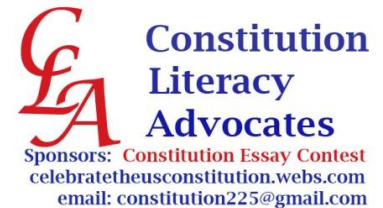


**2022 Constitution Essay Contest Entry Form**  
September 17, 2022 marks the 235<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the signing of our U. S. Constitution. To mark this historic occasion, we invite you to enter **Solano County's Eleventh Annual Constitution Essay Contest**



- \* **GRAND PRIZE AWARD:** \$700. *Mini-Grant*
- \* **BEST of SCHOOL AWARDS:** \$100. *Mini-Grants* presented to **ONE STUDENT** from **EVERY SCHOOL** submitting **30+ student essays**
- \* **FOUNDERS' CHOICE AWARDS:** \$50. *Mini-Grants* as merited

**Contest is open to ALL Solano County students in grades 10 - 12**

Teachers and Schools of the Grand Prize and Best of School recipients will also receive awards.

- \* Awards will tentatively be presented at the Awards Presentation Dinner, Date and Location to be determined
- \* (Complimentary dinners for Award Recipients, their parents and teachers will be provided by the *Constitution Literacy Advocates*, sponsors of the annual essay contest. Visit *CLA* website for more information.)  
[www.celebratetheconstitution.webs.com](http://www.celebratetheconstitution.webs.com)

**2022 Constitution Essay Contest Topic and Rules**

**Who is Eligible:** **Solano County Students, grades 10 – 12** currently enrolled in public, private, or are Home Schooled within Solano County

**ESSAY TOPIC:** How do you define election integrity and why is it imperative if “We the People” are “to secure the Blessings of Liberty for ourselves and our Posterity”?

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN:**

\* **READ:** “Writers’ Tips & Judges’ Criteria” and “Suggested Reading & Resources,” pp 2-4

**CONTEST RULES:**

1. Essay must be **500 words or less** and include a “Title” reflecting Your Main Idea
2. Entry must be an original work (not plagiarized) or previously appeared in any medium. Entries will be judged primarily on strength of the content (however, poor grammar, punctuation, spelling will not help your chances.) Any quotations or copyrighted material used in the essay must be properly identified.
3. Completed essays are to be submitted in either **Word** or **PDF format** via e-mail to: [constitution225@gmail.com](mailto:constitution225@gmail.com) and must include the following affidavit and information:  
“I certify that I am a student at \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ grade and that I am the sole author of this submission.” The affidavit must also include your full name, **Include your teacher’s name and email address.**  
\*\* **Please CC your teacher as proof that you have entered the contest.**
4. Entry Deadline: **All entries must be submitted by NOON, Friday, October 21, 2022**
5. Entries not meeting these submission guidelines will be automatically disqualified.
6. No entry fee is required.
7. Decisions are at the sole discretion of the judges.
8. Award recipients will be notified by email, or through your teacher.

**Writers' Tips & Judges' Criteria (YOUR ESSAY SHOULD INCLUDE) -- Judges will look for the following:**

1. Define "election integrity."
2. Explain how elections empower "We the People" to control our government?
3. What factors put fair, honest and transparent elections at risk today? Cite examples.
4. What are the consequences of compromised elections? Cite examples
5. How can we insure election integrity for future elections?
6. **Essay Development:** Be sure to include a "Title." Pay attention to sentence structure, topic sentences, introduction, body, and conclusion. Check grammar and spelling. Proofread your work!

**\*\* Suggested Reading \*\* \* See Additional Resources pp. 3-4.**

**Preamble of the U.S. Constitution:** "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

**Article IV Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution** mandates that, "The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a republican form of government." The word *republic*, derived from the Latin *res publica*, or "public thing," refers to a form of government where the **citizens conduct their affairs for their own benefit** rather than for the benefit of a ruler. By a republic, **James Madison**, the father of the Constitution, meant a system in which representatives are chosen by the citizens to exercise the powers of government. In Number 39 of *The Federalist Papers*, he returned to this theme, saying that a republic "is a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people; and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure, for a limited period, or during good behavior."

<https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/The+republican+form+of+government>

**Thomas Jefferson** wrote: "We in America do not have a government by the majority—we have government by the majority *who participate*... All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent."

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/5958-we-in-america-do-not-have-government-by-the-majority>

"If there is a lesson in all of this it is that our Constitution is neither a self-actuating nor a self-correcting document. **It requires the constant attention and devotion of all citizens.** There is a story, often told, that upon exiting the Constitutional Convention Benjamin Franklin was approached by a group of citizens asking what sort of government the delegates had created. His answer was: "A republic, if you can keep it." The brevity of that response should not cause us to under-value its essential meaning: **democratic republics are not merely founded upon the consent of the people, they are also absolutely dependent upon the active and informed involvement of the people for their continued good health.**"

Dr. Richard Beeman University of Pennsylvania <http://constitutioncenter.org/learn/educational-resources/historical-documents/perspectives-on-the-constitution-a-republic-if-you-can-keep-it>

**James Madison:** "Although all men are born free, slavery has been the general lot of the human race. Ignorant--they have been cheated; asleep--they have been surprised; divided--the yoke has been forced upon them. But what is the lesson...? **The people ought to be enlightened, to be awakened, to be united, that after establishing a government they should watch over it.... It is universally admitted that a well-instructed people alone can be permanently free.**"

[https://www.azquotes.com/author/9277-James\\_Madison](https://www.azquotes.com/author/9277-James_Madison)

# Constitution of the United States of America, 1787

## Link to full text of the U.S. Constitution:

[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/print\\_friendly.html?page=constitution\\_transcript\\_content.html&title=The%20Constitution%20of%20the%20United%20States%3A%20A%20Transcription](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/print_friendly.html?page=constitution_transcript_content.html&title=The%20Constitution%20of%20the%20United%20States%3A%20A%20Transcription)

## Amendment XIV 1868

### Section 2. (right of citizens of the U.S. to vote)

Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. **But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice-President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age,\* and citizens of the United States,** or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.

\* Note: section 1 of the 26<sup>th</sup> amendment modified this section

## Amendment XV 1870 (right of citizens of the U.S. to vote)

### Section 1.

**The right of citizens of the United States to vote** shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of **race, color, or previous condition of servitude--**

## Amendment XIX 1920 (right of citizens of the U.S. to vote)

**The right of citizens of the United States to vote** shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of **sex.**

## Amendment XXIV 1964 (right of citizens of the U.S. to vote)

### Section 1.

**The right of citizens of the United States to vote** in any primary or other election for President or Vice President, for electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Representative in Congress, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of **failure to pay any poll tax or other tax.**

## Amendment XXVI 1971 (right of citizens of the U.S. to vote)

**The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote** shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of **age.**

## Major Federal Election Laws:

1994 National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) <https://uscode.house.gov/statutes/pl/103/31.pdf>

2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA) <https://www.congress.gov/107/plaws/publ252/PLAW-107publ252.pdf>

## California Election Laws:

CA Secretary of State Office: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/publications-and-resources/voting-law-compliance-handbook>

Recent Changes in CA Election Laws: "The Golden State Agenda"

<https://www.eip-ca.com/The-Golden-State-Agenda.pdf>

## **Food for Thought and Discussion**

### **Think Before You Write**

1. **"It is enough that the people know there was an election. The people who cast the votes decide nothing. The people who count the votes decide everything," Joseph Stalin.** <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/2140-those-who-vote-decide-nothing-those-who-count-the-vote> Who was Joseph Stalin? What did he mean and what does it imply? How was that relevant during his rule?
2. **"Elections matter, but how much they matter depends entirely on how free, open and fair they are."** - [Elliott Abrams](#) What makes an election "fair and honest?" What safeguards are necessary to protect the integrity of our elections? What constitutes election interference?
3. **"If an election is to be determined by a majority of a single vote, and that can be procured by a party through artifice or corruption, the Government may be the choice of a party for its own ends, not of the nation for the national good."** John Adams' Inaugural Address, [avalon.law.yale.edu](http://avalon.law.yale.edu). March 4, 1797. <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/1317121> J. Adams prefaced that sentence with another cautioning, **"We should be unfaithful to ourselves if we should ever lose sight of the danger to our Liberties if anything partial or extraneous should infect the purity of our free, fair, virtuous, and independent elections."** Contrast President John Adams' views of elections with that of Joseph Stalin.
4. **"Elections have consequences."** Barack Obama What are those consequences?
5. Our elections allow us to freely choose and or replace those who will represent us, make our laws and regulations. America has enjoyed a peaceful transfer of power between administrations for the past 230+ years because the American people have confidence in the validity of their elections. What happens if citizens lose confidence in our fair, honest, and transparent elections---short and long term consequences?
6. What factors put the "integrity" of our elections at risk today?
7. What happens to our elections when there is unlimited access to voting without necessary safeguards? Give examples
8. Some stress that it is necessary "to restore confidence in American elections." Others stress that it is important "to restore election integrity." Is there a difference? Explain
9. What steps can be taken to ensure the transparency and integrity of our elections?
10. Consider Vote by Mail Ballots, (VBM Ballots). What safeguards and risks are involved with VBM ballots?
11. We have Constitutional Amendments, laws, and necessary qualifications before a person can vote. We also have protections to ensure people's right to vote. Why both?
12. The U.S Constitution prohibits voter suppression. Why don't more citizens regularly vote?
13. What can we do as individuals to protect the integrity of our elections?