



Rhode Island

LAW DAY

THE CONSTITUTION'S PROMISE:

OUT OF MANY,



ONE



Friday, May 2, 2025

**MIDDLE SCHOOL
PROGRAM GUIDE**



2025 RI LAW DAY

THE CONSTITUTION'S PROMISE: OUT OF MANY, ONE



On this Law Day, we explore how the United States Constitution brings people together and protects the freedoms we all share. The theme, “**The Constitution’s Promise: Out of Many, One**,” reminds us that our country is made up of many individuals, and the Constitution helps unify us as one nation.

The phrase “E Pluribus Unum” means “Out of many, one.” It represents the idea that people from different places, families, and communities can come together to build a strong and united country.

The Constitution begins with the words, “We the People,” showing that it was created by all of us, for all of us. It gives us a framework for justice, peace, and freedom, and it continues to guide how we work together today.



Lesson One - The Preamble and Unity

Introduction:

Start by asking students:

"What helps people in a country work together and get along, even when they have different ideas or come from different places?"

Introduce the idea that the Constitution gives us a set of shared goals. The Preamble is like an introduction that explains what the Constitution is trying to do and why it matters.

The Preamble:

Display and read the Preamble aloud as a class.

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Ask Students: "What stands out to you in this sentence?"

Possible Answer: "We the People" stands out because it shows the government is created by everyone, not just leaders.

Ask Students: "What words sound important or powerful?"

Possible Answer: Justice" and "Liberty" sound important because they are about fairness and freedom.

Vocabulary and Key Ideas

Explain that the Preamble lists six big goals for the country. Go over these terms together with definitions students can understand:

- **A more perfect Union:** Bringing the states together as one strong country
- **Establish Justice:** Making sure laws are fair and everyone is treated equally
- **Ensure domestic Tranquility:** Keeping peace and safety in our communities
- **Provide for the common defence:** Protecting the country from outside threats
- **Promote the general Welfare:** Supporting the well-being of everyone
- **Secure the Blessings of Liberty:** Protecting our freedoms now and for future generations

To help students connect these ideas to real life, move into the next activity where they'll work in groups to explore one phrase in more depth.

Group Discussion Activity

Divide students into small groups. Assign each group one phrase from the Preamble.

Ask each group to answer the following questions:

- *What does this phrase mean in your own words?*
- *Why is this goal important for helping people work together?*
- *Can you think of a real-life example of this goal in action?*

Have each group share their ideas with the class.

After hearing from each group, take a moment to bring the class back together. Use the following questions to guide a conversation about the bigger picture and help students connect their group work to the importance of unity in everyday life.

Class Discussion

Ask the students the following questions:

- *How does the Preamble help bring people together?*
- *Why is it important for a country to have shared goals?*

Encourage students to think about school, sports teams, or their community. What happens when people have the same goals? When individuals work toward shared goals, they often cooperate more, listen to each other, and support one another. It creates a sense of teamwork, helps resolve disagreements peacefully, and makes it easier to solve problems and reach success together.

Wrap-Up

Remind students that the Constitution begins with "We the People" because it belongs to everyone. The goals in the Preamble are still important today and help us live, work, and grow as one country—together. These words remind us that all citizens have a role to play in making the nation stronger and fairer. By understanding and working toward these shared goals, we continue the promise of the Constitution in our everyday actions, whether in school, in our communities, or as future voters and leaders.

Lesson Two - Federalism and Unity

Introduction:

Start by asking students:

"Why do we have both a national government and state governments? What would happen if only one group made all the decisions?"

Explain that the United States uses a system called **federalism**. This means power is shared between the national government (which works for the whole country) and state governments (which focus on local needs).

Federalism allows both levels of government to operate independently in some areas, while also working together in others. It helps make sure the needs of people in all parts of the country are considered.

Key Terms to Review:

- **Federalism:** A political system where power is divided between national and state governments.

- **Balance of Power:** Making sure no one level of government becomes too powerful.
- **Separation of Powers:** Dividing responsibilities among different branches of government.
- **Federal and State Powers:** Some powers belong to the national government, others to the states.
- **Checks and Balances:** Each part of the government can check the others to keep things fair.

Optional Video Activity

Show the video: [What is Federalism? – PBS LearningMedia](#)

After watching, ask students:

- *What are some things only the federal government does?*
- *What are some things states decide on their own?*
- *Why do you think sharing power is a good idea?*

After the video and once students have answered the discussion questions, take a few minutes to summarize the main points as a class. Encourage students to recall examples mentioned in the video and consider how they connect to the key terms you reviewed earlier.

Discussion: Federal vs. State Responsibilities

Ask students: *Can you think of examples where federal and state governments might have different responsibilities?*

You may need to guide them with examples:

- **Driver's Licenses**
 - **Federal:** Sets safety standards for road signs and highway funding.
 - **State:** Issues driver's licenses and sets age or training requirements.
- **School Lunch Programs**
 - **Federal:** Provides nutrition guidelines and funding for meals.
 - **State:** Runs the programs in each school district and sets menus.
- **Education Standards**
 - **Federal:** Sets broad goals and funding
 - **State:** Creates curriculum and testing rules

- **Voting Rules**
 - **Federal:** Protects voting rights
 - **State:** Manages how elections are run
- **Public Health**
 - **Federal:** Offers national health guidance
 - **State:** Decides things like school health rules

Scenario Discussion: Working Together

Use this section to help students understand that federalism is not just about dividing responsibilities—it also creates opportunities for cooperation. Before diving into the examples, explain that many of the challenges our country faces require different levels of government to share resources, coordinate responses, and work toward the same goal. Remind students that teamwork between state and national governments can lead to better, faster, and more effective solutions.

Now let's look at how federal and state governments collaborate to solve problems. Present a few examples and ask:

"How do federal and state governments work together here? How does that teamwork help the country stay united?"

Examples:

- **Disaster Response:** States manage emergencies locally, and the federal government sends help.
- **Education Funding:** Federal funds support state-run schools.
- **Transportation:** Federal money helps states build highways.
- **Environmental Protection:** Federal laws set standards, states build on them.
- **Public Safety:** Local police and national agencies cooperate on major investigations.

Final Wrap-Up:

End the lesson by summarizing that federalism is one of the ways the Constitution brings people together. By dividing power between national and state governments, we make room for different needs and ideas across the country while still working toward shared goals. Federalism allows for collaboration, flexibility, and local decision-making, all while keeping the nation united under one system of government.

Emphasize that federalism helps people in all parts of the country feel heard and supported. It gives states freedom to meet local needs, while also creating national rules that keep things fair and organized.

Presenter Notes: Using These Lessons Together

These two lessons were designed to help students understand how the Constitution encourages unity and cooperation among the people and levels of government. While each lesson can stand alone, they also work well together as a connected sequence.

Lesson One explores the Preamble and its shared national goals.

Lesson Two introduces the concept of federalism and shows how national and state governments work together.

How to Use These Lessons

- Presenters can choose to lead one or both lessons, depending on time and interest.
- If only one lesson is used, we recommend Lesson One as a foundation.
- If time allows, follow with Lesson Two to build on the idea of unity through shared responsibilities.

Companion Materials

Please refer to the PowerPoint presentation included with this packet. The slides correspond to key points and activities in both lessons and are intended to support discussion, visuals, and pacing.



The 2025 RI Law Day Program Guide is presented by the Rhode Island Law Day Committee comprised of members of the Rhode Island Judiciary, Rhode Island Bar Association, Rhode Island Police Chief's Association, Rhode Island Department of Education, and the Roger Williams University School of Law.