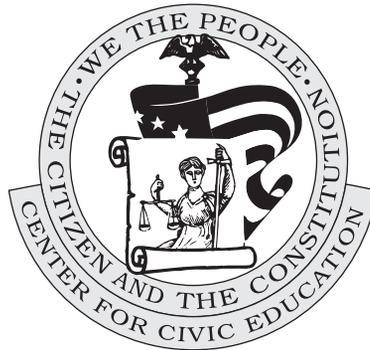


# We the People

THE CITIZEN & THE CONSTITUTION  
TEACHER'S EDITION

## SIMULATED CONGRESSIONAL HEARING QUESTIONS



## LEVEL 1



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## INSTRUCTIONS

As you know from studying your *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* textbook, members of Congress make laws. These laws should protect our rights and promote our welfare. To make good decisions about which laws they want to pass, members of Congress need to gather information. This information will help them understand how to address our nation's problems and pass good laws.

One way that members of Congress get the information they need is by holding congressional hearings. At these hearings, they ask experts to answer questions about important issues that affect proposed laws.

For this activity, you will role-play an expert who has been asked to speak at a congressional hearing. Each Unit Group will act as a team of experts on one of the five units in your text.

You will need a good understanding of your unit. You will also have to prepare answers to the questions assigned to your unit. At the hearing, committee members might ask you other questions about the information you have presented.

Your Unit Group should meet before the congressional hearing to prepare answers to your assigned questions. Most of the information you need for preparing good answers is in your text. In some cases, you might want to ask parents, teachers, and friends for their ideas about government in the United States today. Each member of your group should contribute to the presentation and speak at the hearing.

**UNIT 1****WHAT BASIC IDEAS ABOUT GOVERNMENT  
DID THE FOUNDERS HAVE?**

Congress has formed a congressional committee. This committee will examine the United States Constitution and the purposes of government. The members of your group are expert witnesses who will appear before the committee. You will be asked to testify on the following questions.

- According to the Founders, what are the basic purposes of government?
- Why did the Framers think a constitution was necessary to achieve these purposes?
- Which did the Founders think was more important, the common good or individual rights?
- Does our government still serve the purposes that the Framers intended?

**UNIT 2****HOW DID THE FRAMERS WRITE OUR CONSTITUTION?**

Congress has formed a congressional committee to gather information on the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights. It is also looking at the compromises that were made at the Philadelphia Convention. As expert witnesses, you will be asked to testify on the following questions.

- What major conflicts required the Framers at the Philadelphia Convention to make compromises?
- Why was it so difficult for the Framers to reach agreement about how to resolve their conflicts?
- How did the compromise of later adding a Bill of Rights affect our Constitution?
- Do you agree with the Framers decision to keep the proceedings of the Philadelphia Convention secret? Why or why not?
- Was the group that assembled at the Philadelphia Convention a fair representation of the people? Why or why not?

**UNIT 3****HOW DOES THE CONSTITUTION ORGANIZE OUR GOVERNMENT?**

Congress has formed a congressional committee to look at how power is divided among the three branches of our national government. As expert witnesses, you will be asked to testify on the following questions.

- How did the Framers use separation of powers and checks and balances to limit the powers of government?
- Give examples of checks and balances at work today.
- Give examples of the use of federalism to limit power.
- Do you think the Congress should have the power to pass a bill over the president's veto? Why or why not?
- Do you think the Supreme Court should have the power to declare a law passed by Congress unconstitutional? Why or why not?



## UNIT 4 HOW DOES THE CONSTITUTION PROTECT OUR BASIC RIGHTS?

Congress has formed a congressional committee to examine the people’s rights. They want to know how well they are being protected and what more might be done. As expert witnesses, you will be asked to testify on the following questions.

- What is freedom of expression, and why is it important to our democracy?
- How does the Constitution protect freedom of expression?
- Are there times when freedom of expression should be limited? Why or why not? Give examples.
- How is freedom of religion protected in the Constitution?
- When is it acceptable for government to limit the practice of people’s religious beliefs?
- How has the idea of “equal protection of the laws” been used to protect people’s rights? Give examples.



## UNIT 5

## WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS?

Congress has formed a congressional committee to examine the responsibilities of citizens in our constitutional democracy. As expert witnesses, you will be asked to testify on the following questions.

- What responsibilities go along with the rights of citizens?
- Do you think every citizen should be required to participate in his/her government? How?
- How does a responsible citizen promote the common good?
- Why do so many young people not fulfill their responsibility to vote?
- As citizens of a democracy, do we have responsibilities to other nations of the world?