Unit 2: Legislative Branch

Content Area: **Social Studies**
Course(s): **Civics**
Time Period: **Semester 1 & 2**
Length: **4 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Standards

6.1.12.CivicsPI.1.a	Explain how British North American colonies adapted the British governance structure to fit their ideas of individual rights, economic growth, and participatory government.
6.1.12.CivicsPD.1.a	Use multiple sources to analyze the factors that led to an increase in the political rights and participation in government.
6.1.12.CivicsPI.2.a	Prepare and articulate a point of view about the importance of individual rights, separation of powers, and governmental structure in New Jersey's 1776 constitution and the United States Constitution.
6.1.12.CivicsPI.2.b	Examine the emergence of early political parties and their views on centralized government and foreign affairs and compare these positions with those of today's political parties.
6.1.12.CivicsPD.2.a	Compare and contrast the arguments of Federalists and Anti-Federalists during the ratification debates and assess their continuing relevance.
6.1.12.CivicsPI.3.a	Analyze primary and secondary sources to determine the extent to which local and state issues, publications, and the rise of interest group and party politics impacted the development of democratic institutions and practices.
6.1.12.CivicsPI.3.b	Describe how the Supreme Court increased the power of the national government and promoted national economic growth during this era.
6.1.12.CivicsDP.3.a	Compare and contrast the successes and failures of political and social reform movements in New Jersey and the nation during the Antebellum period (i.e., the 1844 State Constitution, abolition, women's rights, and temperance).
6.1.12.CivicsDP.3.b	Judge the fairness of government treaties, policies, and actions that resulted in Native American migration and removal.
6.1.12.CivicsDP.3.c	Examine the origins of the antislavery movement and the impact of particular events, such as the Amistad decision, on the movement.
6.1.12.CivicsDP.4.a	Compare and contrast historians' interpretations of the impact of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments on African American's ability to participate in influencing governmental policies.
6.1.12.CivicsDP.4.b	Analyze how ideas found in key documents contributed to demanding equality for all (i.e., the Declaration of Independence, the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Gettysburg Address).
6.1.12.CivicsPR.4.a	Draw from multiple sources to explain the ways in which prevailing attitudes, socioeconomic factors, and government actions (i.e., the Fugitive Slave Act and Dred Scott Decision) in the North and South (i.e., Secession) led to the Civil War.
6.1.12.CivicsDP.5.a	Analyze the effectiveness of governmental policies and of actions by groups and individuals to address discrimination against new immigrants, Native Americans, and African Americans.
6.1.12.CivicsDP.6.a	Use a variety of sources from multiple perspectives to document the ways in which women organized to promote government policies designed to address injustice, inequality, and workplace safety (i.e., abolition, women's suffrage, and the temperance movement).

6.1.12.CivicsPR.6.a	Use a variety of sources from multiple perspectives to evaluate the effectiveness of Progressive reforms in preventing unfair business practices and political corruption and in promoting social justice.
6.1.12.CivicsHR.8.a	Analyze primary and secondary sources to explain how social intolerance, xenophobia, and fear of anarchism led to restrictive immigration and refugee laws, and the violation of the human rights of individuals and groups.
6.1.12.CivicsPR.10.a	Analyze how the Supreme Court has interpreted the Constitution to define and expand individual rights and use evidence to document the long-term impact of these decisions on the protection of civil and human rights.
6.1.12.CivicsPR.10.b	Assess the effectiveness of governmental policies enacted during the New Deal period in protecting the welfare of individuals (i.e., FDIC, NLRB, and Social Security).
6.1.12.CivicsDP.11.a	Use a variety of sources to determine if American policies towards the Japanese during WWII were a denial of civil rights.
6.1.12.CivicsHR.11.a	Assess the responses of the United States and other nations to the violation of human rights that occurred during the Holocaust and other genocides.
6.1.12.CivicsPI.13.a	Craft an argument as to the effectiveness of the New Jersey Constitution of 1947, New Jersey Supreme Court decisions (i.e., Hedgepeth and Williams v. Trenton Board of Education), and New Jersey's laws in eliminating segregation and discrimination.
6.1.12.CivicsDP.13.a	Analyze the effectiveness of national legislation, policies, and Supreme Court decisions in promoting civil liberties and equal opportunities (i.e., the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, the Equal Rights Amendment, Title VII, Title IX, Affirmative Action, Brown v. Board of Education, and Roe v. Wade).
6.1.12.CivicsPI.14.a	Draw from multiple perspectives to evaluate the effectiveness and fairness of the processes by which local, state, and national officials are elected.
6.1.12.CivicsPI.14.b	Use case studies and evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of the checks and balances system in preventing one branch of national government from usurping too much power during contemporary times.

Enduring Understandings

1. The U.S. Constitution establishes a bicameral legislature with distinct structures, powers, and responsibilities for the House of Representatives and the Senate.

2. The legislative process is complex and influenced by many factors, including political parties, interest groups, public opinion, and procedural rules.

3. The system of checks and balances ensures that the legislative branch does not act in isolation but works alongside and is constrained by the executive and judicial branches.

4. Congress plays a vital role in representing the interests of the American people and shaping public policy through debate, negotiation, and compromise.

5. Redistricting and gerrymandering can significantly impact representation and electoral fairness.

6. Citizen engagement is essential to holding legislators accountable and ensuring a functioning representative democracy.

Essential Questions

1. What is the structure of the legislative branch, and how does it function within the larger context of the U.S. government? If is sufficiently functional in passing laws?
2. Is the process of making laws adhering to the needs of the American public?
3. What are the specific powers and responsibilities of Congress as outlined in the Constitution and do our legislators represent the wishes of the people?
4. How does the system of checks and balances affect the legislative branch's interactions with the executive and judicial branches?
5. In what ways does the legislative branch represent the interests of the public, and how do various factors (e.g., political parties, interest groups, and public opinion) influence this representation?
6. What are the significant challenges currently facing the legislative branch, and how do these challenges affect its ability to fulfill its role in democracy?

Knowledge and Skills

Students will know:

1. The structure and roles of the House of Representatives and Senate as outlined in Article I of the U.S. Constitution.

2. The major steps in the legislative process, including how a bill becomes a law.

3. Key powers of Congress, such as the power to tax, declare war, regulate commerce, and oversee the executive branch.

4. The roles of political parties, interest groups, lobbyists, and constituents in influencing legislation.

5. The concept and consequences of gerrymandering and the significance of redistricting.

6. The ways Congress checks the power of the other branches (e.g., oversight, impeachment, budget control).

7. The relationship between federal and state legislatures.

Students will be able to:

1. Analyze primary source documents, including sections of the Constitution and Supreme Court decisions.

2. Explain and model the steps of the legislative process.

3. Evaluate how effectively Congress represents diverse public interests.

4. Debate and critique real and hypothetical legislation based on constitutional and democratic principles.

5. Investigate the role of constituents and advocacy in shaping public policy.

6. Participate in simulations or discussions modeling congressional behavior and decision-making.

7. Interpret and analyze the effects of redistricting and gerrymandering using maps and case studies.

Transfer Goals

1. Students will be able to independently use their learning to:

    1. Critically analyze legislative actions and public policies to determine how well they reflect democratic values, constitutional principles, and the needs of constituents.

    2. Engage in the democratic process as informed citizens by understanding how to influence legislation, communicate with elected representatives, and evaluate their performance.

    3. Apply knowledge of the legislative process to real-world issues, advocating for change or support through civic engagement tools such as petitions, letters, or public testimony.

    4. Interpret and evaluate political messaging, legislative debates, and media coverage with an understanding of the roles and limitations of Congress.

    5. Assess the fairness and effectiveness of legislative representation by exploring issues like gerrymandering, campaign finance, and access to political power.

Resources

Digital Sources:

iCivics - Engaging Students in Meaningful Civic Learning

C3 Teaching - College, Career and Civic Life

New Jersey Department of State

US Government Services and Information

Bill of Rights Institute

The Choices Program - Brown University

Civics 101 - Podcast Platform

PBS News Hour

Supplemental Resources:

A

Crash Course Government and Politics

Fox News

CNN

MSNBC

NPR

270towin.com

livingroomdata.com (Database of Campaign Ads)

School Those Rock videos

National Archives

Annenberg Classroom

Digital Civics Toolkit

icivics

Voices of Democracy

SCOTUS blog

Stanford History Education Group

WH Databases, AI (Gemini, Copilot, Magicshoolai), Pear Deck

Web-based resources including but not limited to digital media (SIFT method), primary sources, peer reviews, historical documents and writings of historians

OYEZ (Supreme Court Cases)

US Citizenship and Immigration Services

Constitutional Rights Foundation

Assessments

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mKgdwpriGuRcVHIVCJUdBEk7lih12Q0ckKSTC4TMUXs/edit

Modifications

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ODqaPP69YkcFiyG72fIT8XsUIe3K1VSG7nxuc4CpCec/edit