

# THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION: OUR OWNER'S MANUAL

## PREAMBLE

The opening three words to the Constitution re-echo the theme of the Declaration that the people are sovereign. This was a completely novel type of government at that time.

The Constitution governs the government and the government governs the nation.

## Article I: Legislative Branch

- Section 1: Legislative power
- Section 2: House of Representatives
- Section 3: Senate
- Section 4: Times and places of election and assembly
- Section 5: Organization of Congress
- Section 6: Compensation and privileges
- Section 7: Legislative process
- Section 8: Enumerated powers
- Section 9: Restrictions on powers ("mini bill of rights")
- Section 10: Restrictions on states

Article I comprises over half the Constitution and contains instructions for the most powerful branch: Legislative. The first three articles independently describe the three branches, a signal that they should be separate powers.

List of 20 authorized expenditures here.

## Article II: Executive Branch

- Section 1: Organization of executive branch
- Section 2: Executive powers
- Section 3: Executive powers and Congress
- Section 4: Impeachment

The second most powerful branch contains five basic powers:

- Executive or the power to enforce laws
- Power to veto laws
- Authority to act as Commander-in-Chief
- Diplomatic powers
- Authority to grant pardons or reprieves

## Article III: Judicial Branch

- Section 1: Organization of judicial branch
- Section 2: Judicial jurisdictions
- Section 3: Treason

Alexander Hamilton described this branch as the weakest because it has no power to act on its own. Tocqueville marveled that the Judicial branch was given power over the Constitution, it was uncommon in Europe to give the courts such power. Originally this branch was intended to be used very sparingly, the other branches were expected to interpret the constitution for themselves.

## Article IV: State relationships

- Section 1: Full faith and credit
- Section 2: Privileges and immunities
- Section 3: Admission requirements
- Section 4: Republic guaranteed and protected in each state

This was the article that fulfilled the promise for a more perfect union. It created a few basic rules for the states to act as a union.

## Article V: Amendment process

This is perhaps the first constitution in history to have a built-in correction mechanism. It was meant to be changed in an orderly fashion, not by decree or apathy.

## Article VI: Supremacy clause

## Article VII: Ratification process

The Constitution grants few powers to the federal government but these powers must be absolute, otherwise there would be no reason for a federal government.

Here is the fulfillment of the promise in the Declaration that government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed. Two thirds majority vote was the minimum for ratification. Eventually all 13 states ratified.

# POLITICAL SCIENCE PRINCIPLES OF THE FOUNDERS

