



The League of Women Voters invites you to

Celebrate Constitution Day

with your students in Philadelphia (1787) as a small group works in secret to save the USA

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Daily, May 25 through September 17

Discussion Suggestions

- **One of the first actions of the convention (on May 29) was to adopt strict secrecy rules. They were so strict that information about convention events did not become public until 1819 (32 years after the convention ended), when the federal government published the official convention journal. Madison's notes were not published until 1840, 4 years after his death, and 53 years after the convention ended. Could such secrecy be maintained today? How might our constitution and history have been different had the delegates not required that their proceedings be kept secret? What might have happened had they carried mobile phones running Twitter?**
- **The delegates spent a great deal of time debating the method for electing the President of the U.S. They consistently rejected election by popular vote. Why were they so opposed? (see July 17) If they were able to return to life and watch a Presidential election cycle today, would they approve or disapprove of what they'd witness?**
- **Many on the nation's political right assert that the framers intended our government to embody Christian principles. (Indeed, a 2007 First Amendment Center Poll shows that 65% of the U.S. public agrees with them.) After reading the summaries of the debates on June 28 & 29, do you think these assertions have any basis in fact?**
- **The battle between the supporters and opponents of slavery and the slave trade several times threatened to deadlock the convention and prevent a constitution from being approved for ratification. Madison on June 30, and Gouverneur Morris on August 8 addressed this contentious issue. What eventually was done to keep the convention together and allow the delegates to finish their work?**
- **April 1, 2010 is Census Day in the United States. The constitution mandates that a population census be conducted every 10 years. The census was one of the more hotly debated topics in the convention, taking up much of the debate from July 10 through July 13. Since most of us don't think much about the census today, what issues were of such concern that delegates felt compelled to spend almost four days trying to work them out?**
- **Money was also a central issue in the convention. At one point delegates debated having federal officers serve without pay. Why did they decide against this? What pay plans were considered? (see June 2, 12, 22 & 26; & July 18) Might the ones not selected have been successful?**