

# Freedom's Feast PRESIDENTS' DAY

On-line resources to get the most out of your AMERICAN holiday celebrations.

## ★ TABLE TALK! CONVERSATION STARTERS ★

### Constitutional Articles Summary

*Understanding the Constitution & what it means to me, my family, and my community.*

Delegates to the Constitutional Convention created the Constitution during four months of debate in Philadelphia from late May to mid September 1787. Our very young country was not doing well under the original governing document called "The Articles of Confederation." We needed a balanced set of principles flexible enough to adapt with changing times but reliable enough to assure liberty and maintain stability without a king.

Please choose from the following:

1. Have your group read the brief article summaries below (most articles have additional sections) OR read a full transcript of the **Constitution**.
2. Pick one or two articles to discuss.
3. Start a conversation about the Constitution using one of the following questions:
  - Pick an article and ask: how does this article affect us today?
  - When and how did the Constitution impact our American stories?
  - What were the creators of the Constitution concerned about with each article?
  - Do we still have concerns today?
  - Can you think of recent news stories that highlight one of the articles discussed?
4. Ask your group to consider:
  - What might happen if Congress passed a law that was possibly unconstitutional?
  - How would the system of checks and balances work? (Refer to Articles 1-3)
  - How has the Constitution impacted our lives this past year?
  - How do you feel about it?



### THE PREAMBLE TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

The Constitution begins with the Preamble which states the Constitution's purpose followed by seven articles.

The articles (most with sections) describe a function of government, set limits on government, and define the rights of all citizens.

*"We the people of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote 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."*

### RESOURCES

To learn more about the Constitution, visit the **National Constitution Center** in Philadelphia. It teaches about the Constitution through interactive and highly engaging exhibits.

### CONSTITUTIONAL ARTICLES SUMMARY

**Reader** Article 1, (which the framers thought was the most important), establishes the legislative branch of government, called the Congress: the Senate (two senators per state), and the House of Representatives (number of representatives set by state population). Together, they create laws, levy taxes, make rules for commerce, set standards for citizenship, print money, build roads and post offices, provide copyrights, declare war, maintain military forces and can impeach the president, other executive branch officials or members of the federal judiciary.



PHOTO: WHITE HOUSE

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Visit the [White House's page](#) about the Constitution and the Constitutional Convention.
2. Learn more about how to build citizenship at [Citizen University](#).
3. Visit [We the People: The Citizen of the Constitution](#), a site dedicated to promoting civic competence and responsibility.

- Reader* Article 2 establishes the executive branch. The executive branch includes the president, the vice president, and the Cabinet. The president signs or vetoes the laws Congress passes. The president is also the commander-in-chief of the country's armed forces.
- Reader* Article 3 establishes the judicial branch, or the court system, which sets the Supreme Court as the highest court in the land. The judicial branch decides whether laws are constitutional. It also guarantees due process and justice for all citizens when laws have been broken.
- Reader* Article 4 requires that states respect the laws of other state, gives all citizens the same protections (except that someone charged with a crime must be returned to the state in which he/she committed the crime), and gives Congress the power to create new states.
- Reader* Article 5 allows amendments to the Constitution. This means that our Constitution is a living document. It can be changed provided that two-thirds of members of Congress favor the change. But the people have the final say. Through elected representatives, three quarters of the states must approve an amendment in order to add it to the Constitution.
- Reader* Article 6 says that the Constitution is the supreme law of the land and overrides all state constitutions and state laws. All elected and judicial officials are bound by it and no religious tests can ever be applied to someone seeking public office.
- Reader* Article 7 makes the Constitution the law of the land upon ratification by nine state conventions. Note: This may seem like a small number, but at the time, only thirteen states had been formed. Now we have fifty. The Constitution passed by the Convention on September 17, 1787 was ratified on June 21, 1788.

Enjoy a meaningful and memorable Presidents' Day! Please visit us again for [Memorial Day](#).

