

# Comparative Constitutions



Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## We Need a Little Change Around Here

Nothing stays the same—not even constitutions. Changing a constitution is a big deal. That’s because a constitution is the foundation for all the other laws in the country or in a state. Because constitutions are so important, it’s not easy to change them. They don’t pull a constitutional amendment out of a hat! Usually there is a complicated procedure that requires many people to agree on the proposed amendment. There are two main steps to amending (changing) most constitutions: proposing (suggesting) an amendment and ratifying (approving) the amendment.

Compare the methods for amending the U.S. Constitution with the methods for amending Virginia’s Constitution.

	 <b>U.S. CONSTITUTION</b>	<b>VIRGINIA CONSTITUTION</b> 
<b>STEP 1:</b> Proposing an Amendment	<p><u>Method 1:</u> Two-thirds of the members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives vote to propose an amendment</p> <p><u>Method 2:</u> the legislatures in 2/3 of the states vote to propose an amendment</p>	<p><u>Method 1:</u> Either the state senate or the state house of delegates (like a house of representatives) proposes an amendment, and a majority of members of both houses vote to approve the idea</p> <p><u>Method 2:</u> Two-thirds of the members of both the Senate and the House of Delegates vote to call a convention for proposing an amendment</p>
<b>STEP 2:</b> Ratifying an Amendment	<p><u>Method 1:</u> the legislatures in three-fourths (3/4) of the states vote to approve the amendment</p> <p><u>Method 2:</u> Three-fourths of the states hold conventions that vote to approve the amendment</p>	<p><u>Method 1:</u> After the next election of the House of Delegates, both the Senate and the House of Delegates vote to approve the amendment. Finally, the amendment is put on a ballot for the voters. If the voters approve the amendment, it becomes part of the constitution.</p>

**Compare:** There is one major way that ratifying Virginia’s constitution is different from ratifying the U.S. constitution. What is that major difference? Why do you think we don’t do that for ratifying the U.S. Constitution?