

Amicus Brief

UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION (ANNOTATED)

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CASE OVERVIEW

United States Constitution (Annotated)

N/A | United States (Federal) | 1787-09-17 (original signing); annotated amendments up through 1992 Source: constitution.pdf

THE LEDE

The Lede

This is the United States Constitution, the nation's foundational legal document, presented with all current amendments and notations about changes to original text. It lays out the blueprint for federal government, fundamental rights, and the amendment process.

QUICK STATS

Number of original articles

7

Number of amendments included

27

Original signing date

September 17, 1787

THE PLAYERS

George Washington (PRESIDENT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION AND SIGNER)

Presided over the 1787 Convention; first President of the United States (p.10)

James Madison Jr. (DELEGATE FROM VIRGINIA AND SIGNER)

Dubbed 'Father of the Constitution'; principal author (p.11)

Alexander Hamilton (DELEGATE FROM NEW YORK AND SIGNER)

Major proponent for strong federal government and signatory (p.10)

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Benjamin Franklin (DELEGATE FROM PENNSYLVANIA AND SIGNER)

Elder statesman and signatory (p.10)

All original signers (39 total) (FOUNDING DELEGATES AND SECRETARY)

Delegates from 12 states and Secretary William Jackson (p.10-11)

National Constitution Center (DOCUMENT PUBLISHER)

Independent, non-partisan nonprofit presenting the annotated text (p.19)

KEY DATES

1787-09-17

Original Constitution signed in Philadelphia (p.10)

1791-12-15

Bill of Rights (first 10 amendments) ratified (p.12)

1865-12-06 to 1870-02-03

13th, 14th, 15th Amendments (end slavery, ensure equal protection, expand voting rights) ratified (p.14-15)

1920-08-18

19th Amendment (women's suffrage) ratified (p.15)

1992-05-07

27th Amendment (congressional pay) ratified (p.18)

WHAT IS THIS

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What Is This

This is the full text of the United States Constitution, as published and annotated by the National Constitution Center. It includes both the original 1787 document and all ratified amendments up to the 27th (1992). The document outlines the structure of the federal government, lists individual rights, and specifies how the Constitution can be changed.

THE KEY POINTS

The Key Points

Point: Establishes three branches of government: Legislative (Congress), Executive (President), and Judicial (Supreme and lower courts). | Citation: p.2, p.6, p.8 | Why It Matters: Defines the core structure and powers of U.S. government. Point: Bill of Rights (first 10 amendments) guarantees freedoms like speech, religion, press, assembly, and the right to a fair trial. | Citation: p.12-13 | Why It Matters: Protects civil liberties central to American identity. Point: The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments outlaw slavery, guarantee equal protection under the law, and prohibit race-based restrictions on voting. | Citation: p.14-15 | Why It Matters: These 'Reconstruction Amendments' reshaped the nation's social structure and legal order after the Civil War. Point: The Constitution declares itself 'the supreme Law of the Land,' overriding conflicting state laws. | Citation: p.10 | Why It Matters: Ensures federal law trumps state law, which underlies the modern legal system. Point: Amendment process requires supermajorities in Congress and states, making major changes difficult to enact. | Citation: p.9 | Why It Matters: Provides stability but also allows national consensus to reshape foundational law. Point: Explicit separation of powers and checks and balances, including impeachment for 'Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.' | Citation: p.3, p.7 | Why It Matters: Sets up tension and cooperation between branches, with mechanisms to remove executive or judicial officers.

WHY IT MATTERS

Why It Matters

The Constitution remains the single most significant legal text in the United States, not just outlining government but setting boundaries for all federal and state actions. Whether the issue is free speech, voting rights, or the powers of the President, virtually every major legal battle in American history has hinged on its language. The amendment process shows how it can change—slowly, and only with overwhelming consensus. The stakes are broad: it shapes the rules of government, the rights of individuals, and the limits of both.

THE TIMELINE

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The Timeline

Date: 1787-09-17 | Event: Original Constitution signed in Philadelphia (p.10) Date: 1791-12-15 | Event: Bill of Rights (first 10 amendments) ratified (p.12) Date: 1865-12-06 to 1870-02-03 | Event: 13th, 14th, 15th Amendments (end slavery, ensure equal protection, expand voting rights) ratified (p.14-15) Date: 1920-08-18 | Event: 19th Amendment (women's suffrage) ratified (p.15) Date: 1992-05-07 | Event: 27th Amendment (congressional pay) ratified (p.18)

QUOTABLES

Most Interesting – Unattributed in document

"All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives."

p.2 | Establishes the legislative branch as the first pillar of government.

Most Poetic – Unattributed in document (Amendment V)

"No person shall be ... deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation."

p.12 | Core promise of legal fairness and limits on government seizure.

Most Sweeping – Unattributed in document

"This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States ... shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding."

p.10 | Supremacy Clause, the ultimate trump card in federal vs. state legal conflicts.

Most Iconic – Unattributed in document (Preamble)

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

p.2 | Sumptuous opening line, known worldwide as a statement of purpose and authority.

AMBIGUITIES / UNCERTAINTY

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Open Question 1

The text includes annotation brackets indicating amended language or superseded text, but does not specify the contents or implications of all amendments beyond text changes.

Open Question 2

No interpretation or judicial opinions are included — this is the legal text only, not case law or commentary.

Open Question 3

While the source (National Constitution Center) is reputable, the content is a reproduction rather than an official government publication.