

Two Constitutions, Two Amendment Paths

Trace and compare how amendments are proposed and approved in the U.S. and Virginia constitutions.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Read the official procedure cards

Directions: Read both cards. They are classroom-friendly summaries based on official constitutional text. Use only these cards to complete the process charts in Part 1.

Source A - United States amendment procedure

Classroom-friendly summary based on the U.S. Constitution, Article V (1787), National Archives. Congress may propose an amendment when two-thirds of both the House and Senate agree. Or, after applications from two-thirds of state legislatures, Congress must call a convention to propose amendments. An amendment becomes valid when either three-fourths of state legislatures or conventions in three-fourths of the states ratify it. Congress chooses the ratification mode.

Official source: National Archives, "The Constitution of the United States: Article V," accessed September 25, 2026. <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/constitution/article-v.html>

Source B - Virginia legislative amendment route

Classroom-friendly summary based on the Constitution of Virginia, Article XII, Section 1, Virginia General Assembly. A proposed amendment must win a majority of all elected members in each chamber of the General Assembly. It is recorded, referred to the General Assembly chosen after the next House of Delegates general election, and published for at least three months before that election. The newly chosen General Assembly must again approve it by a majority of all elected members in each chamber. At least 90 days later, voters decide it. A majority of voters voting on the amendment approves it; it takes effect on the date the amendment prescribes.

Official source: Virginia General Assembly, "Constitution of Virginia, Article XII, Section 1," accessed September 25, 2026. <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/constitution/article12/section1/>

Important: This worksheet traces Virginia's *legislative amendment route*. Article XII also addresses a convention route, which is outside this activity.

Two Constitutions, Two Amendment Paths

Trace and compare how amendments are proposed and approved in the U.S. and Virginia constitutions.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Part 1: Build and compare the routes

1. U.S. process chart. Fill every blank with a body, fraction, or action from Source A. Show both proposal routes and both possible ratification modes.

Stage	Route or decision
Proposal route 1	Congress: _____ of the House and _____ of the Senate agree.
Proposal route 2	_____ of state legislatures apply; Congress calls a _____.
Ratification choice	Congress chooses state _____ or state _____ as the ratifying body.
Ratification threshold	The amendment needs approval in _____ of the states.

2. Virginia legislative process chart. Number the steps 1-5 in order. Then add the missing threshold or time requirement.

Order	Virginia legislative route
	Each General Assembly chamber gives first approval by a _____ of all elected members.
	It is recorded, referred past the next House general election, and published for at least _____ months.
	The newly chosen General Assembly gives second approval by a _____ of all elected members in each chamber.
	No sooner than _____ days after final passage, voters decide the amendment.
	A _____ of voters voting on the amendment approves it.

Two Constitutions, Two Amendment Paths

Trace and compare how amendments are proposed and approved in the U.S. and Virginia constitutions.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Part 1: Build and compare the routes (continued)

3. Compare. In 3-5 sentences, explain one important difference in proposal and one important difference in final approval. Include at least two numbers or fractions.

Two Constitutions, Two Amendment Paths

Trace and compare how amendments are proposed and approved in the U.S. and Virginia constitutions.

Answer key and teaching notes

Materials and setup: Print and supply all student pages, keeping teacher-key pages separate. Students need pencils and the supplied procedure cards; optional: highlighters for marking proposal, waiting, and approval steps. Do not add a Virginia convention chart: this task is intentionally limited to Article XII, Section 1. Place students in pairs only after each student has first read the cards independently.

Teaching script: “Constitutions set procedures for changing their own text. Read for who acts, what fraction is needed, and what happens next. In the U.S. route, notice that there are alternatives. In the Virginia legislative route, notice the two General Assembly approvals with an election between them. Fill the charts from the supplied cards, not from memory. Then use the charts to make your comparison.”

Observation method: Circulate while students complete Part 1. For each student, mark whether the student (a) distinguishes U.S. proposal alternatives, (b) identifies the U.S. ratification choice made by Congress, (c) puts Virginia's election-between-votes sequence in order, and (d) supports the comparison with accurate procedure details. Prompt once: “Which body acts at this step?” Collect the charts and comparison for scoring.

1. U.S. chart answers: Proposal route 1: two-thirds of the House and two-thirds of the Senate. Proposal route 2: two-thirds of state legislatures apply; Congress calls a convention. Ratification choice: state legislatures or state conventions. Ratification threshold: three-fourths of the states. Accept “2/3” and “3/4.” Congress proposes only in the congressional route; the President has no approval role in Article V.

2. Virginia chart answers: In order: (1) first approval by a majority of all elected members in each chamber; (2) recording, referral past the next House general election, and publication for at least three months; (3) second approval by a majority of all elected members in each chamber; (4) voters decide no sooner than 90 days after final passage; (5) a majority of voters voting on the amendment approves. The amendment becomes effective on its prescribed date; that detail is not a chart blank.

3. Comparison scoring: A complete response states one accurate proposal difference and one accurate final-approval difference, with at least two accurate numbers/fractions. Sample: “The U.S. Constitution has two ways to propose an amendment: two-thirds of both the House and the Senate, or a convention requested by two-thirds of state legislatures. Virginia's legislative route begins with majorities of all elected members in both General Assembly chambers. Virginia requires another General Assembly vote after the next House election before voters decide. For final approval, the U.S. needs three-fourths of states using a mode Congress chooses, while Virginia needs a majority of voters voting on the amendment.”

Source credits: National Archives, “The Constitution of the United States: Article V,” <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/constitution/article-v.html>. Virginia General Assembly, “Constitution of Virginia, Article XII, Section 1,” <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/constitution/article12/section1/>. Sources checked September 25, 2026.