



Fifth-graders from Buckingham Elementary School present their ideas.

REWRITING THE RULES

These fifth-graders won a contest for their ideas about the U.S. Constitution.

AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT:

What rules would you like to change, and why?

Like many kids, the students in teacher Linda Monkoski's fifth-grade class had never thought too much about the U.S. Constitution. But last fall, Monkoski asked them what they

would change about the historic document.

It was part of a contest called the Citizenship Challenge.* Fourth- and fifth-graders near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, were invited to come up with ideas for an **amendment** to the Constitution. The winning class would win \$1,000.

"I was really excited to get to work on such a big project and for our voices to be heard," says 11-year-old Cami Martin.

The students at Buckingham Elementary School spent weeks brainstorming. They researched existing amendments and debated new **proposals**.

For Cami and her classmates, all that hard work was about to pay off.

New Ideas

America's Founders wrote the Constitution in 1787. It laid out a plan for how the

national government would be run. That system is still in place today. The Founders also outlined a process for making changes to the Constitution. Over time, 27 amendments have been added, the most recent in 1992.

The students' job was to come up with ideas for a 28th amendment. They focused on making elections fairer. For one thing, they believe that members of Congress should be limited to two terms, like the president. Congress is the lawmaking branch of the U.S. government. It is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Members of the House currently serve two-year terms.

Members of the Senate serve six-year terms. But all members of Congress can be reelected over and over. Some have held their positions for more than 40 years. The kids think more new people should be able to serve. "We need fresh ideas," says 11-year-old Colin Williamson.

Watch a VIDEO Test your Constitution knowledge!

A Team Effort

The kids worked together to write an essay outlining their proposal. The class was among 10 finalists chosen to present their ideas to three judges at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia.

"It was pretty scary up there," says Colin.

This past January, the students found out that they had won first place!

What would your class's Constitution include?

Enter our contest and your class could win a \$50 gift card.

Go to [scholastic.com/sn4](https://www.scholastic.com/sn4) for details and an official entry form.



"We were all really surprised and excited," says Cami.

Learning About Laws

The class used its prize money to take a field trip to Harrisburg, the capital of Pennsylvania. They met with a state senator and learned how laws are passed.

The victory doesn't mean the amendment will actually be added to the Constitution. But Izzy Murray, 11, says the project taught her a lot about our government.

"I've been really into politics and the Constitution," she explains. "It definitely made me more passionate."

—by Rebecca Zissou

WORDS TO KNOW

amendment *noun*. a change or an addition to a law or legal document

proposals *noun, plural*. plans or suggestions for people to consider

*The Citizenship Challenge is run by the Rendell Center for Civics and Civic Engagement and the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

Constitution Day is **SEPTEMBER 17**. On that day in 1787, our nation's Founders signed the Constitution.



39 DELEGATES

(representatives from the states) gathered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to sign the Constitution. It had taken them nearly four months to write.



THE PREAMBLE

(or introduction) begins with "We the People." The phrase shows that the new government would be run by the people, not by a king.

THE FIRST 10 AMENDMENTS, ADDED IN 1791, ARE CALLED THE BILL OF RIGHTS.

They protect some of our most important rights, such as freedom of speech, religion, and the press.

