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Time Line of Constitutional Events

Here is a sampling of the events that led to America's independence and adoption of a new constitution. You will find the years and the significant events that happened during that time. The goal was to establish a framework for a more robust and stable federal government while preserving individual rights and freedoms.

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Protests against British rule

1763–1765

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

Uprisings in Boston

1770–1773

Colonists reduced their boycott of British goods when they withdrew all of the *Townshend Acts*, except the tax on tea. The *Boston Massacre* occurs when an angry crowd of citizens surrounds a group of soldiers, causing them to open fire. With the American colonists still angry over British tax policies, the *Boston Tea Party* uprising occurred.

The Declaration of Independence

1776

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, the *Liberty Bell* is rung in Philadelphia to call the people to the first public reading of the Declaration.

Beginning of the American Revolution

1775

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 of Lexington. This starts the American Revolution and leads to another famous battle, *Bunker Hill*. In May, the *Second Continental Congress* meets in Philadelphia.

First Continental Congress

1774

In response to the Boston Tea Party, the Parliament passes several acts to punish Massachusetts. Twelve of the thirteen colonies name delegates to the *First Continental Congress*. On September 5th, they meet mainly to deal with Britain's actions.

The Articles of Confederation

1777–1781

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 first constitution of the United States. In October of 1781, British forces surrendered at *Yorktown*.

Ratification of the Constitution

1787–1788

On May 14, 1787, the *Constitutional Convention* met in Philadelphia. Here the delegates reviewed and approved the Constitution. In 1788, nine states ratified the Constitution, which was enacted (the remaining four states will ratify by 1790). America is preparing to operate under this new document.

Our New Government

1789

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 ten 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 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 states and the large states at the Constitutional Convention. The Senate was designed to calm that debate by making all states equal.

The Senate has 100 members: two from each of the 50 states. As you recall, there was a dispute between the small states and the 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. Arizona's two senators are Democrat Mark Kelly (term expires 2029) and Independent Krysten Sinema (term expires 2025).

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. The Constitution established this duty. 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.



Mark
Kelly

Krysten
Sinema

Although the vice president is the Senate's presiding officer, 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 Supreme Court chief justice presides over the trial.

Impeachment of U.S. Presidents

Our Founding Fathers wanted impeachment to be a lengthy and complicated process. Removing any official from office is hard, 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

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. However, 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 were not ready to give the president's selection 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 became known as the Electoral College, but the Constitution does not mention the term "Electoral College."

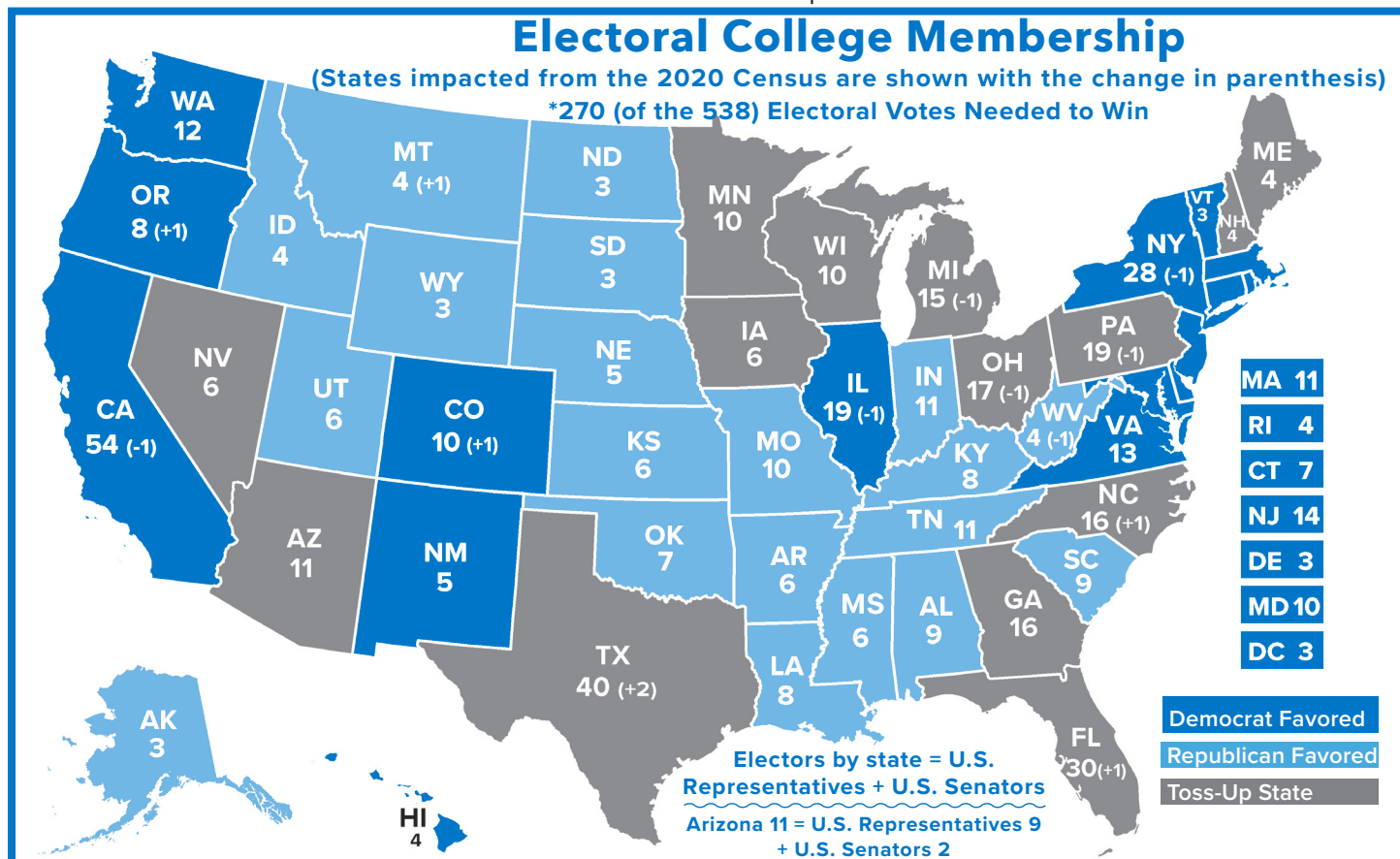
The 12th and 23rd Amendments modified this unique election method. Before 1961, the voters in Washington, D.C., did not get to vote for the president. This restriction was not considered fair in the capital of our country. The 23rd Amendment was added in 1961, giving three electoral votes for Washington, D.C. That made 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 reapportionment 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 state's winner. 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 yet to win 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. A state's electoral votes go to the candidate who wins the election in that state, whether by a single vote or a million votes. A candidate could be elected president without having the most popular 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 most of the popular votes. Furthermore, because this has happened 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 take time. 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 current court has a 6-3 advantage for conservatives based on presidential nominations. Six justices, including the chief justice, were nominated by Republican presidents, including three by President Donald Trump. Democratic presidents appointed three justices (including the newest, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson).

These nine Justices have views and beliefs that may align with the Democratic (liberal) or Republican (conservative) parties. As we have studied, federal courts are often called the “guardians of the Constitution” because their rulings protect the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution. The Supreme Court Justices interpret and apply the law through fair and impartial judgments to resolve disputes.

The Constitution dictates that all federal judges, including justices appointed to the Supreme Court, serve for life, but they can retire. Thomas, appointed in 1991, is the longest-serving justice on the court.

Court of Appeals

The United States has 13 *courts of appeal*, one court in each of the 12 federal circuits that divide the country and one *Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit* which has nationwide jurisdiction to hear appeals in specialized cases.

Their primary job is to hear cases of appeal from lower courts and determine whether the law was applied correctly. The appellate courts do not retry cases or hear new evidence. They do not hear witnesses testify.

Appeals courts consist of three or more judges and do not use a jury. These judges are appointed for life by the president and confirmed by the Senate.

These courts were created in 1891 to relieve the Supreme Court of the significant burden of cases appealed from the district courts. As we previously learned, the Supreme Court hears only a small number of cases. That means the decisions made by the 12 Circuit Courts of Appeals across the country and the Federal Circuit Court are the last word in thousands of cases.

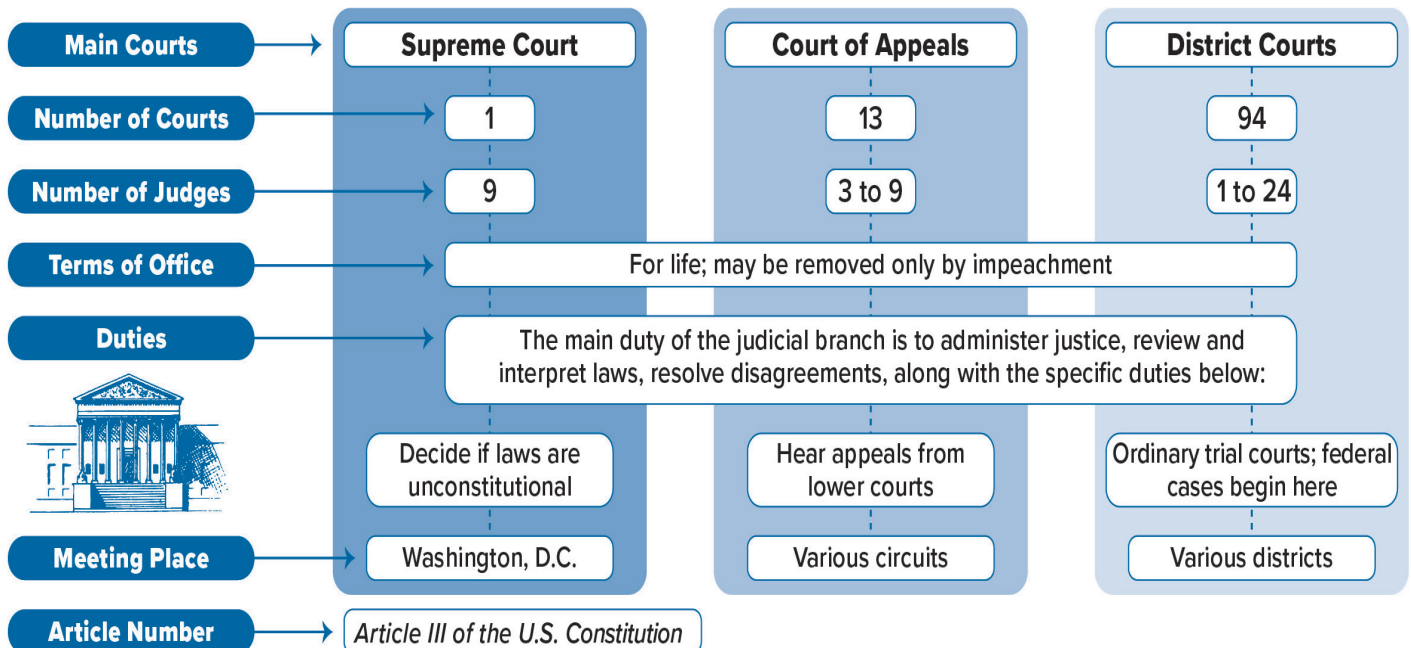
District Courts

Ninety-four *district courts* in the United States resolve disputes by determining the facts and applying legal principles. Most people would contact a U.S. District Court if involved in a federal legal issue. The district courts are the ordinary trial courts in the federal system. Almost all cases heard in the federal system begin here.

Each court has one to 24 judges. Trial courts include the district judge who tries the case and a jury that decides the case. Each district court judge is appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate for a life term.

There is at least one district court in each state and the District of Columbia. Each district includes a U.S. bankruptcy court as a unit of the district court. Four territories of the United States have U.S. district courts that hear federal cases, including bankruptcy cases: Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Judicial Branch Fact Sheet



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 55.

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 c. should be displayed on national holidays
b. should be in the front of a parade 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 c. the Speaker of the House
b. the States 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 c. the Vice President
b. the Secretary of State d. all Cabinet members
11. _____ The president of the Senate is:
a. the President of the United States c. the Secretary of State
b. the Speaker of the House 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 c. the Secretary of State
b. the Governors 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 c. freedom of speech
b. freedom of employment d. freedom of religion
18. _____ The vote of what group really decides who will be president?
a. Electoral College c. United Nations
b. popular vote by the people 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 c. Executive Branch
b. Supreme Court d. State Legislatures

continued

The history of the State of Arizona is rich and distinguished. The state has played a vital role in developing the United States. We need to know the path to statehood to understand Arizona's government and constitution.

Long before this area was known as *Arizona*, it was inhabited by ancestors of present-day Indians. The earliest of these principal Native American tribes were the Anasazi, Mogollon, and Hohokam. The Anasazi were located in the north and are the ancestors of the present-day Pueblo Indians. The Mogollon lived in what is now eastern Arizona and part of New Mexico, building their villages on ridges and using the valley for agriculture. The Hohokam had communities in the Gila and Salt River valleys and constructed the largest irrigation systems in North America before the Europeans arrived. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Apache and Navajo Indians moved into eastern Arizona. For reasons not entirely known, the Hohokam population eventually disappeared.

In the 1530s, with visions of wealth, Spaniards headed from Mexico (which was ruled by Spain) to the region. One of the first Spanish visitors was Franciscan priest Marcos de Niza. Niza is believed to be the first European to visit the region. He encouraged more exploration, and other Spanish missionaries followed, bringing Christianity to the Indians. It would not be long before a conflict between the Indians and Spanish explorers.

Spanish exploration and settlements continued through the 1600s. More miners and farmers inhabited the area, some of which displeased the original residents of the state. There were deadly skirmishes with the Hopi and Apache Indians against the visitors, raiding livestock that supported these settlements.

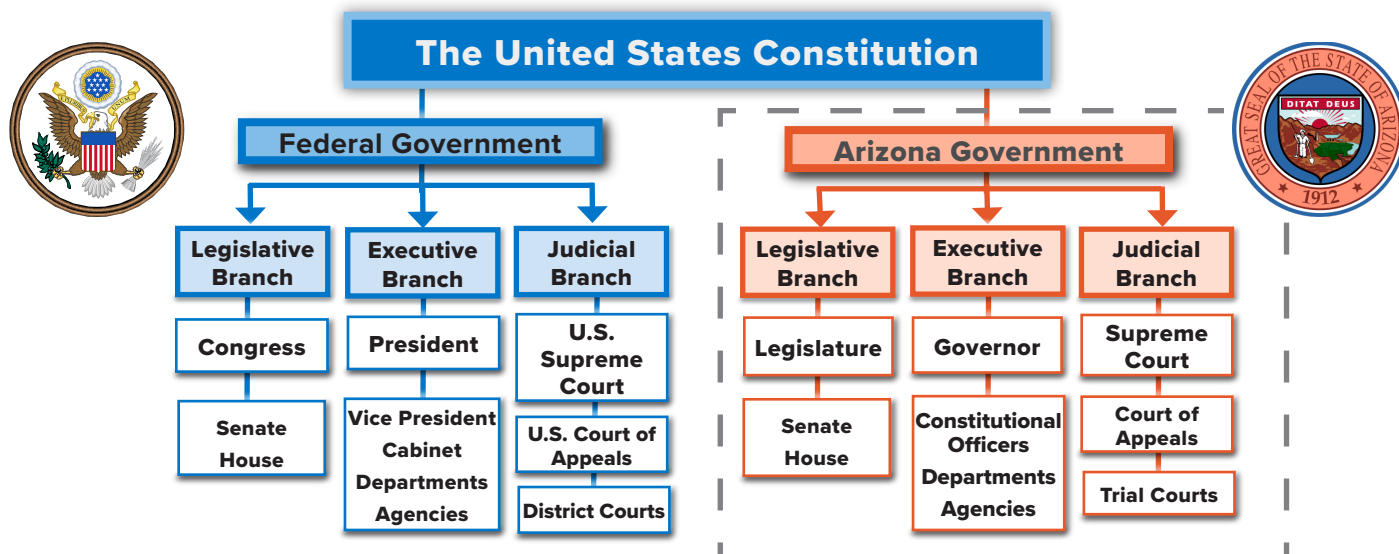
The state's first white settlement came when Spanish troops established a military post at Tubac. Other forts were established to help protect the settlers from hostile native Indians. For many more decades, these skirmishes continued. Then, in 1821, the Spaniards fought a different enemy, Mexico. Mexico was seeking its independence from Spain. After a successful revolt lasting a decade, the Arizona region was now under Mexico's control.

As America expanded westward, there was more interest in this region. In 1836, the Mexican power began weakening as Texas declared independence and claimed parts of northern Mexico. Then, in 1846, the United States went to war with Mexico (called the *Mexican-American War*) and eventually took possession of lands, including present-day New Mexico and Arizona. After the war, some 50,000 miners from the California gold rush came to the state seeking additional wealth.

In 1853, President Franklin Pierce sent James Gadsden to Mexico to negotiate the purchase of the remaining area of Arizona and New Mexico (later known as the *Gadsden Purchase*). This transaction would make present-day Arizona part of the New Mexico Territory. A few years later, there were discussions about Arizona becoming a separate territory.

Before becoming a new territory, the United States was dealing with the *Civil War*. In 1862, the westernmost battle was fought at Picacho Pass, northwest of Tucson. Finally, in 1863, after several bills had been introduced and failed, President Abraham Lincoln signed the bill for the *Territory of Arizona* into law. This would follow the legal structure set up by the *Northwest Ordinance* (1787), outlining the steps to form territorial governments and how new states

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.

“A majority of all members elected to each house shall be necessary to pass any bill, and all bills so passed shall be signed by the presiding officer of each house in open session.” — Arizona Constitution Article 4, Section 15

Each session, state legislators introduce over 1,000 bills. Bills start in the House or the Senate, depending on who sponsors the bill. Senate bills begin with “1001,” House bills begin with “2001” and are numbered sequentially. Although there are some differences in how each chamber operates, the basic process is the same.

Bills that move through the Legislature need a *simple majority* vote for passage. Exceptions include bills with emergency clauses or new tax bills, as these require *supermajorities* or two-thirds vote to pass.

Bill Passage, Votes, and Effectivity

| Type of Bill | Votes Needed | Veto Override | Law Takes Effect |
|------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|
| Normal Bill | <u>Simple Majority</u> Senate - 16 House - 31 | <u>Two-Thirds</u> Senate - 20 House - 40 | 90 days after Legislature adjourns |
| Emergency Clause | <u>Two-Thirds</u> Senate - 20 House - 40 | <u>Three-Fourths</u> Senate - 23 House - 45 | immediately after passage |
| New Tax Bill | <u>Two-Thirds</u> Senate - 20 House - 40 | <u>Three-Fourths</u> Senate - 23 House - 45 | immediately after passage |

Hundreds of bills that pass the Legislature are sent to the governor. If the governor does not veto a bill, the bill is enacted into law. The governor has five days to act on a bill if the legislature is in session or ten days to act if the legislature has adjourned. If the governor vetoes the bill, the Legislature can override the governor’s veto with a two-thirds vote (or three-fourths vote for emergency clauses or new tax bills). If this is done, it will be a law without the governor’s approval.

Upon receiving the governor’s signature, a bill is sent to the secretary of state, where it becomes an act, gets a chapter number for publication in the Arizona session laws, and is codified into the *Arizona Revised Statutes*. The new law takes effect 90 days after the legislature adjourns or immediately if it is an emergency bill.

The lawmaking process is discussed in Article 4 of the Arizona Constitution, and more details are included on the following pages. Some of the special rules about passing bills include:

1. The *Arizona Legislative Council* is responsible for ensuring each bill is in proper form, how each bill will affect other statutes, and determining whether each bill is constitutional.

2. Bills are to be read on three different days (by title) before a final vote on passage.
3. Most bills are confined to one subject.
4. In *special sessions* called by the governor, the legislature may only consider matters specified by the governor.

Lawmaking Terminology

Each state has unique processes and associated terminology. Below are some of the words and definitions common with Arizona lawmaking.

- **A.R.S.** - *Arizona Revised Statutes*, the laws of Arizona
- **C.O.W.** - *Committee of the Whole*, with the entire House or Senate debating and adopting legislation
- **died in conference** - when a committee cannot agree on language or details of a bill
- **emergency clause** - an urgent bill dealing with public health or safety
- **engrossed bill** - version of bill which includes all amendments, an “engrossed” bill may no longer be amended or debated in that chamber.
- **hopper** - a box where a legislator submits legislation
- **sine die** - Latin for “without a day,” marks the end of a legislative session, terminating all unfinished business
- **striker** - An amendment to a bill that replaces the contents of previously introduced or adopted bill

Direct Democracy

Up to this point, our discussion has involved law-making from our representatives through *indirect democracy*. In Arizona, the process of initiative and referendums are considered *direct democracy*. Arizona’s initiative and referendum process are as old as the Arizona Constitution, lasting more than 100 years, where citizens could propose statutes, amendments, and veto referendums.

An *initiative* is a law or constitutional amendment introduced by citizens through a petition process with proposals that qualify to go directly on the ballot. A proposition is placed on the ballot if the necessary signatures are met. This allows registered voters to make laws directly, without the Legislature or governor. The first initiative voted upon was a 1912-initiated constitutional amendment, which gave suffrage to women. The measure was approved, accomplishing a milestone in statewide politics.

With a *referendum*, citizens review (vote on) a new law or constitutional amendment after the state Legislature

continued

Appeals from decisions in the superior court are typically directed to the Arizona Court of Appeals, except for death penalty appeals and special cases involving elected officials and disputes between counties. The Court of appeals consists of two divisions. "Division One" is located in Phoenix. "Division Two" is located in Tucson. There are 16 appellate judges in Division One. Division Two has six appellate judges. Each division randomly assigns a panel of three judges to decide each appeal in that division.

The highest court in the state is the Arizona Supreme Court. The court hears appeals from both divisions of the court of appeals. It has the highest authority on the interpretation of state and local laws. Also, it can declare laws from the Arizona Legislature unconstitutional.

The Arizona Supreme Court oversees the entire state court system, monitors court workload, seeks improvements to the court system, and establishes an administrative office to watch over the lower courts. The governor appoints seven judges for a regular term of six years. One justice is selected by fellow Justices to serve as chief justice for a five-year term. To be eligible, a candidate must be under 70 years of age, a resident of Arizona for at least ten years, and licensed to practice in Arizona for at least ten years. The governor appoints each new justice with the assistance of a nominating commission. Once a new justice has been appointed, they will serve for at least two years before going through a retention election. Afterward, they will serve for six-year renewable terms. A justice cannot hold another public office or participate in any campaigns other than their own.

The justices usually sit *en banc* (all seven judges), but they also may sit in *division* (a panel of four judges). Before a case is argued to the court, the justices review any briefs filed in previous proceedings. A majority vote decides the case. Once a decision is made and signed by all justices, it is filed with the Supreme Court's Clerk and released to the public.

Arizona Supreme Court

One Court - 7 justices - 6 year terms

- Reviews the decisions of the state trial and appellate courts



appeals

Arizona Court of Appeals

Two 2 Divisions - 22 judges - 6 year terms

- Review the decisions of the state lower courts including the superior court, tax court, and the industrial commission.



appeals

Arizona Trial Courts

- Superior Court - county divisions - 174 judges
- Justice of the Peace Court - county precincts - 87 judges
- Municipal Court - city courts - 154 full/part-time judges

Jury Duty

In all severe criminal cases and many civil cases, defendants are entitled to a trial by a jury. All U.S. citizens are qualified for jury service if they are at least 18 years old and residents of the jurisdiction they have been summoned to serve. Jury service is a civic responsibility vital in the legal system, ensuring a fair and impartial trial process.

QUESTIONS

MULTIPLE CHOICE- Circle the letter of the correct answer.

- Which of the following is not a state court?
 - U.S. District Court
 - Court of Appeals
 - Superior Courts
 - Municipal Courts
- The main purpose of the state judicial branch is to:
 - administer justice
 - make the laws
 - interpret the laws
 - both a and c
- Justice of the peace judges must:
 - have a law degree
 - be appointed by the governor
 - be 35 years old
 - neither a, b, or c
- The entire Arizona court system is supervised by the:
 - by the governor
 - by the people
 - by the AZ Supreme Court
 - by the state Legislature
- Most of the state's court cases would take place in the following court:
 - Supreme Court
 - Municipal Court
 - Court of Appeals
 - Superior Court
- This court would hear cases involving the death penalty:
 - Supreme Court
 - Municipal Court
 - Court of Appeals
 - Superior Court
- Divorce cases would have jurisdiction in this court:
 - Supreme Court
 - Municipal Court
 - Court of Appeals
 - Superior Court

ARIZONA JUDICIAL BRANCH BY THE NUMBERS.

Choose the correct number from the bank that matches the statement.

Number Bank: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 18, 30

- _____ Number of appellate divisions
- _____ Number of Supreme Court justices
- _____ Number of levels in Arizona court system
- _____ Term (in years) of a Supreme Court justice
- _____ Term (in years) of a Superior Court justice
- _____ Judicial details in this Article of Constitution
- _____ Minimum age of a Superior Court justice
- _____ Minimum age to serve as a juror

SHORT ANSWER

The average citizen is likely to come in contact with this branch of government. Name and explain one reason why you would be required to go to court.

This glossary contains constitution-related terms to aid in the study of the your 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 Legislature, 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.

apportionment – dividing the state into 30 legislative and eight congressional districts with distinct geographic boundaries.

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.

biennial – occurring every two years.

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 be 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."

committee of the whole (COW) – full membership of the Senate or the House sitting as committee debating and adopting legislation.

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

concurrence – action by which one house accepts the amendments made to a measure by the other house.

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.

conflict of interest – when a public official may receive personal benefit or harm from taking or withholding public action.

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 to 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.