



Delaware Day 4th Grade Competition

Lesson Nine

Suffrage and Amending the Constitution



Objectives: Students will be able to

- Identify which part of the U.S. Constitution allows changes to be made to it. (Panel 4:1)
- Explain why the Founders might have included this process in the Constitution. (Panel 4:1)
- Identify who was allowed to vote in Delaware in 1787. (Panel 4:2)
- Describe who is now eligible to vote in Delaware. (Panel 4:3)
- Create a timeline that identifies and explains each amendment that expanded suffrage. (Panel 4:4)
- Explain why voting is an act of citizenship. (Panel 4:5)

This lesson contains information, resources and ideas to help students understand suffrage and amending the Constitution. Teachers will determine best practices and methods to instruct the students.

1. Introductory Activity

- a. Project or distribute Document 1: *Article V*. Invite students to guess what an amendment is. (A change or addition to the Constitution.) Ask them why the founders might have wanted to include this article in the Constitution.

2. Historical Background

The framers knew that people and circumstances would change over time. They wanted to ensure that the Constitution could change with the times. As Madeline Dunn from the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs likes to say, "Article V keeps it alive." The founders also wanted to make sure that the Constitution was not too easy to change which is why they required that 3/4 of the states agree to the changes before an amendment could be added to the Constitution

2. Activity: Suffrage

- a. Ask students to list any changes that they know of that happened in the U.S. between the time the Constitution was ratified and today.
- b. Write the word "Suffrage" on the board. Explain that when the Constitution was first written, it did not say anything about who could vote. Explain that the word "suffrage" means "the right to vote." The framers of the Constitution decided to let states decide who could vote. The states decided to do what was done in England which was to let white men who owned land vote. They argued that only people who paid taxes should be allowed to vote.
- c. Cut Document 2: *Who Gets to Vote* into individual squares and distribute one square to each student. You will need to decide how and to whom to distribute the squares. Students can be very sensitive with this type of activity.
- d. Call on all students who have a square that says "White male who owns land and who is 21 or older" to stand up and remain standing. This represents 1791, when approximately 10-20 percent of Americans could

vote. (*CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS FOUNDATION* , *Bill of Rights in Action, Fall/Winter 1991* (8:1).)

- e. Ask students to share their reactions.
- f. Tell students that 81 years have passed. The year is 1870. Slavery ended five years earlier. Many African Americans had been speaking out about how they should have the right to vote. As a result, the 15th Amendment was ratified. Invite the following people to stand up: Any white male or black male who is at least 21 years old.
- g. Invite reactions. The girls will be upset. Explain that women back then were also upset. They began to march and speak out, arguing that they should have the right to vote.
- h. Now the year is 1920. The 19th Amendment has been ratified. Fifty years have passed since the last time the Constitution was amended over suffrage. Invite all women who are at least 21 years old to stand.
- i. Ask who is left. Students will tell you the 18 year olds are left in their seats. Ask students if they feel that 18 year olds should be allowed to vote.
- j. Explain that 18 year olds were very angry that they were being asked to be soldiers and yet were not allowed to vote. The year is 1971. The 26th Amendment has just been ratified. Invite the 18 year olds to stand.

3. Discussion

Ask students how they felt when they were not allowed to vote. Ask them how they felt when they got the right to vote. Ask them why voting is so important.

Help students to understand that people who are elected want to help the people who voted for them. When people are not allowed to vote, their voices are not heard and their needs are not met. The society does not improve. The “We The People” part of the Preamble is incomplete when many of the people cannot vote.

3. Activity: The Amendments

- a. Distribute Document 3, pages 1 and 2: *The Rest of the Amendments*. Ask students to find the amendments that extended suffrage to African Americans, women and 18 year olds.
- b. Ask students to create a timeline that shows how voting rights changed over time.
- c. On the back, have them respond to the following writing prompt:

Many people fought hard for the right to vote. These people get upset when others do not vote. They say that voting is everyone's responsibility as a citizen. Why might they say that?

Article V

The Congress, whenever two thirds of both houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose amendments to this Constitution...

- **2/3 of both houses of Congress plus 3/4 of the states must all agree that the Constitution needs to be changed OR**
- **2/3 of all the states can propose the change and then 3/4 of the states must agree**

Who Gets to Vote?

White male, age 40, owns land	White male, age 30, owns land	White male, age 25, owns land
White male, age 60, owns land	White male, age 21, owns land,	White male, age 33, does NOT own land
White male, age 40, does NOT own land,	White male, age 30, does NOT own land	White female, age 35 owns land
White female, age 60	White female, age 40	White female, age 30
African American male, age 40, owns land	African American male, age 30, owns land	African American male, age 25, owns land
African American male, age 21, does NOT own land	African American male, age 33, does NOT own land	African American female, age 40
African American female, age 30	African American female, age 25	African American female, age 60
Teenage girl, age 18	Female, age 20	Male, age 20
Teenage boy, age 18	Teenage boy, age 18	Teenage girl, age 18

The Rest of the Amendments

11th - Explains how one state may sue another (Feb. 7 1795).

12th - Explains more clearly how the Electoral College works (June 15, 1804).

13th - Ended slavery (Dec. 6, 1865).

14th - Identifies who is a citizen; Explains that states cannot take away a person's life, liberty or property without "due process." States cannot take away people's constitutional rights (July 9, 1868).

15th - Established that people could not be denied the right to vote based on their race (Feb. 3, 1870).

16th - Authorized the U.S. to collect income taxes (Feb. 3, 1913).

17th - Changed how Senators are elected so that rather than state legislatures choosing senators, the people would choose them (April 8, 1913).

18th - Made it illegal to sell or make alcohol (Jan. 16, 1919).

19th - Established that people could not be denied the right to vote based on their gender (Aug. 18, 1920).

20th - Changed the start dates for terms of the Congress and the President (Jan. 23, 1933).

21st - Overturned the 18th amendment so that it was now legal to sell and make alcohol (Dec. 5, 1933).

22nd - Limited the number of terms to two that a President could be elected (Feb. 27, 1951).

23rd - Gave Washington D.C. the right to three electors for Presidential elections (March 29, 1961).

Document 3-p.2

24th - Outlawed poll taxes which were taxes charged to people when they voted (Jan. 23, 1964).

25th - Outlined what should happen if a President becomes unable to do his/her job anymore (Feb. 10, 1967).

26th - Lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 (July 1, 1971).

27th - Outlawed Congress giving itself a pay raise. Any rise in pay goes into effect after an election (May 7, 1992).