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NOTE TO THE TEACHER

Congratulations on your selection of *Our Federal and State Constitutions* as a teaching tool. Our materials are used in schools across the country, making it one of the most popular worktexts on federal and state constitutions on the market. As with any educational materials, the key to successful use lies with the teacher. We wish you success in your important work as a social studies teacher. Our testing program inside this booklet is suitable to use for mandated testing of federal and state constitutions.

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"Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the
Declaration of Independence!"

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Our Federal and State Constitutions is an updated, streamlined worktext written for your specific state of study. This easy-to-read, concise worktext is used in schools to fulfill the required study of federal, state, and local government curriculum.

While some of the language in the United States and Illinois Constitutions may seem archaic, the documents are not hard to read. The worktext is designed to emphasize the key elements of both documents, demonstrating how they directly affect our students' lives.

Class Introduction

You may ask your students why they think the United States and Illinois Constitutions are essential. It provides fundamental rights and offers the needed services to the United States citizens and the residents of Illinois. Understanding our government structure is vital for achieving a better democracy and a better nation. A student should use their Constitutional knowledge to help shape our country and continue striving for "a more perfect union." As stated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of Democracy, therefore, is education."

Regular Class Use

This worktext is designed to be covered one unit at a time in the given sequence. If one unit were covered each day, the study would take approximately one or two months. However, each teacher has different timing requirements. This format is flexible and may be tailored to your schedule by grouping some units.

The teacher should check the student's progress after each unit to see how well the material is understood. Progress should be noted inside the front cover of the worktext. The student should always correct mistakes. The questions at the end of each unit are mainly objective and factual. Some subjective work should be incorporated into the study. This is an important aspect of the work, especially for more advanced students.

Teaching Techniques

If the worktext is being used each day as the class activity, the teaching techniques should be varied. The variation will keep your students interested and challenged. The following are some examples:

- **Read unit silently** - have your students read silently, answer the questions, and then grade by exchanging books or other creative methods.
- **Read unit orally** - students take turns reading the unit and review questions, allow a few minutes for answers, then grade. You may want to add some good-spirited competition by assigning teams by a group, row, boy-girl, or individually.
- **Student teaching** - assign units to a small group of students responsible for teaching the unit orally in class.

- **Teamwork** - assign units and allow students to work together as teams and answer questions as teams. This team building activity will generate much interest in the material.
- **Design your own** - There are many other exciting ways to teach the material. Design your own and save the ideas that work.

Homework

This worktext is also designed for homework activity. If students need to catch up or if the class falls behind, homework takes little time and can be corrected the next day quickly.

Independent Study

The worktext may easily be used for independent study. You may want to make the answer key available for self-check in this format. If only some of your students can work independently, then use small groups. With your guidance and the communication between group members, this will be an effective teaching method.

Also have your students report on topics in the news that relate to the unit that you are studying. Newspaper articles, magazine articles, or discussing the nightly news are good tools to use.

Teaching the Challenged Student

Consider using alternative teaching methods to assist needy students. Some of these variations include:

- **Special tests** - a properly completed worktext may qualify the student for a particular test: take-home, open book, independent test with the teacher, etc.
- **Test/worktext scoring** - give a regular test and give credit to the grading of the worktext. The worktext score can count for a 1/4 or 1/2 of the final unit scoring. This will provide the challenged student a chance to balance their daily work with a test that they may have a difficult time taking.
- **Oral review** - have a brief oral discussion with the student and count this along with the completed worktext as the required test.
- **Careful teaching** - take one step at a time, expand on the unit's explanations, praising students, and providing positive feedback. Assist in the reading and answering questions, be sure to build in some success, and assure the student that they will be able to handle the final test with the proper preparation.

Teaching the Advanced Student

The advice here centers around one word: *enrichment*. You can offer enrichment through lectures, outside readings in class, reports on related news items, etc. You may have your students expand their enrichment by using the library, the Internet, and community research. This will keep them challenged.

While your parents, teachers, and mentors can provide you with the knowledge and tools to become "good citizens," it is interesting to hear perspectives from others. In October 1957, a teacher at a suburban Chicago school assigned a class project. The students were to ask well-known people their views on citizenship. The question was asked, "What was most important when you were younger in helping you become a good citizen?"

The class sent over 200 letters and received more than 100 in return. The students would read, compare, and compile the thoughts of these respected citizens. Participants included government leaders, entertainers, athletes, journalists, clergy, business and labor leaders, and educators. Many letters included thoughtful ideas and suggestions for being a "good" citizen. A sampling of four letters from Henry Ford II, Eleanor Roosevelt, H.W. Hoover, Jr., and Warren Giles are included.

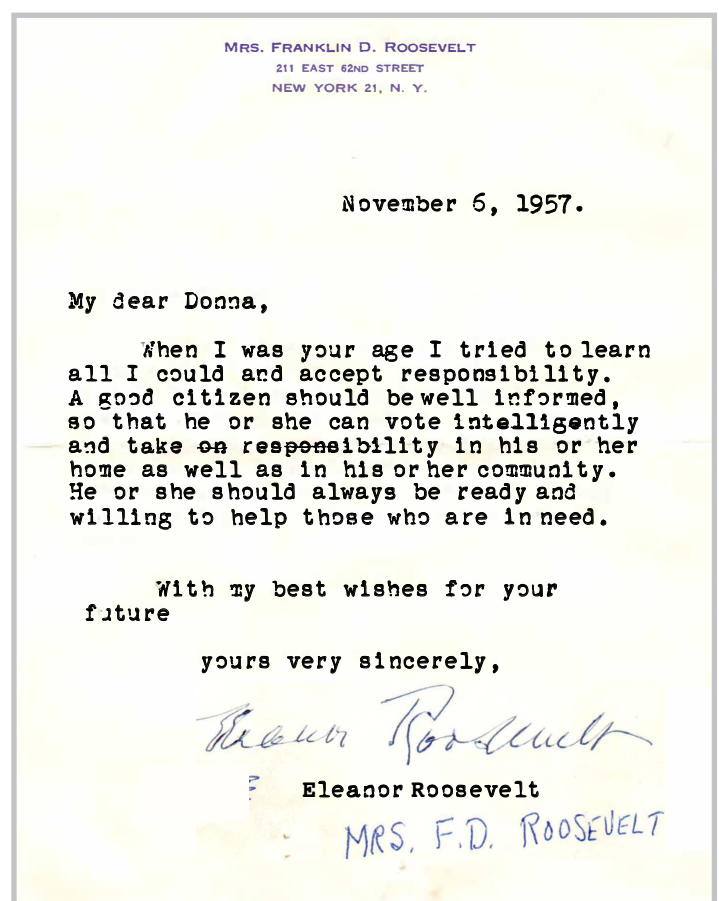
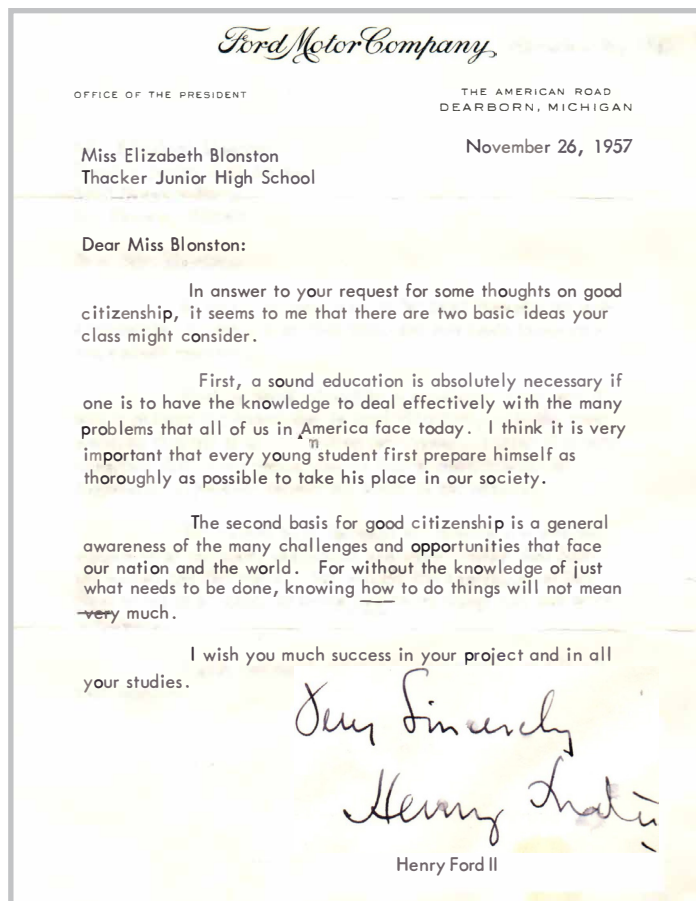
With the help of the letters received, the students created a "Code of Ethics for Young Adults." These ethics that help mold you into a good citizen include:

1. Accept advice and guidance from parents, family, and friends.
2. Get the most out of your education by respecting the teacher's relationship and meeting a student's responsibilities.

3. Evaluate your character, focusing on loyalty, honesty, truthfulness, and integrity; pick friends with these traits.
4. Know and obey all laws, having loyalty and respect towards the local, state, and federal governments.
5. Respect others and understand that everyone has their own experiences and beliefs.
6. There is no replacement for hard work, doing more than is expected, and meeting the obligations as a student, family member, or employee.
7. Become an active member of a team, organization, or school activity and give support to the best of your ability by showing allegiance and team spirit.
8. Be aware of public issues and stay informed on what is happening in the community, state, and country.

Whether it is the 1950s or the world today, the characteristics of good citizens have remained much the same. The most significant difference is social media's impact on society, affecting how people obtain information, share thoughts, and treat others. Although there is no absolute, complete definition of being a proud, respected, and active member of our society, those eight codes are an excellent place to start.

continued



The following 36 pages contain relevant, up-to-date Constitution-related exercises. We continually develop materials to accompany the study of federal and state constitutions. Some do not directly correspond with units in the worktext; others accompany select topics. Consider incorporating these as homework, extra credit, an expanded discussion of a section of the worktext, or another fun or interesting activity.

The year 2026 will start the second year of the current presidential administration, which will continue to bring change to government policies. A Republican trifecta in Congress continues to push significant legislative agendas. This year will also present an important opportunity for citizens to voice opinions in the mid-term elections. Supreme Court decisions on pivotal issues like voting rights, immigration, tariffs, climate change, and gun laws could have wide-reaching implications.



EXTRA EFFORT EXERCISES - PAGES 38-55

Extra effort is an approach to critical thinking, investigating a narrow topic, researching and studying the evidence, and communicating conclusions. These are quick exercises linked to a unit in the worktext, usually completed within one class period. There are currently 18 “Extra Effort” exercises with more to be added; check our website periodically for updates.



FEDERAL UNIT REVIEW EXERCISES - PAGES 56-64

This group of exercises accompanies the federal unit of the student worktext, offering a review of some units. These fun activities can be provided as homework, extra credit, or test preparation.



ILLINOIS UNIT EXERCISES - PAGES 65-73

This section of handouts relates to the Illinois unit of the student worktext. Various exercises include identifying state symbols, sampling new Illinois laws for 2025-2026, Chicago City Government & History, a timeline of events, naming famous people from Illinois, and puzzles.

Please periodically check our website at www.ajspublications.com and search under “Resources.” In the “Handouts & Exercises” section, additional materials will be posted before and after the election. The handouts are designed to accompany your current edition of the worktext and will

Election Day in America occurs on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November each year. This date was initially set by President John Tyler, who signed into law the establishment of this voting day so that farmers would have time to travel to their polling places without interference with their season. Since then, the demographic of voters has drastically changed, including far more Americans than just white males.

Election Day is the day legally established for the general election, sometimes referred to as a “popular election,” of federal public officials: President, Vice President, and Members of the U.S. Congress. Citizens vote for President and Vice President every four years, Representatives every two years, and Senators every six years. State and local elections are often, but not always, held on the same day as federal elections.

National vs. Public Holidays

The United States currently has 11 national holidays, with Juneteenth being the most recent addition. On these holidays, non-essential federal offices are closed and government employees receive pay while having the day off. Other establishments – including schools, businesses and banks – may also receive paid time off on some of these dates.

While Election Day is currently not a federal holiday, 14 states observe it as a public holiday. These states include Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and New York. Here, state offices will be closed, with some requiring employers to provide paid time off for voting. Many other states that do not recognize it as a holiday still require paid time off. At the same time, other states offer time off for voting but with no pay. With all these variations and inconsistencies, these are discussions on how to support the civic duty of voting in upcoming elections.

Election Day could be a holiday if a bill were passed by Congress and then signed into law by the president. Approximately two million people who work for the federal government would then be given a paid day off, and private companies might follow suit. Some suggest a compromise, such as making it a holiday but combining it with Veterans Day (November 11th).

Election Day and the U.S. Constitution

Article 1, Section 4, Clause 1 of the Constitution is known as the “Elections Clause.” It grants the regulation of the “time, place, and manner” of elections to the states, while Congress is given the power to create law to make or change the regulatory processes.

The Constitution and its amendments collectively establish the framework for conducting federal elections, ensuring that they are regulated both by state legislatures and by federal oversight, while also expanding and protecting voting rights for various groups over time.

Would a Holiday Improve Turnout?

There is obviously much to consider when creating a new national holiday. The goal of all politicians should be to hear more voices through the voting process. Are we just

too busy to vote, so allocating more time aids in increasing turnout? In February of 2024, U.S. Representative Anna Eshoo introduced the Election Day Holiday Act, legislation making Election Day a federal holiday. “No one should be unable to vote because they have to work or care for a family member,” said Rep. Eshoo. “Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy, and Congress must make it easier to vote, not harder. With a presidential election this year, it’s imperative that we reaffirm our commitment to the right to vote and ensure every voice is heard. Our democracy depends on it.”

However, Federal law does not require private employers to give employees paid federal holidays, and lower-income individuals who work for hourly wages may not be eligible for holiday pay. Many of these individuals also rely on school days as childcare for their children. On the flip side, parents who bring their children to vote may instill the value of democratic participation at a young age.

Additional factors to consider would be if we had a holiday to vote, would fewer people be included in voting early or by mail? Would there be longer lines at the polls, which already pose problems for election officials and could deter some voters from showing up? Lines are already too long in some precincts, which could increase if more voters are concentrated in a single day. Some studies show that if more states would adopt same-day voter registration, no-excuse absentee voting, and vote-by-mail options could significantly impact access to the ballots.

Mandatory Voting

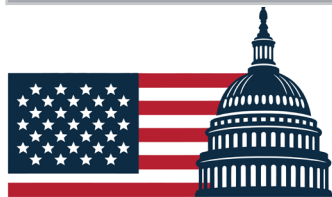
Going one step farther, should voting be mandatory in the United States? Would more Americans’ voices be heard? Voting is mandatory in about 25 countries, including Argentina, Australia, and Belgium.

We should all aim to increase voter turnout so that more voices are represented by our officials and policies. Regardless of partisan politics, all should strive for free, fair, and accessible elections. There are differing views on meeting this goal and whether the creation of a national holiday for Election Day would promote an increase in voter turnout.

EXPRESS YOUR OPINION

1. Would you favor adding “Citizen Day” as the 12th national holiday, celebrating our democracy with additional voting time and nonpartisan community parties? Why or why not?

2. Do you believe that all states should operate with the same election rules with the aim at improving turnout? ____



CONSTITUTION DAY 17 SEPTEMBER

Federal holidays often serve as civic glue, giving people shared moments to remember history, honor values, and create shared experiences. Labor Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Presidents Day, and Martin Luther King Day are among the holidays performing these functions in the United States. Constitution Day fits into the tradition of federal observances by serving as a civic learning and reflection holiday—a day focused not on leisure or celebration, but on understanding the foundation of American government and citizenship.

President Ronald Reagan explained the need for this civic holiday in 1981. “While a constitution may set forth rights and liberties, only the citizens can maintain and guarantee those freedoms. Active and informed citizenship is not just a right; it is a duty.”

Origins of Constitution Day

In 1919, attorney Walter Evans Hampton observed, “It is said to be the practice of certain patriotic societies to celebrate **September 17**—the day on which the Constitution was signed by the members of the convention—as ‘Constitution Day.’” He then asked, “Why should not this excellent practice be made universal?” That year, the governors in 20 states proclaimed September 17 Constitution Day.

The federal government took steps to recognize this day in 1940, 1952, 1965, and 2004, especially when patriotic feelings were running high and loyalty was a primary concern. Each time, the country was either on the brink of war or already involved. During World War II in 1940, the third Sunday in May was named Citizenship Day, also known as “I Am An American Day.” By 1949, governors from all 48 states were issuing proclamations for this day.

In 1952, Congress decided to move “I Am An American Day” to September 17, the day the Constitution was signed, and changed the name to “Citizenship Day.” President Truman spoke on Citizenship Day, hoping the celebrations would grow in meaning and importance over the years. Then, in 2004, at the suggestion of West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd (D), Congress renamed September 17 to “Constitution Day and Citizenship Day.” Byrd pointed out that “September 17 is more important to our everyday lives than Columbus Day, more important than Thanksgiving, and more important than the Fourth of July.”

Constitution Day Public Message

Below is a sample public statement for Constitution Day Recognition, providing a concise explanation of the day:

On September 17th, 1787 delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia signed the U.S. Constitution, a written charter for a new—and enduring—federal government.

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure

domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

With these words, the delegates convened at Philadelphia developed a framework that would provide balance and freedom, consider federal and state interests, and guarantee individual human rights.

Constitution Day, established by the U.S. Congress in 2005, is an opportunity for all of us to reflect on the foundations of our legal system and the rule of law we have come to know. It’s a time to celebrate the rich history of our most precious founding document. It is a time to acknowledge the ways in which it has shaped the American story and continues to inform and inspire our stories today.

Importance of the Day

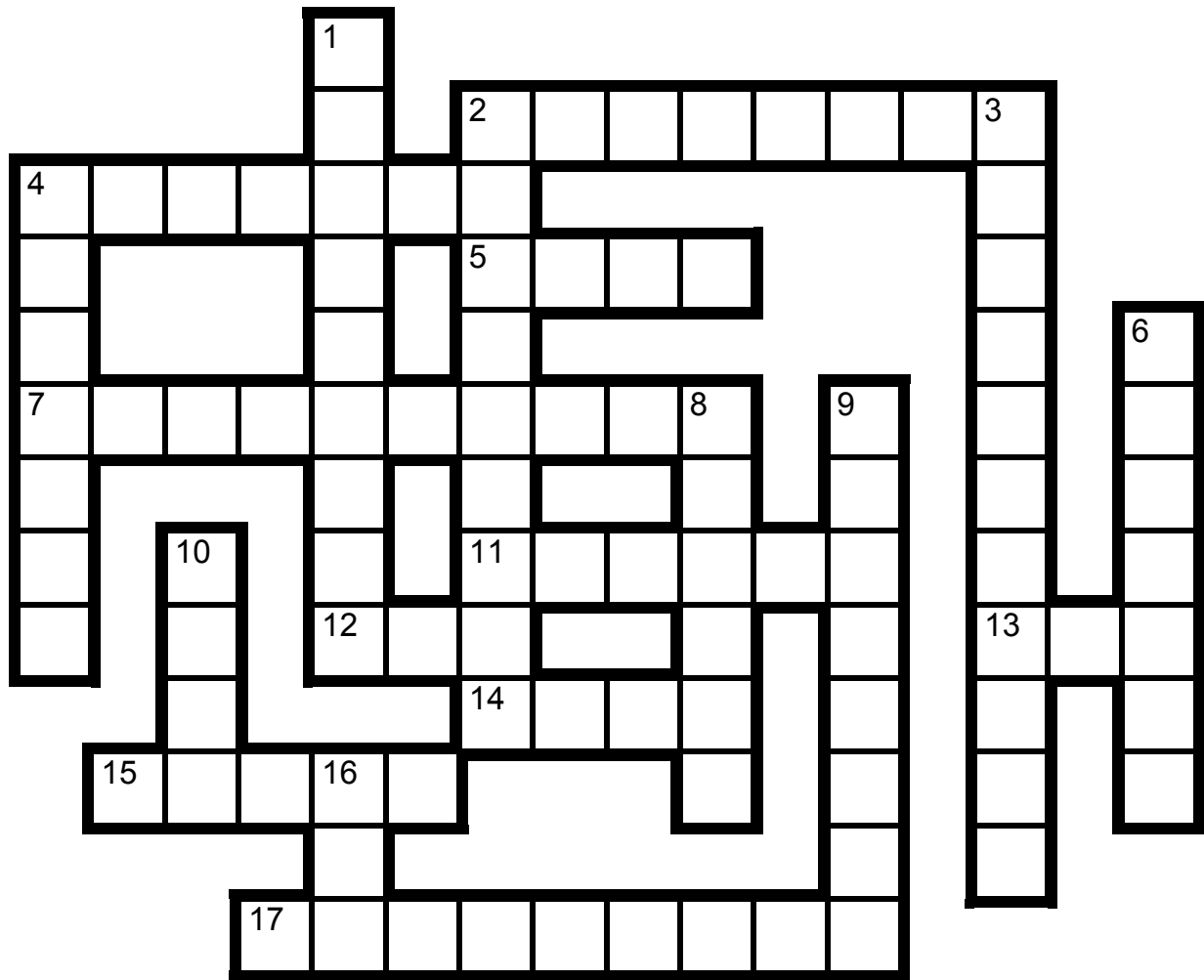
Constitution Day is significant for students as it promotes civic engagement and encourages critical thinking about fundamental democratic principles. It is more than our founding history; it also concerns our future. On this day, every American is encouraged to:

1. Learn more about how our government operates and understand where your voice fits in.
2. Reflect on how your civic knowledge impacts your engagement.
3. Take action—whether that involves voting, volunteering, or listening with empathy to someone with a different perspective.

As former Justice Sandra Day O’Connor wrote, “Knowledge of our system of government and our rights and responsibilities as citizens is not passed along through the gene pool. Each generation of Americans must be taught these basics.”

CIVIC DUTY & VOLUNTEERING

BE YOUR BEST CITIZEN. Volunteering makes a real difference in your community. It connects you with like-minded people, helps you gain new skills, and boosts your happiness. Even a few hours a month can have a big impact. Start by considering your passions and **identify one volunteering** opportunity that interests you.

**Across**

- 2. Branch that interprets the laws.
- 4. Highest federal court.
- 5. Has 50 stars and 13 stripes.
- 7. There are 27 of these.
- 11. Consists of 100 members.
- 12. Term, in years, of a U.S. Representative.
- 13. Number of days the president has to consider a bill.
- 14. Number of justices on the Supreme Court.
- 15. Consists of 435 members.
- 17. Branch that enforces the laws.

Down

- 1. Head of the executive branch.
- 2. Third President of the United States.
- 3. Branch that makes the laws.
- 4. Chief officer of the U.S. House of Representatives.
- 6. Group of 15 that advises the president.
- 8. The stars on the flag represent these.
- 9. Beginning of the Constitution.
- 10. When the president rejects a bill.
- 16. Term, in years, of a U.S. Senator.



Compare and Contrast the Illinois and United States Constitution

The United States Constitution details are given; fill in the blanks related to the Illinois Constitution. This will better understand the similarities and differences between both constitutions.



Topic or Detail	United States	Illinois
Bill of Rights	First 10 Amendments	In Article # _____
Number of Branches	Three 1. legislative, 2. executive, 3. judicial	Three 1. _____, 2. _____, 3. _____
Scope of Branches	<i>Enforce, Make, or Interpret</i> laws of the United States	Enforce, Make, or Interpret laws of _____
Chief Executive Officer	President	_____
Minimum age for Chief Executive	35 years old	_____ years old
Term for Chief Executive Officer	4 years (two-term maximum)	_____ years (no term limits)
First successor to the office	Vice President	_____
Name of Lawmaking Body	Congress	_____
House & Senate Key Officers	House = Speaker Senate = Vice President	House = _____ Senate = _____
Number of members in Legislative Body	House = 435, Senate = 100	House = _____, Senate = _____
Terms for Members of Legislative Body	House = 2 years, Senate = 6 years	House = _____, Senate = _____
Minimum age for Legislative Members	House = 25 years old, Senate = 30 years old	House = _____ years old Senate = _____ years old
Veto override	2/3 of both houses	_____ of both houses
Justices or Judges Terms	Term of office = for life	Term of Office = _____ years
Number of Supreme Court Justices	9 justices	_____ justices
Number of Words in the Constitution	4,543 words	_____ words