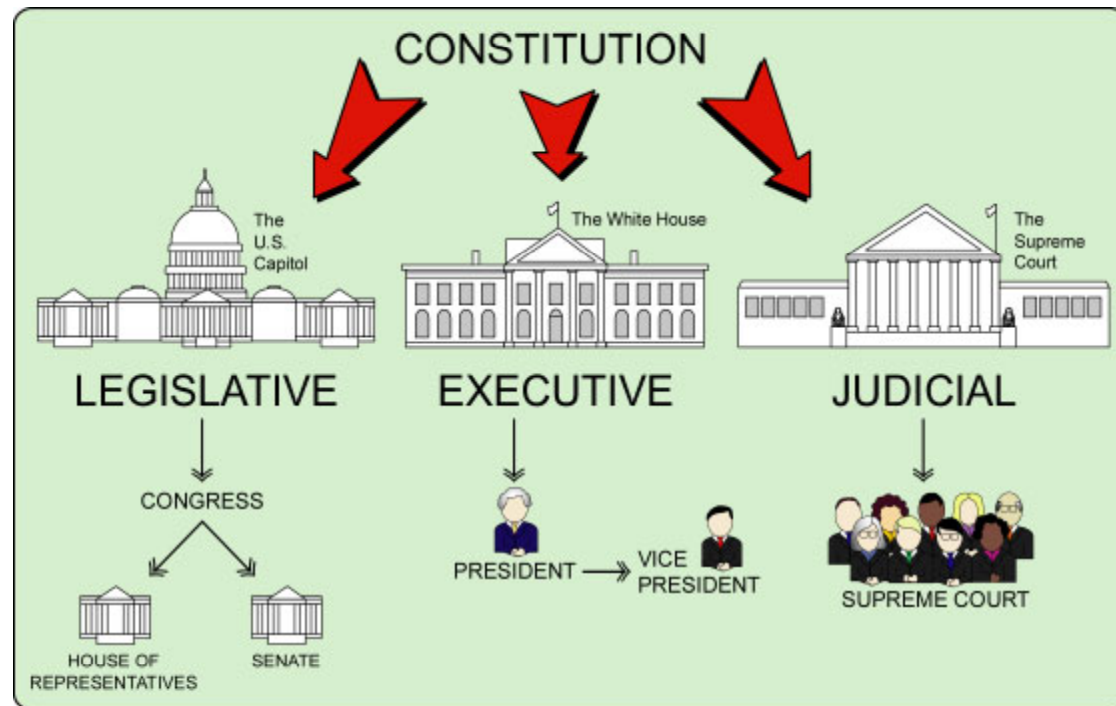


What is the Constitution?

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The document that set up the government under which laws (rules) are made and enforced in the United States.



**Do you ever think about
the Constitution as you go
about your daily life, or as
you plan for your future?**

**If not, maybe you should.
Virtually every aspect of
your life is touched by
constitutional government
in action.**

For example:

- Your school is here because it was built, paid for and is operated by government employees. You are in school because many generations of elected officials and voters determined that you and they would be better off if you had educational opportunities. Do you know of any proof of the benefits for young people from those decisions?

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Full Time Workers in the U.S. age 25 and older, 2007

Number of workers: 100,343,000,000

Highest Education Attained		Median Income	Difference from previous step	Cumulative difference from 1st step	% of Professional
less than 9th grade	2.96%	\$21,694			21.69%
Grades 9-12, no diploma	5.08%	25,802	\$4,108	\$4,108	25.80%
High School graduate	28.57%	32,464	6,662	9,089	32.46%
Some college, no degree	17.72%	38,728	6,264	15,353	38.73%
Associate degree (AA)	10.10%	41,837	3,109	18,462	41.84%
Bachelor's degree (BA)	22.81%	53,141	11,304	29,766	53.14%
Master's degree (MA)	9.16%	62,920	9,779	39,545	62.92%
Doctorate (Ph.D.)	1.60%	85,837	22,917	62,462	85.84%
Professional degree (Dr., lawyer, dentist, etc.)	1.99%	100,000	14,163	76,625	100.00%

Average annual expenditures per household (2006): \$48,398

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- Most of the food you eat, the fluids you drink, and the medicines you take are inspected by government agents, and are approved for sale only when shown to be safe. The federal Food and Drug Administration was created by an act of Congress in 1906 (104 years ago). What have been the effects of that decision?

For example:

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Expectation of Life (in years) at birth, U.S.

1900	47.3
1910	50.0
1920	54.1
1930	59.7
1940	62.9
1950	68.2
1960	69.7
1970	70.9
1980	73.7
1990	75.4
2000	77.0
2004	77.8
2010 (projection)	78.5
2015 (projection)	79.2

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- Most of the food you eat, the fluids you drink, and the medicines you take are inspected by government agents, and are approved for sale only when shown to be safe.
- The streets on which you travel were built and paid for, and are maintained by people working for constitutionally elected officials. Suppose roads were privately owned, and you had to stop every mile or two to pay a toll to a different owner in order to use that stretch of roadway? Or, what if police and fire services were all private, and would only appear when you needed them if you could pay what they asked? Suppose your neighbor's house was burning and s/he couldn't afford to pay for fire protection?

Government has the power to make life and death decisions



Washington Post, April 29, 2005

- In 2002, the United States government took us to war in Afghanistan. In 2003, it took us to war in Iraq. To date, 4,420 U.S. soldiers have returned from Iraq in flag draped coffins on flights like the one pictured above; while 1,278 have come back that way from Afghanistan.

Government has the power to make life and death decisions



- Those decisions effect others besides U.S. citizens.

Government has the power to make life and death decisions



New York Times, September 11, 2007

- Those decisions effect other species too.

Government has the power to make life changing decisions



Photo by Nina Berman

- Ty Zeigel and Renee Kline prior to Ty's deployment to Iraq in 2003.

Government has the power to make life changing decisions



Photos by Nina Berman



- Marine Sgt. Ty Zeigel and Renee Kline on their wedding day in late 2006.

In 2004, Ty's tour was cut short when a suicide bomber blew up near his truck during a routine patrol. The searing heat melted most of the skin off his body and left him blind in one eye. His skull was so badly shattered that doctors had to replace it with plastic. Ty was taken to Brooke Army Medical Center, where he underwent 19 surgeries.

What can you do about any of this?

- The Constitution establishes a system of representative government that depends on the informed participation of citizens if it is to work as intended.

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- If citizens do not understand how the government is supposed to work, or do not care enough to stay informed, discuss issues facing the community, vote thoughtfully and keep an eye on what their representatives are doing; then the government designed by the framers will not function in the interests of the citizens.

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- If citizens do not understand how the government is supposed to work, or do not care enough to stay informed, discuss issues facing the community, vote thoughtfully and keep an eye on what their representatives are doing; then the government designed by the framers will not function in the interests of the citizens.
- After the Constitution was finished, and as he was leaving Independence Hall, Benjamin Franklin is reported to have been asked, “Well, Doctor, what have we got—a Republic or a Monarchy?” His reply, “A Republic, if you can keep it.”

Happy Constitution Day!

What will you do to keep it?

