



Let's Study The U.S. Constitution – Part 2

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The Constitution was written with the intent that it must endure for ages to come and be adaptable to the various crises of human affairs. Edmund Randolph, one of the five men charged with drafting the document, observed that it was necessary to stick to basic, “*essential principles only; lest the operations of government be clogged by rendering those provisions permanent and unalterable.*” The Framers knew that principles of liberty remain constant throughout time, so they provided this foundation for altering future law.

Let's continue our study of the [U.S. Constitution](#) with Article I.

Article I, Sec 1 basically set forth the working structure of the republic and established the “rules of the game” so to speak.

Sections 2 through 6 describes legislative duties, powers, and sets up the rules of the Senate and House of Representatives - how each are to be elected and the rules of doing the People's business. It also lays out the separation of powers and system of “checks and balances”.

Section 7 established that only the House may initiate bills for raising revenue (a huge shortcoming of the Articles of Confederation). [Prior to 1913](#), the States collected revenue and supported the federal government by “apportionments”. The federal level never taxed the people DIRECTLY before that time, but drew revenue largely from tariffs. Before the 16th Amendment was ratified, it was possible that an American could live their entire lives without any direct contact with the federal government because of the built-in buffer of protection provided by the State level of government. The States were considered the “creators” of the federal level, therefore superior to it, and one of their primary purposes was to protect their citizens from federal tyranny.

Section 8, one of the most important parts of the Constitution, yet unknown to most Americans, lists the [few and defined powers](#) that the States delegated to Congress in 1787. The States or the People retain authority over all other powers not on this list, as reinforced by the [Xth Amendment](#). The States and the People have allowed Congress to violate the few and defined powers for far too long! In doing this, we have actually changed our form of government from a republic (nation of laws) to that of a democracy (mob rule) and we daily reinforce it with our words and behavior. The riots and demonstrations we see on the daily news are a by-product of this change in the cultural mind-set.

The [famous quote](#) attributed to a Scotsman named Tytler describes what happens to a people who want the government to provide daily needs: *“A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the people discover they can vote themselves largess out of the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidate promising the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that democracy always collapses over a loose fiscal policy--to be followed by a dictatorship.”*

Thomas Jefferson put it this way: *"To take from one, because it is thought that his own industry and that of his fathers has acquired too much, in order to spare to others, who, or whose fathers have not exercised equal industry and skill, is to violate arbitrarily the first principle of association, — the guarantee to every one of a free exercise of his industry, & the fruits acquired by it."*

We have essentially violated the basic [principles of life, liberty, and property](#) and are perilously close to [Jefferson's description](#), are we not? It was the role of churches and individuals in early America to provide for the poor, orphan, widow, take care of the sick, and educate children and youth - not on the list of delegated powers in Article I, Sec 8. But churches have largely abdicated that role, bringing the American Church dangerously close to irrelevance in modern society – not to mention judgment by an Almighty God.

Article I, Sec 8 also sets forth the parameters for a standing army. Just having endured the cruelties of the Redcoats, the Framers needed to establish a system of protection to which all of the States would contribute financially, yet avoid the tendencies of a standing army. Interestingly, and because of their experience with the tyrannical British army, Article I reads, *“To raise and support Armies, but no appropriation of money to that use shall be for a longer term than TWO YEARS.”*

Many of the Founding Fathers, including George Washington and Alexander Hamilton recognized that peace comes only through strength. [Alexander Hamilton wrote](#) in Federalist #11, *“The rights of neutrality will only be respected when they are defended by an adequate power. A nation, despicable by its weakness, forfeits even the privilege of being neutral.”* Does this not describe our situation in the world today?

The [Commerce Clause](#) in Article 1 has become one of the greatest sources of federal control. The Articles of Confederation granted no such power, so this was a huge change in direction. It became necessary at the time of the Constitution's drafting to regulate commerce between the states. Each state had its own taxes, tariffs, and regulations, which created chaos among the colonies. A shipment of the same cargo would sometimes be charged taxes by multiple states. If the taxes were unpaid, the state felt obliged to confiscate the cargo. So the Commerce Clause began as a good and necessary thing. But misinterpreted, it also became a source of usurpation of power for anything the federal government wanted. Finally, the Supreme Court began to see the light in the 1990s, despite their previous track record of allowing practically any claim by misinterpreting the Commerce Clause.

This week's assignment: Read Article I and understand it. The Constitution was intentionally written so the average American in 1787 could [understand](#) it, but language of the Framers has been changed over time. If there are questions after reading Article I, consult your modern English version of the Federalist Papers and Webster's 1828 Dictionary. There are also many helpful tools online.

We all need to have a thorough understanding of how our government is supposed to operate so we can tell when Congress oversteps its bounds, a frequent occurrence these days. If we don't know when the boundaries of our system have been violated we will not be able to keep our republic intact, as Ben Franklin instructed when he said, "We have given you a republic, IF you can keep it".

Next week we will study Article II.

Resources: *US Constitution for Beginners* by Steven Bachman, *The Heritage Guide to the US Constitution*, *The Words We Live By* by Linda Monk, *The Original Argument*, *FederalistPapers.com*

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