Civics and Economics
CE.2a-d Study Guide

STANDARD CE.2A
-- FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Foundations of American constitutional government:
- 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.

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.
- 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
  - 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.

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.
**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.

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**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