US – Political System

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# Constitution – 1 ---

* **Constitution Overview**: Signed on September 17, 1787, it has been amended 27 times and remains the foundation of the U.S. political system.
* **Historical Background**: The Constitution was drafted after the American Revolutionary War and replaced the Articles of Confederation, which were seen as insufficient for governance.
* **Key Articles**:
  + *Article I* defines the legislative branch (Congress).
  + *Article II* outlines the executive branch (President).
  + *Article III* covers the judiciary (Supreme Court).
  + *Article IV* deals with federalism and state relations.
* **Amendments**: There have been 27 amendments to the Constitution, with the last one in 1992.

The Constitution seems quite flexible and is deeply shaping the US government till today.

# Constitution – 2 ---

Summary

The U.S. Constitution, signed on September 17, 1787, is one of the oldest democratic constitutions still in effect. It established the framework for the U.S. political system, emphasizing democracy, separation of powers, and federalism. Over its 200+ years, it has been amended 27 times to adapt to contemporary challenges. The Constitution ensures checks and balances among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, while empowering the people as the ultimate source of authority.

Highlights -📜

1. **“We the People”**: The Constitution begins with a powerful declaration of popular sovereignty.
2. **Historical Context**: Formed after the American Revolution to replace the ineffective Articles of Confederation.
3. **Separation of Powers**: Establishes legislative, executive, and judicial branches to prevent power abuse.
4. **Checks and Balances**: Each branch can limit the others, ensuring accountability.
5. **Amendability**: The Constitution has been amended 27 times to remain relevant.
6. **Federalism**: Balances power between the federal government and individual states.
7. **Judicial Review**: The Supreme Court interprets the Constitution, adapting it to modern needs.

Key Insights -🔍

1. **Foundation of Democracy** - 🗳️  
   The phrase “We the People” signifies a departure from autocratic rule, placing ultimate power in the hands of citizens. This principle laid the groundwork for a democratic society that values individual rights.
2. **Response to Historical Challenges** - 🏛️  
   The Constitution arose from the failures of the Articles of Confederation, emphasizing the need for a stronger central government to unify diverse state interests while maintaining individual state sovereignty.
3. **Checks and Balances** - ⚖️  
   The Constitution’s structure promotes a system where legislative, executive, and judicial branches can monitor and limit each other, preventing any single entity from gaining excessive power.
4. **Adaptability through Amendments** - 🔄  
   The 27 amendments reflect the Constitution’s ability to evolve with societal changes, showcasing its foundational framework’s flexibility to meet contemporary issues while preserving core principles.
5. **Role of the Supreme Court** - 🏛️  
   The judiciary interprets the Constitution, allowing it to adapt to changing political, social, and economic contexts without needing formal amendments, illustrating its living nature.
6. **Federalism as a Balancing Act** - 🌐  
   Federalism ensures a balance of power, allowing states to maintain sovereignty while being part of a larger federal structure, promoting both unity and local governance.
7. **Legacy and Influence** - 🌍  
   The U.S. Constitution has inspired numerous other nations in drafting their own constitutions, serving as a model for democratic governance and the protection of rights worldwide.

# Constitution – 3 ---

The document titled "The Political System of the USA - Material 1: The Constitution" offers a detailed exploration of the U.S. Constitution, its historical background, and its core principles, alongside an in-depth look at its articles and amendments. Below is a more detailed summary of the document:

**1. Introduction to the U.S. Constitution**

The U.S. Constitution starts with the famous words, "We the People," symbolizing the power of governance originating from the people. This document, signed on September 17, 1787, by delegates of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, is one of the oldest constitutions still in effect today. Despite the changing needs of the country, it has been amended only 27 times in over 200 years, showcasing its robust yet flexible nature.

The Constitution achieves several goals:

* It rejects the concept of absolutist rule, which was common in 18th-century Europe, and instead vests power in the people.
* It creates a system of governance where power is transferred to the state and its representatives for a limited period.
* To prevent abuse of power, the Constitution divides authority into three branches: legislative, executive, and judiciary, with a checks and balances system ensuring that no single branch can dominate the others.
* It transforms a confederation of thirteen sovereign states into a strong federal entity, the United States of America.

**2. Historical Evolution**

The Constitution's creation was a response to several key historical events:

* **Seven Years’ War (1754-1763)**: The British and French fought for control over North America, with the thirteen British colonies supporting Britain. However, despite the colonies' contribution, Britain imposed new taxes on them, fueling discontent.
* **American Revolution**: The increasing tensions between the colonies and Britain led to the American Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. After a prolonged war, the British acknowledged the colonies' independence in 1783.
* **Articles of Confederation (1777)**: After independence, the thirteen states established a loose confederation under the Articles of Confederation. However, this system proved inadequate due to the weak central government it created.
* **Constitutional Convention (1787)**: In response to the failures of the Articles of Confederation, a convention was held in Philadelphia. Initially aimed at revising the Articles, the convention delegates, including figures like George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, decided to draft an entirely new constitution. After months of debate, the final draft was signed on September 17, 1787, and became law on March 4, 1789.

**3. Key Articles of the Constitution**

The Constitution is organized into seven articles that define the structure of the U.S. government:

**Article I: The Legislative Branch**

* **Overview**: Article I grants legislative powers to a bicameral Congress, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives.
* **House of Representatives**: Members must be at least 25 years old, have been U.S. citizens for at least seven years, and reside in the state they represent. Representatives are elected every two years, and the number of seats per state is determined by population.
* **Senate**: Senators must be at least 30 years old, have been citizens for at least nine years, and reside in the state they represent. Each state has two Senators, who serve six-year terms. Initially, Senators were chosen by state legislatures, but the 17th Amendment introduced direct election by the people in 1913.
* **Powers of Congress**: Congress holds significant powers, including the ability to declare war, maintain an army, and regulate commerce. Section 9 of Article I prohibits Congress from banning immigration, imposing sentences without trial, or taxing exports from individual states.

**Article II: The Executive Branch**

* **Overview**: Article II vests executive power in the President of the United States, who serves as both head of state and head of government.
* **Requirements**: Presidential candidates must be natural-born U.S. citizens, at least 35 years old, and have lived in the U.S. for at least 14 years.
* **Election Process**: Presidents are elected indirectly via an electoral college system. States appoint electors, who vote for the President and Vice President. The 12th Amendment, passed in 1804, refined this process by ensuring separate votes for these two offices.
* **Powers and Responsibilities**: The President is the Commander-in-Chief of the military and has the authority to negotiate treaties (with Senate approval) and appoint ambassadors, officials, and Supreme Court judges. The President serves a four-year term and can be re-elected only once, as per the 22nd Amendment.
* **Impeachment**: The Constitution allows for the impeachment of the President or Vice President in cases of treason, bribery, or other high crimes. If convicted, they are removed from office.

**Article III: The Judicial Branch**

* **Overview**: Article III establishes the U.S. Supreme Court and other federal courts. Supreme Court justices are appointed for life, though Congress can impeach them for misconduct.
* **Jurisdiction**: The judiciary handles disputes involving the Constitution, U.S. laws, treaties, and cases where the U.S. is a party. It also handles conflicts between states. Most cases are heard in lower federal courts, with the Supreme Court typically acting as an appellate court, reviewing decisions for legal errors.
* **Criminal Trials**: The Constitution guarantees that all criminal trials must be held in the state where the crime occurred, and they must be jury trials.

**Article IV: Federalism**

* **Relations Among States**: Article IV outlines the relationship between the federal government and individual states. States must respect the public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of other states.
* **Equal Rights for Citizens**: No state may pass laws that infringe upon the rights of U.S. citizens, preventing discrimination based on state of residence.
* **Admission of New States**: Congress can admit new states to the Union, provided they are not formed within another state's jurisdiction.
* **Federal Protection**: The federal government guarantees each state a republican form of government and provides protection against foreign invasion or internal disorder.

**4. Amendments to the Constitution**

Since its inception, the Constitution has been amended 27 times. Amendments are added to the end of the document, preserving the original text. Significant amendments include:

* **The Bill of Rights**: The first ten amendments, added in 1791, protect fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, religion, and the press, as well as the right to a fair trial.
* **14th Amendment**: Passed in 1868, this amendment expanded civil rights and granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the U.S.
* **17th Amendment**: Introduced direct election of Senators by the people in 1913.
* **22nd Amendment**: Passed in 1951, this amendment limits Presidents to two terms in office.
* **27th Amendment**: The most recent amendment, added in 1992, addresses Congressional pay increases.

The U.S. Constitution is praised for its adaptability, having undergone relatively few amendments despite the significant changes in American society since the 18th century. The flexibility of its language allows the U.S. Supreme Court to interpret its provisions in light of current political, social, and economic conditions without requiring constant formal revisions.

**5. Conclusion**

The U.S. Constitution is a dynamic document that has guided the governance of the United States for more than two centuries. Its system of checks and balances, division of powers, and the ability to amend it as needed have ensured its relevance in both past and present political landscapes. It serves as a model for democratic governance worldwide.

# Congress ---

Text.

# President ---

Text.

# Supreme Court ---

Text.

# Election of the President ---

The document provides an overview of the U.S. presidential election process. It begins by outlining the historical context, referencing Article 11, Sections 1 and 2 of the U.S. Constitution, which established the rules for selecting the president through an Electoral College system. The document traces this process from the Constitutional Convention of 1787, highlighting how the founding fathers debated different methods of choosing a president, eventually settling on a system of electors.

It then describes the eight stages to becoming U.S. president:

1. **Candidate Requirements**: A minimum age of 35, 14 years of U.S. residency, and U.S. citizenship by birth are prerequisites.
2. **Primary Race**: Various candidates within the two major parties, Democrats and Republicans, compete for their party’s nomination.
3. **Party Primaries**: State-level elections determine the parties’ official presidential nominees through primaries or caucuses. Delegates are allocated based on state populations, and both open and closed primaries are possible, depending on state rules.
4. **National Conventions**: Delegates formally nominate their party’s candidate, with conventions serving as symbolic events.
5. **Presidential Campaign**: The nominees then campaign across the country, focusing on populous and swing states.
6. **Presidential Election**: Held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, this indirect election system uses the "winner-takes-all" principle in most states, where the candidate with the majority of votes wins all of that state’s electoral votes.
7. **Electoral College Vote**: Electors meet in their respective states to cast their official votes for president and vice president.
8. **Inauguration**: On January 20, the newly elected president takes the oath of office on the steps of Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., marking the start of their four-year term.

# Electoral College ---

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Pro* | *Contra* |
| * Independent executive   + Independent from the Congress     - “true” separation of powers * Prevents that big states and areas dominate the election |  |

# Abortion ---

Vocal: gestational age: age of the unborn foetus

Viability (of the foetus): chance of surviving after birth