



STUDY GUIDE

HOW THE STATES CAN SAVE AMERICA

KEY TERMS: federal government
amendment

Founding Fathers
convention

Article Five
partisan

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section during the video. Include definitions and key terms.

CUE COLUMN: Complete this section after the video.

How big was the federal government, in terms of dollars budgeted, in 2016, and how does that figure compare with what the government spent in 1965?

Why does Senator DeMint believe it is time to call a constitutional convention?

How did all 27 amendments start out?

What could the outcomes of calling a constitutional convention be?

If 34 states call a convention, how many states will send a delegate to represent their interests?

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- In the beginning of the video, Senator DeMint shares with us that, “The federal government has become a lumbering giant. With each passing year, it gets bigger and scarier. In 1965, Washington was 761 billion dollars big. In 2016... it was 3.5 trillion – five times the size. If the government spent only the money it collected in taxes, that would be one thing. But it always spends more – which is why we’re \$20 trillion dollars in debt.” What specific factors do you think contribute to the federal government growing to be so big? Why do you think the government spends more money than it collects? Explain.
- Senator DeMint goes on to point out that, “...the crazy spending isn’t even the worst of it. Washington is involved in every part of our lives. Think about anything you do: From driving your car to buying your groceries to mowing your lawn. Whatever it is – your education, your job, your health – the government has its hand on your shoulder, if not on your throat.” Why do you think the government is so heavily involved in so many aspects of your life? Do you believe that having the government be so involved in your life is good? Why or why not?
- Later in the video, Senator DeMint states, “...the amazing thing is, the answer is right in front of us. The Founding Fathers, in their wisdom, foresaw the situation we find ourselves in today. They wrote into the Constitution a way to repair Washington... not from the inside, because that will never happen. But from the outside, where it might.” Why can’t the problems with the federal government be solved from the ‘inside?’ Explain. What are some of the problems with the federal government that need to be ‘repaired?’
- Senator DeMint explains that, “Congress must call a convention to amend the Constitution if two-thirds of the states – that’s 34 states – demand it. The time has come to demand it. The time has come to propose amendments that will restore meaningful limits on federal power and authority. The time has come for a convention of states.” Do you agree that the states should act to compel congress to hold a convention to amend the Constitution? Why or why not? What do you think Senator DeMint means by restoring ‘meaningful limits on federal power and authority?’ Explain.
- Towards the end of the video, Senator DeMint asks, “So, what amendments might a Convention of States propose to limit Washington’s power? Term limits, for one. No one should be in Congress for 20 or 30 years. The only people who disagree have been in Congress for 20 or 30 years. And how about a limit on taxes, spending and borrowing? Since you began this video, the national debt has gone up \$8.4 trillion dollars. Here’s one more idea: A constitutional amendment that Congress can’t exempt itself from the laws it passes – something it’s done dozens of times, from insider trading to Obamacare.” Do you agree with Senator DeMint’s proposals? Why or why not? If you could introduce amendments to the Constitution, what would they be? Explain.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Term Limits

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “The common sense of term limits,” then answer the questions that follow.

- How did George Washington affect term limits? How long, on average, did a Senator serve at the end of the 19th century? How many states limit governors to 2 terms in office? Why was Governor Weld and Governor Johnson proud to sign the U.S. Term Limits pledge?
- What main argument does Governor Johnson make regarding term limits? In what ways does having a career politician represent a group of people negatively affect that constituency?
- In what ways does this article support the points made in the video? Would you be for or against an amendment that introduced term limits? Why?



QUIZ

HOW THE STATES CAN SAVE AMERICA

- 1. The federal government only spends the amount of money it collects in taxes.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

- 2. Which of the following parts of American's lives is immune to federal involvement?**
 - a. Education
 - b. Employment
 - c. Health
 - d. None of the above.

- 3. How many votes does each state get for any constitutional amendments proposed?**
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. The number of votes is based on population.
 - d. The number of votes is based on land area.

- 4. How many states are required to call a convention?**
 - a. 13
 - b. 25
 - c. 34
 - d. 50

- 5. What part of the United States Constitution grants the states the ability to call a convention?**
 - a. The Preamble
 - b. Article 5
 - c. Amendment 7
 - d. Amendment 27



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

HOW THE STATES CAN SAVE AMERICA

1. The federal government only spends the amount of money it collects in taxes.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. Which of the following parts of American's lives is immune to federal involvement?
 - a. Education
 - b. Employment
 - c. Health
 - d. None of the above.

3. How many votes does each state get for any constitutional amendments proposed?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. The number of votes is based on population.
 - d. The number of votes is based on land area.

4. How many states are required to call a convention?
 - a. 13
 - b. 25
 - c. 34
 - d. 50

5. What part of the United States Constitution grants the states the ability to call a convention?
 - a. The Preamble
 - b. Article 5
 - c. Amendment 7
 - d. Amendment 27

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/jun/28/the-common-sense-of-term-limits-for-congress/>

The common sense of term limits

A constitutional amendment would end the scourge of careerists in Congress

By Gary Johnson and Bill Weld -- Tuesday, June 28, 2016

ANALYSIS/OPINION:

As our first president, George Washington knew that everything he did set a pattern for those who would follow. He served two terms in office, then stepped down. He declined all efforts to get him to stay.

“Prudence on my part,” Washington wrote to a supporter, “must arrest any attempt of the well meant, but mistaken views of my friends, to introduce me again into the Chair of Government.”

Hence, George Washington established a de facto framework of term limits for those holding elective office. And this framework demonstrates a widely respected principle in American politics. It’s from the Declaration of Independence: Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.

Those who would be elected leaders — as we were as governors of New Mexico and Massachusetts — must recognize their time-limited role.

We came to office not to seek for our own power, but to implement sound principles and to benefit all the people within our states. We then passed the torch to the next generation of leaders.

Imagine how different — and better — policy and politics in America would be if term limits applied to the United States Congress.

We didn’t always have representatives and senators as career politicians. At the end of the 19th century, for example, a member of the House of Representatives served an average of 3.5 years, and a senator served an average of 6.5 years. By the year 2000, those numbers were 9.0 years for a representative and 11.0 years for a senator.

This process of becoming career politicians is one reason Congress is so unpopular. It’s unhealthy to be constantly seeking re-election. It’s like a shepherd feeding himself on the lambs in his own flock, instead of fending for and protecting them.

Some politicians argue that term limits undercut political experience. The public doesn’t buy it. Three-quarters want term limits. They know that term limits only cause problems for the career politicians.

The last two decades have given our nation even more confidence in this gut belief. Term limits for state and local elective office are now more of the norm than not. Indeed, 36 states limit governors to two terms in office, including New Mexico.

Also, about one-third of states place term limits on their legislatures. Those of you who live in those states know that, in general, legislators are more open and more willing to talk with everyday citizens. It’s only natural that citizens feel more connected to their elected officials if they are citizen-legislators.

Governing with term limits, I saw politicians do the right things for the right reasons — instead of whatever it took to get re-elected. Term limits gave me the freedom to use my best judgment as governor.

Term limits are reassuring for citizens. They know that they minimize the opportunity for corruption and centralization of power within a single individual. That's not the American way. We believe in the rule of law, not the rule of a strongman or -woman.

This is why Bill Weld and I were proud to sign the pledge by U.S. Term Limits, a leading national organization seeking to limit terms for elected officials, that we will support a constitutional amendment for term limits on members of Congress.

Current presidential candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton have not signed the pledge.

Yet pledging support for term limits is simple common sense, at least for someone who isn't seeking power as a career politician.

• Gary Johnson, a former Republican governor of New Mexico, is the Libertarian Party's 2016 presidential nominee. Bill Weld, a former Republican governor of Massachusetts, is his running mate.