

# 5

Basic Proficiency

## The US Constitution

U.S. History Grades Seven and Eight

Schroon Lake Central School Social Studies  
David Jones, 2011 Version

### Statements to Learn

#### Articles of Confederation

1. The Articles of Confederation is the name for the first set of rules that the United States used to run its government. These rules did not work well for the following reasons:

Congress could not levy and collect taxes.

Congress could not regulate interstate or foreign trade.

There was no national court system to settle disputes.

The thirteen separate states lacked national unity.

#### Constitutional Convention

2. A convention is a meeting. A convention was called in 1787 to write a new constitution. The reason was that the government was not strong enough and the individual states had too much power.

3. When you count everyone in the nation, you are doing a census. The census is used to decide how many will represent each state. States with larger populations get to have more representatives.

4. At the Constitutional Convention in 1789, the Great Compromise solved the problem about representation in Congress. The Great Compromise created a legislature of two houses.

5. The argument over whether to count slaves when doing a census was decided in this way: slaves would be counted as 3/5 of a person. This is called the Three-Fifths Compromise.

6. The preamble is the first paragraph of the constitution. It says the people are in charge!

#### Checks and Balances

### CBM Vocabulary

Amendment

Bill

Bill of rights

Checks and balances

Compromise

Constitution

Convention

Depression

Executive branch

Federal

Impeachment

Judicial branch

Judicial review

Legislative branch

Legislature

Override

Separation of powers

Unconstitutional

Veto

7. The system of checks and balances gives each branch power over the other branches. This is to make sure no one branch gets too much power.

8. The president can veto a law he does not like.

9. The Congress can override a presidential veto.

10. The Supreme Court can throw out a law it finds unconstitutional. This power is called judicial review.

11. The president picks the Supreme Court justices, but the Senate confirms them.

12. An elected official can be kicked out of office by a process called impeachment. In the first step in this process for the president, charges are brought against the president by the House of Representatives

#### Ratification of the Constitution

13. The Constitution can be changed by a process called amendment.

14. The first 10 changes or amendments to the Constitution are called the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights guarantees Americans such freedoms as religion (separation of church and state), speech, meetings, bearing arms, complaining to government, and fair trials.

**Legislative Branch**  
(Congress)  
Passes the laws

**Executive Branch**  
(President)  
Carries out and enforces the laws

**Judicial Branch**  
(Courts)  
Interprets the laws

15. People called federalists believe the central government should be more powerful than the state governments. Anti-federalists believe the opposite.

16. Federalists felt that the most power should be given to well-educated, wealthy men.

17. Anti-federalists believe a Bill of Rights is necessary to guarantee our freedom from a government that might get too strong.