



Instructor's Guide

U.S. Government: How It Works

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Introduction

This Instructor's Guide provides information to help you get the most out of *The Legislative Branch*, part of the six-part series *U.S. Government: How It Works*. The contents of the guide will allow you to prepare your students before using the program and to present follow-up activities to reinforce the program's key learning points.

While the complexities of the American political system have never been greater, the right visual aid can help students sift through them — and even develop a passion for the subject. The six-part series *U.S. Government: How It Works* is an ideal tool for introducing and exploring key aspects of U.S. government and public policy. Using a combination of eye-catching graphics, dynamic video footage, and interviews with legal and political scholars, each episode celebrates a particular dimension of American democracy while equipping students to candidly discuss political issues. The series includes:

- *The Legislative Branch*
- *The Executive Branch*
- *The Judicial Branch*
- *The Constitution and Foundations of Government*
- *Elections and Political Parties*
- *Citizenship and Civic Responsibilities*

Program Summary

Although the office of the President personifies American leadership, the Legislative branch was actually designed to hold at least as much power as the Executive, if not more. Many Founding Fathers envisioned Congress as the primary governing body, given its closeness, politically speaking, to the people. This program examines the origins, history, and activities of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. Topics include the roots of today's legislative branch in the Continental Congress of the Revolutionary period; the reasons why a bicameral legislature was ultimately deemed necessary; the

unique characteristics of both legislative chambers; the specific functions of Congress, from writing and passing bills to ratifying treaties to declaring war; and more.

Learning Objectives

After viewing the program, students will understand:

- The origins of the Constitution and the Legislative branch
- The structure of the bicameral legislature
- The duties and powers of the Senate and House of Representatives
- The number of congresspeople and senators, the length of their terms, and how they are elected
- How a bill becomes a law

Main Topics

Section 1: Introduction

The program begins with a discussion of the first Congress of the United States, held in 1789, and some of the important legislation it passed — including ratification of the Bill of Rights.

Section 2: The Legislative Branch

This section explains how our Constitution, with its provision for a bicameral legislature, grew out of dissatisfaction with the Articles of Confederation. The segment also touches on the main duties of the Legislative branch.

Section 3: The House of Representatives

The process by which members of the House of Representatives are elected, how many are elected and why, and the length of their term of office is the main topic here. Viewers learn about a congressperson's daily tasks as well as the overall responsibilities of the House, including the work by committees on proposed legislation.

Section 4: The Senate

Here viewers learn how members of Senate are elected, how many are elected and why, and the length of a senator's term of office. It describes their daily tasks as well as the overall responsibilities of the Senate, and highlights some notable senators.

Section 5: Legislative Process

The program's final section provides details of the legislative process — where an idea for a new law comes from, how it passes through committees, and what can happen if the bill makes it to the President — and is vetoed.

Fast Facts

- In April of 1789, the Congress of the newly formed “United States” convened in New York City for the first time. During its two-year session, some of America’s most important legislation was passed, including the establishment of the Departments of State, of War, and of Treasury. This congress also passed the Judiciary Act (establishing the U.S. judiciary), conducted the first national census, and in 1789, ratified the Bill of Rights.
- The Library of Congress, established by Congress in 1800, is the largest library in the world, and contains the largest number of books — 530 miles’ worth housed within its three buildings. Borrowing privileges are reserved for legislators and high-ranking government officials, but tours, events, and exhibitions are open to the public. The Thomas Jefferson Building is renowned for its gorgeous interior full of paintings, sculptures, and unique architectural details, including a set of 10-foot-high female figures standing atop eight gigantic marble columns, representing Religion, Commerce, History, Art, Philosophy, Poetry, Law, and Science.
- One of the duties granted to the House of Representatives is the power to elect the president if there is a deadlock in the electoral college. None of the four nominees in the 1824 presidential election had enough electoral votes to actually win, so Speaker of the House Henry Clay elected John Quincy Adams as President — in spite of the fact that Adams had received fewer electoral and popular votes than opponent Andrew Jackson. Clay and Adams were accused of striking a “corrupt bargain,” but many modern analysts now believe that this choice really did represent the wishes of the people, due to the intricacies of the vote having been split among four candidates.
- Hiram Rhodes Revels was the first African-American senator, representing Mississippi in 1870 and 1871. Southern conservatives unsuccessfully challenged his election, arguing that as a black man, Revels did not become a legal citizen until 1868, when the 14th Amendment granting blacks Constitutional rights was ratified (election to the Senate required nine years’ prior citizenship). The first woman to become a senator was Hattie Wyatt Caraway, serving from 1931 to 1945, and the first Hispanic was Octaviano Ambrosio Larrazolo, in 1928. When Hillary Rodham Clinton was elected to the Senate in 2000 she became the first First Lady to win public office.
- As many as 200 new Constitutional amendments are proposed in Congress each term. Ending the death penalty, overhauling the electoral college, the abolishment of personal income tax, the prohibition of same-sex marriage, and the right to school prayer are just some of the issues being considered by legislators.
- In most cases, amendments to the Constitution are ratified by the necessary majority within a few years of their proposal. But some states withhold ratifying until long after the proposal has passed into law. Some notable hold-outs:

- Georgia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut did not ratify the Bill of Rights (proposed in 1789) until 1939;
 - Mississippi did not ratify the 13th Amendment (prohibiting slavery) until 1995;
 - Maryland and California did not ratify the 14th Amendment (guaranteeing the rights of citizens, proposed in 1866) until 1959, and Kentucky did not ratify until 1976;
 - Maryland, California, and Kentucky ratified the 15th Amendment (ensuring the right of black men to vote, proposed in 1869) during the 1960s and 1970s, but Tennessee did not ratify until 1997;
 - Many of the Southern states began to ratify the 19th Amendment (ensuring women the right to vote, proposed in 1919) in the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and 70s; Mississippi held out until 1984.
- Congress processes four types of legislation: bills, joint resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and simple resolutions. Bills and joint resolutions must be passed by both the House and the Senate, and can then be signed into law. Concurrent and simple resolutions cannot become laws, and are generally used to express congressional sentiments. In 2009 Senator Schumer of New York introduced a resolution to congratulate the New York Yankees on their World Series win.
 - If the President chooses to sign a bill, it will become a law. If the President does not sign or return the bill and Congress is in session, the bill automatically becomes a law after ten days. If the President takes no action and Congress has adjourned its session, the bill dies and does not become a law. This is called a “pocket veto.”
 - There are now a number of Web sites dedicated to helping citizens keep track of what’s going on in Congress. Sometimes called “civic hacking” sites, they make it easy to find the name of your congressperson, how they voted, what legislation is being proposed and exactly what stage the proposal is at, and a wealth of additional information. The comprehensive *GovTrack* also allows users to search for legislative information by subject, and then subscribe to newsfeeds and email alerts for updates on these. *OpenCongress* provides data on campaign contributions, broken down by industries and interest groups. *Legistalker* features the latest online activity of Congress members, posting new items about them, their YouTube appearances, and their “tweets” (a post on the Twitter social networking site), along with a daily listing of updated bills. And *Filibusted* informs citizens on who is stalling legislation by conducting a filibuster.

Vocabulary Terms

amendment: An alteration or addition to a bill or constitution. The United States Constitution has been amended twenty-seven times between 1791 and 1992; the first ten amendments are known as the Bill of Rights.

appropriation: An act of a legislature authorizing money to be paid from the treasury for a specified use.

Articles of Confederation: The first national constitution of the 13 states, drafted and proposed by the Second Continental Congress in 1777 and adopted in 1781. The authors of the Articles saw the threat of too much government as more dangerous than too much liberty, and thus wrote the Articles to limit the powers of the national government. Under the Articles, there was no chief executive or judiciary, and the government could not collect taxes. The Articles of Confederation were replaced in 1789 by the Constitution of the United States.

bicameral legislature: Consisting of two legislative branches, such as the House of Representatives and the Senate, which together make up the Congress.

bill: A proposed law that has been introduced by a member of the Senate or the House of Representatives. Members of Congress often introduce legislation at the request of lobbyists. A bill originating in the House of Representatives is designated by the letters "H.R.", signifying "House of Representatives", followed by a number that it retains throughout all its parliamentary stages.

Bill of Rights: The term given to the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution. The Bill of Rights guarantees, among other things, the freedoms of speech, press, and religion. The Bill of Rights was drafted primarily by James Madison, who used the Virginia Bill of Rights as a rough model, in response to colonists' fears that the Constitution did not do enough to safeguard individual liberties.

Cabinet: An advisory body to the president, consisting of the heads of the 15 executive departments of the federal government.

Capitol: The building in Washington, D.C., used by the U.S. Congress for its sessions.

checks and balances: The powers conferred on each of the three branches of government by which each restrains the others from exerting too much power.

committee hearing: A special meeting in which members of Congress consider a particular bill.

Committee of the Whole: A committee made up of members of the House that meets to quickly move legislation along so it can be debated and then amended accordingly. When debate concludes the Committee of the Whole dissolves, and the bill is then voted on.

Congress: The national legislative body of the U.S., consisting of the Senate, or upper house, and the House of Representatives, or lower house.

congressperson: A member of Congress, but usually referring to a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Constitution of the United States: “The supreme law of the land,” it is the document that embodies the fundamental laws and principles of the United States. Drafted at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and ratified by the required nine states in 1788, the document replaced the Articles of Confederation and went into effect on March 4, 1789. It consists of the preamble, seven articles, and 27 amendments (which were added later). It established a new federal republic, granting certain powers to the national government while reserving other powers to the states.

Constitutional Convention of 1787: Also known as the Philadelphia Convention and as the Constitutional Congress, the gathering in Philadelphia of delegates (including George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and Benjamin Franklin) from each of the former colonies (except Rhode Island) who met with the purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation, and who ended by drafting an entirely new document: the Constitution.

Declaration of Independence: The document drafted by Thomas Jefferson at the Second Continental Congress by which the thirteen colonies proclaimed their independence from Great Britain. It was adopted in its final form on July 4, 1776. The goal of the document was to announce the independence of the colonies to the world and to list the reasons why the Revolution was legitimate.

executive branch: The branch of federal and state government responsible for implementing, supporting, and enforcing the laws made by the legislative branch and interpreted by the judicial branch.

First Continental Congress: The gathering in Philadelphia of delegates (including John Adams, Samuel Adams, Roger Sherman, John Jay, and George Washington) who met from September 5 to October 26, 1774, with the purpose of composing and sending a list of the colonies’ grievances to the king of England. The Congress approved an economic boycott against Britain, and also called for another meeting in the event that their complaints were ignored by the Crown.

Great Compromise: An agreement between large and small states reached during the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 that in part defined the legislative structure and representation that each state would have under the new Constitution. The Compromise proposed a bicameral legislature, resulting in the current United States Senate and House of Representatives.

House of Congress: A term referring to either the Senate (the upper house) or the House of Representatives (the lower house).

House of Representatives: The lower house of the U.S. Congress, to which 435 members are elected for a two-year term.

joint committee: A congressional committee consisting of members of both Houses and having jurisdiction over matters of joint interest. The four joint committees are Economic, Library, Printing, and Taxation. Special joint committees have been created to address specific issues (such as the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War).

judicial branch: The court systems of local, state, and federal governments, responsible for interpreting the laws passed by the legislative branch and enforced by the executive branch.

Judiciary Act of 1789: A landmark statute adopted in 1789 in the first session of the first United States Congress establishing the U.S. federal judiciary.

legislative branch: The branch of federal and state government empowered to make the laws that are then enforced by the executive branch and interpreted by the judicial branch. The legislative branch consists of Congress and the fifty state legislatures.

legislative committee: A legislative sub-organization that handles a specific duty rather than the general duties of Congress. The job of committees is to create and consider bills; each committee has jurisdiction over a specific field, such as education or foreign affairs.

lobbyist: A person who advocates the passage or rejection of a bill affecting the interest of a particular group, such as a corporation or a labor union.

lower house: A term for the House of Representatives.

ratify: To approve and give formal sanction to.

Second Continental Congress: A series of congressional sessions with delegates from the thirteen colonies that met in Philadelphia from 1775 until 1781, and at which the Articles of Confederation and the Declaration of Independence were drafted. The Second Continental Congress was the congress of the United States during the Revolutionary War, and is the forerunner of today's Congress.

Senate: The upper house of the U.S. Congress, to which two members are elected from each state by popular vote for a six-year term.

Senate committee: A sub-organization that handles Senate tasks. The U.S. Senate has 20 committees, 68 sub-committees, and 4 joint committees.

Speaker of the House: The presiding officer of the House of Representatives. The Speaker is second in line, after the vice president, in succession to the presidency. In 2007 Nancy Pelosi became the first female Speaker of the House.

standing committee: A permanent committee with jurisdiction over legislation in a particular area.

Supreme Court: The highest federal court in the United States, consisting of nine justices and having jurisdiction over all other courts in the nation.

upper house: A term for the United States Senate.

veto: The power of a president or governor to reject a bill proposed by a legislature by refusing to sign it into law.

Pre-Program Discussion Questions

1. Do you think you have a voice in government?
2. What do you think congresspeople do on a day-to-day basis?
3. Can you name any of your state's senators or congresspeople?
4. Do you think smaller states are fairly represented in Washington, DC?
5. How do you think laws are made?

Post-Program Discussion Questions

1. Do you think congresspeople should serve for longer than two years, or senators for less than six years?
2. What do the duties of senators and congresspeople include?
3. What's the difference between the House and the Senate? Why do we have both?
4. What are the steps a bill must go through to become a law?
5. Have you heard news stories about "pending legislation" or about a bill that has been approved by the House but not the Senate? Do you feel you have a better grasp of these events after viewing this program? What legislation has been passed recently, or is pending?

Student Projects

- Learn more about the scope of our nation's concerns, issues, and goals by researching one of the 23 House committees or 20 Senate committees (or one of their many subcommittees). Report back to the class, answering the following questions:
 - When was this committee created, and why?
 - How many members does it have, and who is its chairperson?
 - What are its goals and its duties?
 - What are some of the bills and resolutions assigned to this committee?
Which have passed, and which have not?
 - Has this committee been in the news?The class should try to present information on as many different committees as possible.
- Create a presentation in the form of a chart, Web page, or other media listing the “enumerated powers” of Congress, as stated in Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution. Under each “power” include a plain-English version of what the framers of the Constitution meant. Give examples of how these powers play out in everyday life.
- Would you like to serve as a congressional page? Pages act as assistants to legislators, living in a special dormitory and attending Page School during the academic year. Write a report entitled “A Day in the Life of a Page,” incorporating information on eligibility and the application process, as well as the duties and responsibilities of a page.
- Look up your legislators on a Web site such as OpenCongress, and put together a report on one of them. Information to include:
 - number of bills sponsored or cosponsored
 - voting record (how many votes missed)
 - campaign contributions received
 - committee membership
 - news coverageIf your legislator has succeeded in getting a bill passed into law, describe what the law is about, some of the interests and organizations who supported it, and some who opposed it.
- Follow the passage of a bill into law. Visit one of the Web sites featuring current, and even “hot” legislation (that which is stirring up the most publicity and debate). Study the bill and summarize its intent. Note who introduced it, which Congressional committees are involved, and any media coverage it is receiving. Then, keep track of how the bill does over the rest of the school year. Some proposed legislation that may be of interest:
 - H.R. 493 Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008
 - H.R. 185 Sewage Sludge in Food Production Consumer Notification Act
 - S.773 Cybersecurity Act of 2009
 - S. 229 Afghan Women Empowerment Act of 2009

Assessment Questions

- 1. The Legislative branch is one of three equal branches of government, along with the Executive and Judicial branches. The three-branch system was established _____.
a) in the Declaration of Independence, to avoid concentrating too much power in one government agency
b) in the Declaration of Independence, to provide for an organized system of government
c) in the Constitution, to avoid concentrating too much power in one government agency
d) in the Constitution, to provide for an organized system of government**
- 2. One of the reasons we have a “bicameral” legislature is _____.
a) the Founding Fathers incorporated workable elements from the British parliamentary system into the new American government
b) its two-part structure was part of a compromise between the large states and the small states in terms of fair representation in government
c) its two-part structure was suggested by Thomas Jefferson as being “harmonious”
d) its “open forum” structure was part of a compromise between the large states and the small states in terms of fair representation in government**
- 3. The legislative branch consists of the _____, which is divided into the _____ and the _____.
a) Senate; upper house; lower house
b) Senate; Congress; House of Representatives
c) House of Representatives; Senate; Congress
d) Congress; Senate; House of Representatives**
- 4. The United States Senate has _____ members (senators).
a) 50 (one from each state)
b) 100 (two from each state)
c) varying numbers, depending on states’ population density
d) 435, based on the population of different states**
- 5. The House of Representatives has _____ members (congresspeople).
a) 50 (one from each state)
b) 100 (two from each state)
c) varying numbers, depending on states’ population density
d) 435, based on the population of different states**

- 6. Each member of the House of Representatives serves _____.**
- a) a 2-year term
 - b) a 3-year term
 - c) a 4-year term
 - d) a 6-year term
- 7. Each member of the Senate serves _____.**
- a) a 2-year term
 - b) a 3-year term
 - c) a 4-year term
 - d) a 6-year term
- 8. The primary duty of Congress is to _____.**
- a) veto laws
 - b) declare a law unconstitutional
 - c) make laws
 - d) determine the constitutionality of a law
- 9. True or False? The Congress has the authority to declare war.**
- 10. The House of Representatives can _____. (*Choose all that apply*)**
- a) impeach officials (initiate the process)
 - b) try impeachments
 - c) initiate revenue bills
 - d) approve presidential appointments to the Cabinet
 - e) approve presidential appointments to the Supreme Court
 - f) elect the President in electoral college deadlocks
- 11. The Senate can _____. (*Choose all that apply*)**
- a) impeach officials (initiate the process)
 - b) try impeachments
 - c) initiate revenue bills
 - d) approve presidential appointments to the Cabinet
 - e) approve presidential appointments to the Supreme Court
 - f) elect the President in electoral college deadlocks
- 12. True or False? When the House proposes a bill, it then goes to the Senate for approval.
When the Senate proposes a bill, it then goes to the White House for approval.**

13. If the President vetoes a bill proposed by Congress, ____.

- a) the bill can still become a law, if two-thirds of both congressional houses vote to override the veto
- b) the bill can still become a law, if lobbyists campaign strongly enough for it
- c) the case is closed, but the issue can be resubmitted during the next Congressional term
- d) the case is closed; often at this point Congress will try resubmitting the bill to the next President who is elected

Assessment Questions Answer Key

- 1. The Legislative branch is one of three equal branches of government, along with the Executive and Judicial branches. The three-branch system was established _____.
a) in the Declaration of Independence, to avoid concentrating too much power in one government agency
b) in the Declaration of Independence, to provide for an organized system of government
c) in the Constitution, to avoid concentrating too much power in one government agency
d) in the Constitution, to provide for an organized system of government
A: (c) in the Constitution, to avoid concentrating too much power in one government agency**

- 2. One of the reasons we have a “bicameral” legislature is _____.
a) the Founding Fathers incorporated workable elements from the British parliamentary system into the new American government
b) its two-part structure was part of a compromise between the large states and the small states in terms of fair representation in government
c) its two-part structure was suggested by Thomas Jefferson as being “harmonious”
d) its “open forum” structure was part of a compromise between the large states and the small states in terms of fair representation in government
A: (b) its two-part structure was part of a compromise between the large states and the small states in terms of fair representation in government**

- 3. The legislative branch consists of the _____, which is divided into the _____ and the _____.
a) Senate; upper house; lower house
b) Senate; Congress; House of Representatives
c) House of Representatives; Senate; Congress
d) Congress; Senate; House of Representatives
A: (d) Congress; Senate; House of Representatives**

- 4. The United States Senate has _____ members (senators).
a) 50 (one from each state)
b) 100 (two from each state)
c) varying numbers, depending on states’ population density
d) 435, based on the population of different states
A: (b) 100 (two from each state)**

5. The House of Representatives has _____ members (congresspeople).

- a) 50 (one from each state)
- b) 100 (two from each state)
- c) varying numbers, depending on states' population density
- d) 435, based on the population of different states

A: (d) 435, based on the population of different states

6. Each member of the House of Representatives serves _____.

- a) a 2-year term
- b) a 3-year term
- c) a 4-year term
- d) a 6-year term

A: (a) a 2-year term

7. Each member of the Senate serves _____.

- a) a 2-year term
- b) a 3-year term
- c) a 4-year term
- d) a 6-year term

A: (d) a 6-year term

8. The primary duty of Congress is to _____.

- a) veto laws
- b) declare a law unconstitutional
- c) make laws
- d) determine the constitutionality of a law

A: (c) make laws

9. True or False? The Congress has the authority to declare war.

A: True

10. The House of Representatives can _____. (Choose all that apply)

- a) impeach officials (initiate the process)
- b) try impeachments
- c) initiate revenue bills
- d) approve presidential appointments to the Cabinet
- e) approve presidential appointments to the Supreme Court
- f) elect the President in electoral college deadlocks

A: (a) impeach officials (initiate the process)

(c) initiate revenue bills

(f) elect the President in electoral college deadlocks

11. The Senate can _____. (Choose all that apply)

- a) impeach officials (initiate the process)
- b) try impeachments
- c) initiate revenue bills
- d) approve presidential appointments to the Cabinet
- e) approve presidential appointments to the Supreme Court
- f) elect the President in electoral college deadlocks

A: (b) try impeachments

(d) approve presidential appointments to the Cabinet

(e) approve presidential appointments to the Supreme Court

12. True or False? When the House proposes a bill, it then goes to the Senate for approval.

When the Senate proposes a bill, it then goes to the White House for approval.

A: False. A bill proposed by the Senate then goes to the House for approval, and vice versa. After both houses of Congress have approved a bill, THEN it goes to the White House.

13. If the President vetoes a bill proposed by Congress, _____.

- a) the bill can still become a law, if two-thirds of both congressional houses vote to override the veto
- b) the bill can still become a law, if lobbyists campaign strongly enough for it
- c) the case is closed, but the issue can be resubmitted during the next Congressional term
- d) the case is closed; often at this point Congress will try resubmitting the bill to the next President who is elected

A: (a) the bill can still become a law, if two-thirds of both congressional houses vote to override the veto

Additional Resources

The White House

www.whitehouse.gov

The U.S. Constitution Online

www.usconstitution.net

Government Resources

THOMAS (The Library of Congress)

<http://thomas.loc.gov/links>

The National Archives

America's Historical Documents

www.archives.gov/historical-docs

The Constitution of the United States: Questions and Answers

www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_q_and_a.html

GovSpot

US government, state government, & more

www.govspot.com

Govtrack.us

a civic project to track Congress

www.govtrack.us

OpenCongress

Track bills, votes, senators, and representatives in the U.S. Congress

www.opencongress.org

Speaker Nancy Pelosi

www.speaker.gov

United States Senate

www.senate.gov

United States House of Representatives

www.house.gov

The Supreme Court of the United States

www.supremecourtus.gov

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Moyers: Report from Philadelphia Video Clip Collection—Themes (DVD/VHS)

Filmed at Independence Hall and filled with historical images and passages from the diaries, letters, and records of the Framers themselves, this two-part set is an indispensable tool for teaching the Constitution. All 76 clips (2:35 each) are arranged into groupings that take a thematic approach to the doings and decisions of the momentous Constitutional Convention of 1787. A viewable/printable instructor's guide is available online. (2-part set, 104 minutes each) © 2007 (# 39942)

Branches of Government (DVD/VHS)

This series describes the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Branches of American government and how they interact in a system of checks and balances. A Cambridge Educational Production. The series includes *The Executive Branch of Government: A Study of Federal and State Government | How a Bill Becomes a Law | The Judicial Branch of Government*. (3-part series, 29-35 minutes each) © 1993-1995 (# 14442)

The Making of the Constitution (DVD/VHS)

Conforming to civics and history curriculums, this compelling program puts key events into historical perspective by examining the pressures faced by Loyalists, Patriots, and average colonists. Richly textured with historical art, video footage, and insightful commentary, it explores a fascinating mix of individuals, political philosophers, and social issues of the day. Dramatized sections provide insights into what actually went on at Independence Hall while the document was being written. (27 minutes) © 1997 (# 8096)

Evolution of the Congress (DVD/VHS)

The United States Congress is among the most influential political bodies in the world. While it adheres steadfastly to many procedures and traditions, Congress is nonetheless a markedly different institution today than might have been envisioned by our Founding Fathers. This program examines how the legislative branch of the government has evolved, exploring the intended purpose of Congress and what challenges it faces in trying to remain an essential part of our democracy. Experts featured in the program include Dick Baker, Senate Historian; Ray Smock, former Historian of the House; and Dr. Michael Gillette of the Center for Legislative Archives. (29 minutes) © 1995 (# 5939)

Amendments to the Constitution: Bill of Rights and Beyond (DVD/VHS)

This program is an indispensable tool for helping students to understand the constitutional amendment process and to see its importance in their own lives. It defines what an amendment is, explains why amendments have been needed down through the centuries, and describes the process for proposing and ratifying an amendment. Amendments used as illustrations of the process of changing the Constitution have been carefully selected for their interest value to today's students. A viewable/printable instructor's guide is available online. Correlates to National Standards for United States History Education. (18 minutes) © 2002 (# 29906)

Can the States Do It Better? (DVD/VHS)

This program explores the ongoing debate over the idea of shifting power and authority from the federal government to the states and individuals. The program goes back to the founding of the country and examines the split between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton over how much power the federal government should have, through the Civil War, to the rapid expansion of federal powers during the Great Depression and World War II, to the Great Society programs of Lyndon Johnson, to modern times. The program looks at the idea of "devolution" today, and examines in detail two of the most contentious aspects of it: welfare reform and school vouchers. The program draws on documentary footage and archival materials, and features numerous experts, including several governors and a wide range of leading academics. (56 minutes) © 1996 (# 6551)