

Lesson Plan: “The Living Constitution: How the U.S. Constitution changes through informal means”

American Government Content Statement #7:

Constitutional government in the United States has changed over time as a result of amendments to the U.S. Constitution, Supreme Court decisions, legislation and informal practices.

The following activity provides the opportunity for students to apply what they have learned about how the U.S. Constitution changes over time through informal means. This activity would follow a lecture where students are instructed on the following ways of informally amendment the constitution: Federal Court decisions, Congressional laws, and actions of the executive branch.

This lesson is designed to be completed in one class period. Students are to be divided into small groups for discussion and research. Students will need access to computers.

1. Students as a group will discuss different opinions on the meaning of the 2nd Amendment to demonstrate how it can be interpreted in different ways.
2. Students will identify how each of the three branches has played a role in helping to shape the meaning of the 2nd amendment by researching actions they have taken on gun control.

The Meaning of the 2nd Amendment

What does “the right of the people to keep and bear arms” mean today?

Text:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

Discuss as a group:

Which of the following do you think the 2nd amendment was intended to protect?

- _____ 1. The right to possess an atomic bomb
- _____ 2. The right to possess a handgun
- _____ 3. The right to possess a bow an arrow
- _____ 4. The right to carry a gun in public
- _____ 5. The right to own 10 guns
- _____ 6. The right to possess an assault gun that can fire up to 1,000 rounds per minute
- _____ 7. The right to carry a concealed weapon at a high school football game

Which of the following restrictions do you think would be violations the 2nd amendment?

- _____ 1. Having a criminal background check before being able to purchase a gun
- _____ 2. A city with a high crime rate that passes a law banning its citizens from owning handguns.
- _____ 3. Taking away the right of convicted felons to own guns
- _____ 4. Putting age limits on gun ownership
- _____ 5. Banning “cop killer” bullets

How have the different branches of government changed the meaning of the 2nd amendment?
Research each of the follow actions and explain how they have contributed to the interpretation of the 2nd amendment's meaning.

Judicial Branch:

1. Supreme Court decision **D.C. v Heller**

2. Recent Appeals Court decision: Link is also on google classrooms

<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/federal-court-upholds-tough-gun-control-laws-n-y-conn-article-1.2402964>

Legislative Branch:

Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act

Executive Branch:

Obama executive orders on gun control: link is also on google classrooms

https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/november_exec_actions_progress_report_final.pdf