

# Making Amends

## Explaining the constitutional amendment process

**Benchmark:** SS.7.C.3.5 Explain the constitutional amendment process.

### Clarifications/Objectives:

- Students will recognize the methods used to propose and ratify amendments to the U.S. Constitution.
- Students will be able to identify the correct sequence of each amendment process.
- Students will identify the importance of a formal amendment process.
- Students will recognize the significance of the difficulty of formally amending the U.S. Constitution.

**Time:** One class period

### Materials:

- Making Amends PowerPoint
- Computer
- Projector
- Speakers
- Handout A: Constitutional Amendment Proposal Form
- Chart paper – 1 piece per group of 5 students
- Markers – 1 per student

### Lesson Preparation

- Review all handouts and PowerPoints
- Print and review the PowerPoint in “notes view.” The PowerPoint includes notes to guide the lesson.

### Lesson Overview

**Warm Up** Using the Making Amends PowerPoint, review the purpose of a constitution with students and discuss amendments with the students. Emphasize the need for a formal constitutional amendment process as outlined in Article V of the U.S. Constitution. Discuss when the Constitution was written, who wrote the document, and the purpose behind a formal amendment process (so there is a procedure to follow and the Constitution is not easily changed).

**Using the Making Amends PowerPoint**, ask students if the proposals in following slides passed or failed as amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Students should give a thumbs-up (passed) or thumbs-down (failed) for each proposal. Explain that there have been over 10,000 proposed amendments to the U.S. Constitution, but the success rate for passage of the an amendment is less than 1%. There is also a comparison of the U.S. Constitution to the Constitution of India showing how short the U.S. Constitution is in comparison to constitutions of other nations.

**Introduce the steps in the amendment process.** Tell students that there are two parts to the constitutional amendment process: proposal and ratification. The PowerPoint will provide a visual of the constitutional amendment process at both phases: proposal and ratification. Encourage students to take notes and create their own visual of the process.

Optional extension: Provide students with a copy of Article V of the U.S. Constitution. Have them dissect the article and create an outline of the constitutional amendment process.

**Constitutional amendment activity** Divide students into groups of five and distribute Handout A: Constitutional Amendment Proposal Form, a piece of chart paper, and markers.

Working in their groups, students will need to identify a topic that addresses everyone in the United States to propose as an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. 2/3 of the group (at least 3 students) will need to agree to the topic in order for it to become a formal proposal. Students should then complete Handout A and write the exact wording of their proposed amendment on a piece of chart paper. Students should then post their chart paper on the wall. Allow each group a few minutes to provide a brief presentation of their amendment.

Students will now need to decide which proposals they would like to see ratified. Slide 18 will outline questions they should consider when voting for a proposed amendment. Once the students have reviewed the questions, allow them to walk around the room and vote for the proposals they would approve of for addition to the U.S. Constitution by marking a tally on the proposed amendment chart paper. Students may vote for more than one proposal or decide not to vote for any proposals.

After they have concluded voting, total the votes and see if any proposals received  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the class vote. Remind students that in order for a proposal to be ratified, it needs to receive  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the votes of the state legislatures or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the votes of a constitutional convention of the states.

**Check for Understanding** The final slide will include a question from the End of Course Exam Item Specifications book. Have the students independently write down their answer and ask student to explain how they made their decision.

# Constitutional Amendment Proposal Form

Directions: Complete the form below in your small group. Select a national topic that 2/3 of your group agrees to. Remember, your amendment proposal should impact everyone in the United States.

<p><b>Ideas for Topics</b>  <i>Include your notes on the different topics your group discusses.</i></p>	
Selected topic:	
What is the problem this amendment will address?	
Why should it be included in the U.S. Constitution?	
<p><b>Proposed Constitutional Amendment</b>  <i>Write the exact wording of your proposed constitutional amendment in the space below.</i></p>	
<p><b>Evaluate your proposed constitutional amendment:</b></p>	
Is the topic/problem addressed a national/federal issue? Explain.	
Does this proposed amendment support the common good? Explain.	
What is the financial impact of this proposed amendment?	
Are there other ways this issue can be addressed (like a federal law)?	
Is the proposed amendment fair? Does it violate anyone's rights? Explain.	
Is the proposed amendment necessary and appropriate? Explain.	