

Civics and Economics

CE.2a-d Study Guide

STANDARD CE.2A

-- FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Foundations of American constitutional government-
Fundamental principles:

- consent of the governed
- limited government
- rule of law
- democracy
- representative government

Fundamental political principles define and shape American constitutional government.

- **Consent of the governed:** Citizens give authority to the government in exchange for the **protection of their rights**.
- **Limited government:** Government is **not all-powerful** and may do only those things the people have given it the power to do.
- **Rule of Law:** **Everyone**, including government officials, must **follow the law**.
- **Democracy:** In a democratic system of government, the **people rule**.
- **Representative government:** In a representative system of government, **the people elect public officeholders** to make laws and conduct government on the people's behalf.

STANDARD CE.2B

-- EARLIER DOCUMENTS

Impact of earlier documents:

- **Magna Carta**
- **Charters of the Virginia Company of London**
- **Virginia Declaration of Rights**
- **Declaration of Independence**
- **Articles of Confederation**
- **Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom**
- **the Constitution of Virginia and the United States, including the Bill of Rights.**

American constitutional government is founded on concepts articulated in earlier documents.

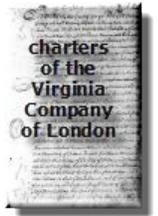
Influence of earlier documents on the Constitution

- The **Magna Carta** established for the first time the principle that **everyone** including the **king** was subject to the **law**, and gave Englishmen **basic rights and freedoms**.



King John signs the Magna Carta in the year 1215

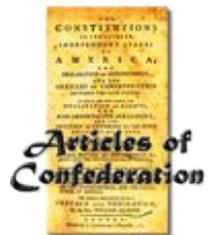
- The **charters of the Virginia Company of London** guaranteed the **rights of Englishmen** to the colonists.
- The Virginia **Declaration of Rights** served as a **model for the Bill of Rights**
- The **Declaration of Independence**



Declaration of Independence

- stated grievances **against the king** of Great Britain
- declared the colonies' **independence** from Great Britain
- affirmed "**certain unalienable rights**" (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness)
- affirmed the idea that all people are **created equal**.

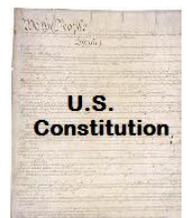
- The **Articles of Confederation**
 - established the **first form of national government** for the independent states
 - maintained that major **powers** resided with **individual states**
 - created **weak central government** (e.g., no power to tax or enforce laws);
 - led to the writing of the **Constitution**



- The **Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom** stated freedom of religious beliefs and opinions.

The **Constitution** of the United States, including the **Bill of Rights**,

- established the **structure** of the United States government
- guaranteed **equality** under the law **with majority rule** and the rights of the **minority protected**
- affirmed individual **worth and dignity** of all people
- protected the **fundamental freedoms** of religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition.



STANDARD CE.2C

-- PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION

Purposes for the Constitution as stated in its Preamble.



The Preamble of a constitution sets forth the goals and purposes to be served by the government.

The **Preamble** expresses the **reasons** the constitution was written.

Purposes of United States government

- To form a more **perfect union**
- To establish **justice**
- To ensure **domestic tranquility**
- To provide for the **common defense**
- To promote the general **welfare**
- To secure the blessings of **liberty**

The Preamble begins, "**We the People**," thereby establishing that the **power** of government **comes from the people**.

STANDARD CE.2D

-- AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

Procedures for amending the Constitution of Virginia and the Constitution of the United States.

The constitutions of Virginia and the United States can be amended through processes outlined in the constitutions.

The Virginia and United States constitutions have been amended and revised several times.

Constitution of the United States

- The amendment process is **complex**.
- To date, there are **27 amendments** to the Constitution of the United States.
- **Amendment process:**
 - Proposal: **action by Congress** or **convention** of the states
 - **Ratification:** by the **states**

Constitution of Virginia

- **Amendment process:**
 - **Proposal:** action by **General Assembly** or **constitutional convention**
 - **Ratification:** by **voters** of Virginia