

State High School Mock Congressional Hearing Questions 2023–2024

Using the questions below for each corresponding unit, groups of students will respond as expert witnesses testifying before Congress. Each group within a class will present a 4-minute prepared response to the full question including bullets. After the 4-minute opening response, students will be prepared to answer follow up questions from a panel of judges for 6-minutes. See full rules or contact apitts@flsouthern.edu for additional details.

Unit One: What Are the Philosophical and Historical Foundations of the American Political System?

3. To what extent, if any, did the Framers' experiences with state constitutions during the American Revolution influence the formation and content of the United States Constitution?

- What were the primary characteristics and features of state constitutions established during the American Revolution, and how did they reflect the ideals of self-governance and individual rights?
- In what ways did the successes and challenges of state constitutions provide valuable insights regarding the balance of power and the protection of citizens' rights?

Unit Two: How Did the Framers Create the Constitution?

1. At the Philadelphia Convention, what considerations resulted in the creation of the three-fifths clause in the Constitution?

- To what extent, if any, did the Three-Fifths Compromise shape the political and social landscape in the first 70 years of United States history?
- How did the 14th Amendment alter the meaning of the three-fifths clause, and, in your estimation, did it provide full citizenship for African Americans?

Unit Three: How Has the Constitution Been Changed to Further the Ideals Contained in the Declaration of Independence?

1. In what ways was the due process clause of the 14th Amendment interpreted by the courts in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War?

- To what extent, if any, have rights been better protected as a result of substantive due process?
- To what extent has the incorporation doctrine contributed to an enhanced protection of rights?

Unit Four: How Have the Values and Principles Embodied in the Constitution Shaped American Institutions and Practices?

1. “Congress did not create the Supreme Court. ... I know this is a controversial view, but I’m willing to say it. No provision in the Constitution gives them the authority to regulate the Supreme Court—period.” * Do you agree or disagree with Justice Samuel Alito’s constitutional assessment of judicial independence? Why or why not?

- Historically, how effective have constitutional checks been in controlling the courts?
- Alexander Hamilton wrote that the judicial branch would be the “least dangerous to the political rights of the Constitution.” ** Do you believe this description is still warranted? Why or why not?

* Kimberly Strawbridge Robinson, “Congress Can’t Force Ethics Code on Supreme Court, Alito Says,” Bloomberg Law, July 28, 2023, <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/congress-cant-force-ethics-code-on-supreme-court-alito-says>. ** Publius, “The Federalist 78,” New York, May 28, 1788, Center for the Study of the American Constitution, University of Wisconsin–Madison, <https://csac.history.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/281/2017/07/78.pdf>.

Unit Five: What Rights Does the Bill of Rights Protect?

1. The United States Supreme Court recently ruled that, under the Second Amendment, firearms regulations must be “consistent with this Nation’s historical tradition of firearm regulation.” * Do you agree or disagree? Why?

- In light of this ruling, how should courts balance the right to bear arms against the need for public safety?
- To what extent, if any, should other amendments in the Bill of Rights be interpreted based on an understanding of the country’s historical tradition?

* New York Rifle & Pistol Assn v. Bruen, 142 S.Ct. 2111 (2022).

Unit Six: What Challenges Might Face American Constitutional Democracy in the Twenty-first Century?

- 3. What obstacles and opportunities does globalization present for participation in world affairs?**
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of social media, digital platforms, and global networks in disseminating information and facilitating transnational activism?
 - What opportunities does globalization provide for grassroots movements, civil society organizations, or individuals to influence global agendas and shape international norms?