
 - b. the Governors
 - c. the Secretary of State
 - d. the President
15. _____ There are how many branches of government? a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4
16. _____ The president takes the oath of office on:
 - a. January 4th
 - b. January 20th
 - c. November 7th
 - d. September 5th
17. _____ In our First Amendment, which is NOT a "freedom"?
 - a. freedom of the press
 - b. freedom of employment
 - c. freedom of speech
 - d. freedom of religion
18. _____ The vote of what group really decides who will be president?
 - a. Electoral College
 - b. popular vote by the people
 - c. United Nations
 - d. House of Representatives
19. _____ What is described in Article 1, Section 8, of the Constitution giving Congress broad powers to write laws about new situations?
 - a. war power
 - b. insight clause
 - c. elastic clause
 - d. inventional clause
20. _____ Which body has the power to borrow money?
 - a. Congress
 - b. Supreme Court
 - c. Executive Branch
 - d. State Legislatures

continued

No state is richer in important history than the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It became America’s “melting pot” with a complex diversity of people of different ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds.

Hundreds of years ago and before European settlement, Native American tribes roamed what is now Pennsylvania. The native tribes included the *Lenape* (or Delaware) and *Susquehannock* tribes, along with the *Nanticoke* and the *Shawnee*, who migrated to Pennsylvania after the Europeans arrived.

English explorer *Henry Hudson* was the first European to discover the Delaware Bay and River. He came here to what he called the South River on a 1609 voyage undertaken for the Dutch East India Company, during which he also discovered another river farther north, which now bears his name. A year later, an English expedition carrying *Lord Thomas de la Warr* to Virginia made a side trip into the South River, named Delaware, in his honor. The English claimed this river and its bay as their own. The conflicting English and Dutch land claims played out over the next seventy years, with the English finally gaining control of the Hudson and Delaware Rivers by the 1670s.

While the Dutch and English were the dominant forces in the area, Swedish settlers also claimed land along the river in the 1630s. They became the area’s first permanent settlers, clearing land for agriculture, building several forts, and a church (now called *Gloria Dei/Old Swede’s Church*) in Wicaco, now part of South Philadelphia.

The English Duke of York controlled the Pennsylvania region until 1681. That year, *King Charles II* of England granted the region to *William Penn* in payment for a debt to Penn’s father. Penn, a member of a Christian group called the *Quakers*, wanted his fellow Quakers to have freedom of worship in Pennsylvania. He also desired religious freedom for persons of other faiths. Penn wanted Pennsylvanians



William Penn

to enjoy personal and property rights and to have self-government. Some of these settlers eventually developed their own dialect; their descendants are now called the *Pennsylvania Dutch*.

As proprietor of this land, Penn seized the opportunity to create a government that would embody his Quaker-Whig ideas. In 1682 Penn drafted his “Frame of Government of Pennsylvania” with the philosophy of “Any government is free to the people under it where the laws rule, and the people are a party to those laws, and more than this is tyranny, oligarchy, or confusion.” He crafted a government that he felt would strive for those ideals.

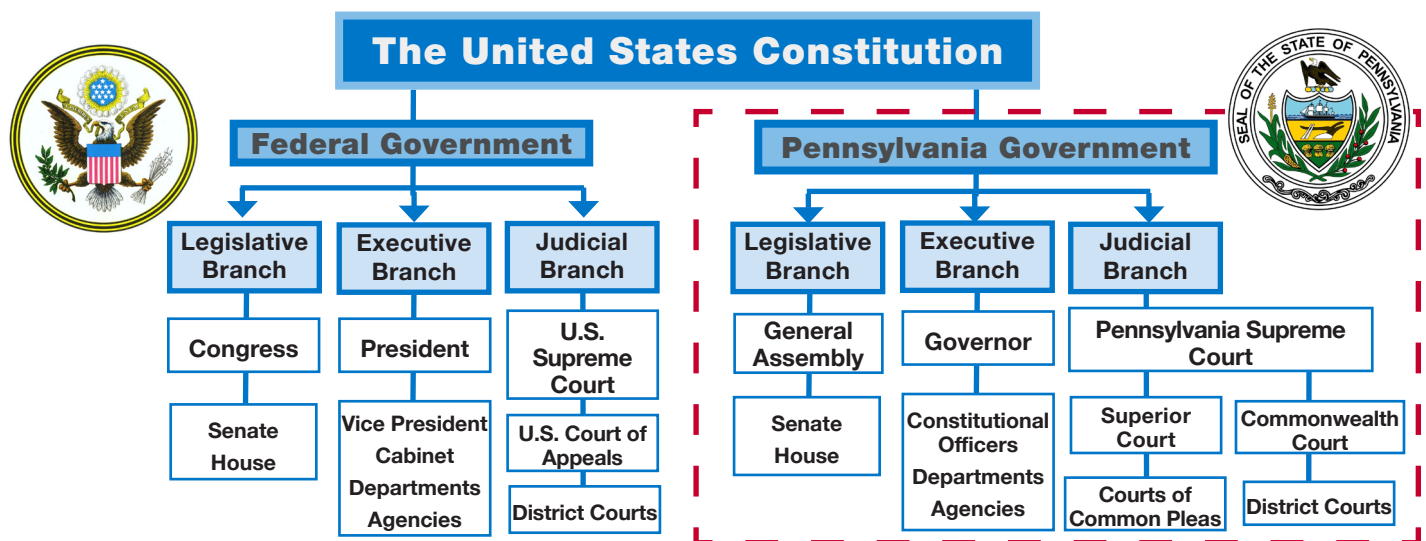
In a series of treaties based on mutual trust, he established good relations with the Delaware Indians, paying for most of the land. According to Legend, Penn and *Tamendend*, the Chief of Delaware, exchanged wampum belts under the famous *Shackamaxon* elm near Philadelphia. This peaceful truce becomes known as the *Great Treaty*.

From the late 1600s to the middle of the 1700s, the English colonists fought several wars against the French colonists and France’s Indian allies. The *French and Indian War* began in western Pennsylvania in 1754. The English won but ended up in debt from fighting. They taxed the colonists to make back the money—something many people did not think was fair. Anger over this action helped lead to the *Revolutionary War*, which started in 1775.

The entire planning and much of the fighting of the Revolutionary War took place in Pennsylvania. The *First Continental Congress* met in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774, and the Revolutionary War began in April 1775. In May 1775, the *Second Continental Congress* met in Philadelphia, and in July 1776, it adopted the *Declaration of Independence* in Philadelphia.

On May 15, 1776, the Continental Congress issued a call for the colonies to overthrow England’s rule and establish constitutions of their own that would ensure

continued



The U.S. Constitution splits governing powers between the federal government and the states. This unit will cover the state government portion of the chart above. It will also include the study of local government bodies.

“The judicial power of the Commonwealth shall be vested in a unified judicial system consisting of the Supreme Court, the Superior Court, the Commonwealth Court...” — Pennsylvania Constitution, Article 5

The judicial branch of government in Pennsylvania administers justice and interprets the laws. The state constitution provides that the judicial power of the state is vested in a supreme court, superior courts, commonwealth courts, courts of common pleas and any other courts that the General Assembly chooses to establish. The judicial system is composed of a system of courts, each designed to fill a specific need.

Criminal and Civil Cases

All courts handle both *criminal* and *civil* cases. A criminal case involves a violation of a law for which there is a fine or other penalty like a prison sentence or probation. Criminal cases range from relatively minor offenses, such as traffic infractions, to serious ones, such as robbery or murder. These typical crimes are classified as *felonies*, *misdemeanors*, or *infractions*.

Felonies – Serious crimes that often are punishable by a state prison sentence or even death in the most extreme cases.

Misdemeanors – A lesser offense than a felony. It is punishable by fine or incarceration for less than a year in a city or county jail rather than in a state penitentiary.

Infractions – These are not punishable by jail or prison time but rather by a fine. The most common infractions are traffic violations.

Civil cases are brought against individuals or organizations by other individuals or organizations. In some civil cases, the plaintiff seeks money damages to be paid by

the defendant. In other kinds of civil cases, the parties ask the court to take a certain action, such as to dissolve a marriage, decide the custody of minor children, review property rights, or stop someone from doing something.

Now that you are familiar with the type of court cases, it is time to learn more about the courts themselves.

Pennsylvania Supreme Court

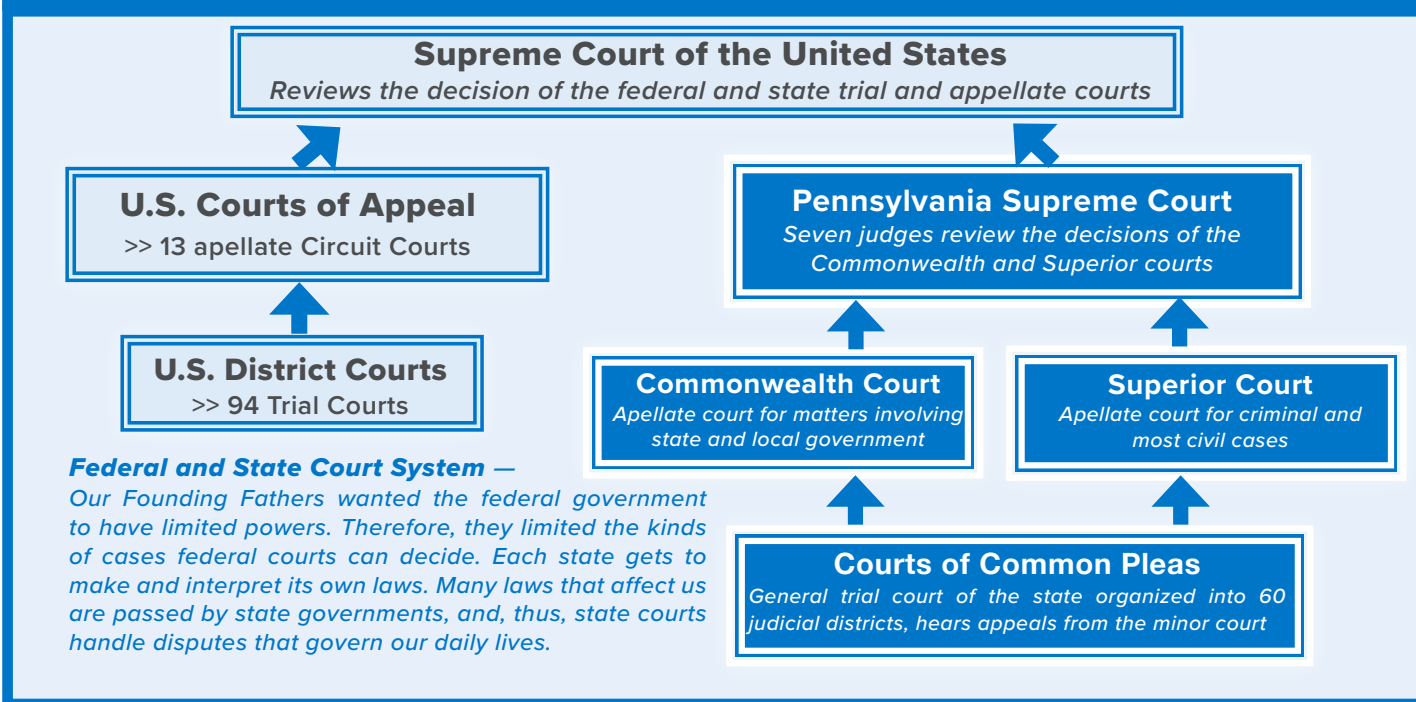
The final authority on the state constitution and the highest tribunal for any action started in the state courts, except when a federal question is raised, is the *Pennsylvania Supreme Court*. Dating to 1684, the Supreme Court is the highest court in the Commonwealth and the oldest appellate court in the nation.

The Supreme Court’s administrative powers and jurisdictional responsibilities are vested with the seven-member court by the Pennsylvania State Constitution and a collection of statutes known as the Judicial Code. The route to the Supreme Court usually begins in the lower courts, which have *original jurisdiction*. It will interpret disputed cases from the Commonwealth and Superior Courts. The court reviews cases according to a calendar set by the chief justice. Other responsibilities include:

- hearing appeals from defendants sentenced to death
- ensuring lower courts are hearing appropriate cases
- supervising the entire Pennsylvania judicial system
- hearing cases involving substantial questions of law, great public importance, or emergencies
- admitting qualified persons to practice law in the state

continued

FEDERAL AND STATE JUDICIAL SYSTEM STRUCTURE



This glossary contains constitution-related terms to aid in the study of the federal and state Constitutions. Many, but not all, of these terms are used in the worktext. These terms can be used to expand your knowledge of the Constitution, government, and our democracy.

act – a bill, or proposal for a law, passed by a majority of lawmakers.

adjourn – to terminate a session (of Congress, or of a court) or suspend until a later time.

ambassador – an official who represents his or her government in dealings with another nation.

amendments – changes in a bill, a law, or a constitution.

appeal – to request another trial before a higher court.

appeals court – a federal court that reviews the decision a lower (trial) court.

appoint – to name someone to fill an office.

appropriation – money set aside for a specific use by an act of the legislature.

article – a segment of a written document. The Constitution is divided into articles dealing with different areas of government.

assembly – a public meeting or gathering; also the name commonly given to the larger house in the state legislature.

attorney general – the head of the executive department who is chiefly responsible for enforcing U.S. laws or state laws.

bail – the sum of money that an accused person may deposit with a court as a security to get out of jail while awaiting trial.

bicameral legislature – a lawmaking body with two houses.

bill – a proposal for a law to be considered by Congress or a state legislature.

bill of attainder – a law naming a person guilty of a crime without trial (such are not allowed by the U.S. Constitution).

Bill of Rights – the first ten amendments of the U.S. Constitution; their common purpose is to protect the American people from abuses of government power.

budget – a plan for spending money over a certain period of time.

cabinet – a group of department heads who meet regularly with the president or with a state's governor.

campaign – an organized effort carried out over a period of months or years; specifically, the efforts of a candidate and his or hers supports to win election.

caucus – a meeting of party members to decide policy or nominate candidates.

censorship – a government's practice of stopping certain ideas from being published or expressed.

census – an official count of the U.S. population conducted every ten years.

charter – a document granting powers of self-government to a city or municipality; also a document giving legal status to a business organization.

checks and balances – a system by which each branch of government has the power to block or overrule the decisions of the other branches.

chief executive – the elected official who is chiefly responsible for enforcing the laws of a state (the governor) or a nation (the president).

circuit court – a court in the federal system that has the power to hear appeals from trial courts.

citizen – anyone who is officially counted as a member of a nation or state.

citizenship – the status of being a citizen.

civil case – a dispute brought to court for settlement.

civil rights – rights which are considered to be unquestionable, deserved by all people under all circumstances.

cloture – a means of preventing a filibuster on a bill.

commander-in-chief – the supreme commander of a nation's armed forces; in the U.S. it is the president.

commerce – business transactions, trade, or the buying and selling of goods on a large scale.

commission form – a plan of local government in which legislative and executive powers are shared by a group of elected officials known as "commissioners."

commutations – changing a prison sentence or other penalty to another less severe.

compromise – to give up a part of one's original demands or desires in order to reach agreement on an issue.

conference committee – a group of lawmakers drawn from both houses of Congress (or a state legislature) with the purpose to resolve the differences between two versions of a bill passed by the two houses.

confirmation – the process by which the U.S. Senate approves a president's appointments to office.

Congress – chief legislative body of our nation.

conservative – someone who wants government's role in society and the economy to be strictly limited; may also refer to changes in policy to be gradual, not rapid.

consideration – A proposed bill that is read to each house of the General Assembly.

constituents – the residents of a district or state who are represented by a legislator from that same district or state.

constitution – the set of basic laws and rules defining a nation's or state's system of government.

convention – a large meeting of delegates from different states or districts.

council-manager system – a system of local government in which legislative power belongs to an elected group (the council), which hires a professional manager to conduct city business.

criminal case – a matter involving the violation of a state or federal law.

debate – a formal process for presenting arguments for and against a bill or a public issue.

defendant – the person at a trial who been accused of some offense, injury, or crime.

deficit – the amount of annual debt.

delegated powers – those rights that the federal government is free to exercise because they are specifically mentioned in the Constitution.

delegates – persons chosen to represent others at a special meeting.

democracy – a system of government in which the people (citizens and voters) have the final power.

department – a major division of the executive branch.

depression – a more serious and long slowdown in the economy.

diplomacy – the means by which nations communicate with one another and try to settle their differences peacefully.

discrimination – the practice of favoring one person or one group over another.

district courts – federal courts that hold trials.