

## **State Middle School Mock Congressional Hearing Questions 2023–2024**

Using the questions below for each corresponding unit, assemble groups of students to specialize in each unit or content area. 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 answer follow up questions from a panel of judges for 6-minutes. See full rules and resources on the Justice Teaching website or contact [apitts@flsouthern.edu](mailto:apitts@flsouthern.edu) for additional details and training.

### **Unit One: What were the Founders’ basic ideas about government?**

**Question: Why do we need government? Whose ideas and philosophies about government had the greatest influence on the Founders?**

- What are the purposes of government? How did Enlightenment ideas influence the Founders’ beliefs?
- What important ideas contained in the Magna Carta, Mayflower Compact, English Bill of Rights, and Common Sense contributed to the colonists’ ideas about government?

### **Unit Two: What shaped the Founders’ thinking about government?**

**Question: What core principles and basic ideas about government are in the Declaration of Independence?**

- What voices and influences resonate from the Declaration of Independence?
- What British policies led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence?
- What specific colonial grievances were outlined in the Declaration of Independence?

### **Unit Three: What happened at the Philadelphia Convention?**

**Question: How did the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation lead to the writing of the U. S. Constitution?**

- What were some of the key compromises during the Constitutional Convention?
- How were the weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation ultimately addressed in the U.S. Constitution?

#### **Unit Four: How was the Constitution used to establish our government?**

**Question: In Federalist 51, James Madison wrote, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary." What did Madison mean? How did the Constitution organize and limit the powers of government?**

- How were government powers separated and balanced in the Constitution?
- How would you assess this constitutional design today and how would you evaluate your trust and confidence in the branches and levels of government? Please explain your thoughts and provide examples.
- Historically, how effective have constitutional checks been in limiting the power of government?

#### **Unit Five: How does the Constitution protect our basic rights?**

**Question: What is the Bill of Rights, and how does it limit the powers of government and safeguard individual rights?**

- Some rights were included in the body of the US Constitution, prior to the Bill of Rights being added. What were some of these rights?
- Why was the Bill of Rights not included in the original Constitution? What were the arguments for and against including a Bill of Rights? How did this impact the ratification process?
- What rights in the Bill of Rights do you think are most important? Please provide evidence and reasoning.

#### **Unit Six: What are the responsibilities of citizens?**

**Question: How important is citizen participation in government? What are the differences between obligations and responsibilities of citizens?**

- Where is the term citizen defined in the United States Constitution and what are the constitutional means of becoming a U.S. citizen?
- How would you evaluate the importance of specific obligations and responsibilities in relation to the functioning of government and the common good?