

# Lesson Plan: The Alaska Constitution: What It Means to You

## Lesson 4

02-01-2006

### Enduring Understandings

The Alaska Constitution is the foundation of our state government, and state legal system. The principles established in the Constitution influence the nature of our government, and serve as a guide for resolving disputes that go before the Alaska Supreme Court. Therefore, the Alaska Constitution plays an important role in shaping Alaskan society.

### Alaska State Standards

Government and Citizenship: E-1, E-4

History: C-2, C-3, C-4

AK History: AH. ICGP 8, AH. ICGP 10, AH. ICGP 12, AH. CC 5, AH. CC 6

### Estimated Time:

3-4 class periods

### Materials

The 49th Star video guide &mdash; Students should complete the video guide before participating in this lesson. Review the importance the framers placed on the civil liberties sections of the Constitution, and the history that helped shape Article VIII of the Alaska Constitution.

Handout Cards: Important Sections of the Alaska Constitution

Task 1 Handout: The Constitution and You

Answer Key &mdash; Password Protected

Task 2 Handout: What the Constitution Means

Print Tasks 1 & 2 back to back, one sheet for each group of three students.

Task 3 Handout: Court Cases

Answer Key &mdash; Password Protected

Print one copy of the Task 3 guide for each group of three students.  
Task 4 Handout: Court Cases: Become an Expert  
Print one copy of the Task 4 guide for each student.  
Task 5 Handout: Constitutional Provisions  
Alaska Constitution: a Citizen's Guide

## Procedure

### Day 1

#### Preparation:

Print out a set of "Constitution Article and Section" cards and Translation cards on different colored paper. Students will be arranged in groups of three for this activity, so make sure you have enough card sets to cover the class.

Print out 12 Constitution Situation Task 1 handouts, back to back with the Task 2 handouts. You will use the Task 2 handouts in the second lesson. In the left hand corner of the Task 1 handout, where it says "Constitution Article and Section," write the Article and Section number of one of the cards. Each Task 1 handout should have a different article and section number on it, for a total of 12.

Inform the students that they will be learning about some important sections of the Alaska Constitution that can loosely be called rights, as well as two important resource sections, and one section dealing with the government's authority to seize personal property. Arrange the students into groups of three and hand out a set of cards to each group. Have the group arrange the Article and Section card with the correct translation. Give the groups 10 minutes to arrange the cards.

Go over the correct answers with the students. Next, tell the students they will quiz each other on the Article and Section meaning. One person in the group will

select a card from the Article and Section pile and ask the student to his or her right to translate the meaning of the Article and Section without looking at the translation cards. After that student has finished, the questioner passes the cards to the person to the right who repeats the process. Continue for 15 minutes.

Next, hand out one Constitution Situation Task 1 handout to each group. Each group will have a different Article and Section to consider. Ask the groups to complete the Task 1 Assignment. Students are asked to come up with situations, either real or hypothetical, where the Article and Section they are assigned might be used as the basis for settling a dispute.

For example: Police now have access to what are called "alcohol-sniffing" flashlights. If a police officer pulls over someone who has a tail light out in his or her car, and sticks this flashlight into the car, does that violate Article I, Section 14 of the Constitution?

After students have worked together for 10-15 minutes, select a spokesperson from each group to report on the examples the group came up with to illustrate how the Constitutional section might serve as the basis for settling a dispute. After the students have given their presentations, collect the assignments for the next class session.

## Day 2

Preparation: Today you will use the "Citizens Guide to the Alaska Constitution." This guide defines in greater detail what each section of the Constitution means, and provides examples of court cases where the section was used to help settle a dispute. Students will become experts on their section of the Constitution and provide a brief report to the class about their section's specific points. You can either have the student groups link directly to the website to answer the questions in the Task 2 assignment, or you can print out the Article sections and staple them to the students' assignments. Whatever approach you choose, allow the students about 15-20 minutes to work through the questions in Task 2. Then elect a spokesperson for each group, a student different from the one you chose during last session. This

student should report his or her group's findings and answer any questions from the class.

### Day 3

Preparation: Make copies of the Task 3 assignment titled "Alaska Court Cases." Read the directions to the students. Students may work in their cooperative groups on this assignment. Students will be given summaries of real Alaska Supreme Court cases. Their task is to identify which section of the Constitution is at issue in the particular case. You might want to include copies of the Constitution Article and Translation cards used in Day 1 as a resource for students to use during this assignment.

### Day 4

Now you have a choice of two culminating activities: Task 4 or Task 5. Task 4 will be too difficult for students who have limited reading skills. Teachers could pair students who have reading difficulties with strong readers or create an abbreviated Task 4 assignment, perhaps asking students to focus only on the "Introduction" to each case where the court's decision is summarized. Or, teachers who find Task 4 too challenging may want to skip to Task 5, which requires students to use the Citizens Guide to the Alaska Constitution.

### Task 4

Hand out the Task 4 assignments. Students will work independently on this assignment. Each student will be given a Supreme Court case to study. He or she will study the facts of the case, identify the Constitutional issues raised in the case, the court's decision, analyze how the court reached the decision, and write a reaction either agreeing or disagreeing with the Court's decision. The teacher then has the option of having the students report their findings orally to the class on their selected court case.

### Task 4 Presentation Evaluation

**Exceeds:** Student's presentation correctly summarizes the court's decision, three important facts in the case, and the court's reasoning. The student explains clearly how this case might affect his or her own life.

**Meets:** Student's presentation demonstrates a basic understanding of the court's decision, a basic understanding of the important facts in the case, and the court's reasoning. The student explains clearly how this case might affect his or her own life.

**In Progress:** Student's presentation demonstrates some understanding of the court's decision, the facts in the case, its reasoning, and the student offers a basic explanation of how this case might affect his or her own life.

**Not Started:** The student struggles with understanding the court's decision, the facts in the case, and the court's reasoning. The student cannot offer a basic explanation of how this case might affect his or her own life.

## Task 5

Students will be asked to evaluate a section of the Constitution and read the detailed description and history of this section in the Citizens Guide to the Alaska Constitution. They will then summarize their findings, and attempt to state how their section of the Constitution impacts their own lives.

### Task 5 Presentation Evaluation

**Exceeds:** The student provides one or two clear summaries of court cases where the court has used a section of the Alaska Constitution to help guide its decision. The student also provides a clear example of the importance of the section in his/her own life.

**Meets:** The student demonstrates a basic understanding of how the court used a section of the Constitution to help settle a dispute. The student also has a basic understanding of how this section of the Constitution impacts his/her life.

**In Progress:** The student attempts to explain how the court used a section of the Constitution to help settle a dispute. The student also attempts to explain how

this section of the Constitution impacts his/her own life.

Not Started: The student fails to explain how the court used a section of the Constitution to help settle a dispute. The student also fails to explain how this section of the Constitution impacts his/her own life.