The United States Government Essay, Research Paper

U.S. Government (History) The United States Government

A collection of short reports all dealing with the United States Government.

William Jefferson Clinton

William Jefferson Clinton was born on August 19, 1946, in Hope, Arkansas. His father, William J. Blythe III was killed in an automobile collision just two months before William?s birth. At age four, William Jefferson Blythe IV was legally adopted by his mothers second husband, Roger Clinton, making him William Jefferson Clinton.

At age 22 William received a Bachelor?s degree from Georgetown University. Just five years later, he received his law degree from Yale.

Soon after graduating from Yale, he became a law professor at the University of Arkansas. He did not stay in one place for long though, and in 1978 he became the Attorney General of Arkansas. From this political position, he moved higher up in the ranks and in 1978 won the election for the gubernatorial seat of Arkansas. In the 1980 elections, however, William (Bill) was defeated by Republican Frank White. As the youngest governor of Arkansas in 40 years, Bill then became the youngest ex-governor in United States history. During the interim, Clinton was hired by the law firm Wright, Lindsey and Jennings. In the 1982 elections, Mr. Clinton went after the position of governor with renewed vigor and defeated incumbent Republican Frank White. During the campaigning for the election a Time magazine article stated: ?If Clinton does win, it could seem like less a comeback than a canny mid-course correction in the path of a young, bright political star.?

Clinton went on to win the next two gubernatorial elections in the state of Arkansas. In 1988 he had the possibility of a Democratic Party presidential nomination, but he refused to run. Finally, in 1991, Clinton announced that he was going to run for President of the United States.

In the 1992 election, Bill Clinton ran against Republican incumbent George Herbert Walker Bush and independent Ross H. Perot. During the campaign, Bill met with some difficulty when the media discovered that he had dodged the Vietnam draft, been unfaithful to his spouse, and smoked marijuana while attending Oxford. Bill placated the liberal-biased media by saying that he didn?t believe in the war, and he ?didn?t inhale.? Opposition mounted when reporters discovered that Clinton and his wife, Hillary Rodham, whom he married in 1975, had made some questionable dealings over a piece of real estate referred to commonly as Whitewater.

Despite the seemingly insurmountable odds, Clinton won the election, with 46% of voting Americans supporting him.

Antonin Scalia, Supreme Court Justice

Antonin Scalia was born March 11, 1936 in an Italian majority section of Trenton, New Jersey. His father, Eugene Scalia was a literary scholar and a professor of Romance Languages at Brooklyn College. His mother was an elementary school teacher.

Scalia attended Xavier High School, a Catholic Military academy. He graduated, first in his class, in 1953. One of his good friends once said: ?He was brilliant, way above everybody else.? He later majored in History at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., where he again graduated first in his class. Soon after leaving Georgetown, he enrolled in Harvard Law School, where he was known around the campus as an effective debater.

From Harvard he earned an LL. B. Degree and in 1960 joined the Cleveland based law firm Jones, Day, Cockly and Reavis. He was one of the most straightforward conservatives on the staff and there too earned a reputation as a debater.

Later, President Richard Nixon appointed Scalia to the position of Part-time General Counsel in Executive Office of Telecom Policy. He was confirmed by Congress under the Gerald Ford administration for the position of Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Justice Department?s office of legal counsel. At that time his job was mostly to give advice to the President and the Attorney General.

In 1977 he became a Professor at the University of Chicago Law School. Antonin Scalia is now an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court. He took his oath in 1986 and is the first Italian-American Supreme Court Justice. He was part of President Ronald Reagan?s effort to make the judiciary system more conservative.

Mr. Scalia is very outspoken against racially based affirmative action programs and the ?Constitutional Right? to abortion. His views are closely related to those of the Reagan administration. Scalia is a very intelligent individual, has an elegant writing style, and has personal charm that makes him an influential member on the Supreme Court.

Legislative Department

The Legislative Department consists mostly of the House and the Senate, the two parts of Congress. The Senate has 100 members or two per state. The House of Representatives has one representative per 30,000 people in the state, currently 435, not including the one from Washington, D.C., who is not allowed to vote. This is called the ?great compromise? because when the laws were first being written the larger states wanted to have a system like the House of Representatives, and the smaller states wanted an equal voice and liked the Senate system better. Finally, in a compromise they decided to have both.

Facts on the House of Representatives:

? House of Representative members are elected to a 2 year term.

? The minimum age to become a member is 25 years.

? In order to become a member, you must have been a citizen of the United

States for 7 years.

? Members must be a resident of the state they are elected by.

? The House of Representatives has the ?power of impeachment.? This means

that the House

can vote to put the president of the United States on trial before the

Senate. The only president

to have ever been impeached was Andrew Johnson in 1867. When the Senate

finally voted,

however, he missed being removed from office by one vote.

Facts on the Senate:

? Senators are elected to six year terms.

? The minimum age for a senator is 30 years.

? You must have been a citizen of the United States for 9 years.

? The Senate tries cases of impeachment.

Powers Granted to Congress The congress shall have the power:

1. To lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States; but all duties, imposts, and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;

2. To borrow money on the credit of the United States;

3. To regulate commerce with foreign nations and among several states;

4. To establish a uniform rule of naturalization, and uniform laws on the subject of bankruptcies throughout the United States;

5. To coin money, regulate the value thereof, and of foreign coin, and fix the standard of weights and measures;

6. To provide for the punishment of counterfeiting the securities and current coin of the United States;

7. To establish post offices and post roads;

8. To promote the progress of science and useful arts by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive rights to their respective writings and discoveries;

9. To constitute tribunals inferior to the Supreme Court;

10. To define and punish piracies and felonies committed on the high seas and offenses against the law of nations;

11. To declare war and make rules concerning captures on land and water.

12. To raise and support armies, but no appropriation of money for that use shall be for a longer term than two years;

13. To provide and maintain a navy;

14. To make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces;

15. To provide for calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the Union, suppress the insurrections, and repel invasions;

16. To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia, and for governing such part of them as may be employed in the service of the United States, reserving to the states, respectively, the appointment of the officers, and the authority of training the militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress.

Ronald Wilson Reagan

Ronald W. Reagan was born February 6, 1911, in Tampico, Illinois. He attended Eureka College and graduated in 1932 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics. He was also popular on his high school football team and played in college.

Soon after graduating from college, Reagan began working as a radio sports announcer. His big break, however, was in 1937 when he became a contract actor for Warner Brothers starring in such movies as Knute Rockne-All American, King?s Row, and probably his most famous, Bedtime for Bonzo.

During WWII Reagan patriotically served his country (unlike some other presidents) as a captain in the army. It was soon after this that he became active in Democratic politics, supporting Harry S. Truman for president in 1948 and Douglas over Nixon in the California senatorial race in 1950. In 1952, Ronald Reagan married actress Nancy Davis, a contract actress for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. They had two children.

Between the years of 1954 and 1962 Reagan was the host of a television program called General Electric Theater. In the early 1950?s, Reagan wised up and became more conservative, this time supporting Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952 and Richard Nixon in 1960. In 1962, Mr. Reagan switched his voter registration to Republican, and was elected governor of California in 1966 and 1970.

He was not able to do everything that he had hoped as governor, because for six of the eight years there was a democratic majority in the state legislature. However, he did find time to cut welfare and start the Medi-Cal program to pay medical bills for the poor. Reagan increased income taxes to avoid a projected deficit but later gave rebates when the state government had a surplus. Reagan also lowered the high property taxes of California.

In 1976, Ronald Reagan challenged Gerald R. Ford for the Republican nomination but lost by a small margin. He was not a quitter, however, and in 1980 he chased after the nomination again and easily beat George Bush whom he later chose for his vice president.

During the Reagan Administration, Reagan brought conservatives to power both in the Republican Party and in the nation. Reagan?s economic program, sometimes called Reaganomics, was a tax and spending cuts budget which stimulated economic growth between 1982 and 1987.

The Constitution of the United States of America

The constitution of the United States is the framework of the government. On it all laws are based, and if there is a conflict, the law will be determined unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. An amendment to the constitution is when a change is made to the constitution. In this section of my Government Booklet, some of the most important amendments will be discussed.

Amendment 1: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

The first amendment is probably the most famous amendment, because it gives citizens of the United States their basic rights and privileges. However, these rights do have limits, and once you go past the limit, you are breaking the law.

Amendment 2: A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. Ask any member of the NRA what the second amendment is, and 9 times out of ten, he will be able to quote it for you. With the laws going more and more to the left, it is my guess that this right will be infringed within the next ten years.

Amendment 4: The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated; and no warrants shall issue but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized. This amendment is basically saying that the government, police, etc., cannot come into your house without a warrant and ?just cause? for wanting to search the area.

Amendment 8 Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted. This amendment is one of the ones for people accused of a crime. In essence, they are not to have bail unreasonably high, fines unreasonably high, or tortured. Many people say that the death penalty is cruel and unusual punishment, but they are wrong.

Amendment 13 Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction. Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation. This amendment totally abolishes any slavery within the legal jurisdiction of the United States.

Amendment 19 The right of the citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation. This amendment, made in 1920, gives women the right to vote. Previously, women had almost no rights, and voting was a privilege that they were not allowed to have.

Amendment 21 The Eighteenth Article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed. The transportation or importation into any state, territory, or possession of the United States for delivery or use therein of intoxicating liquors, in violation of the laws thereof, is hereby prohibited. This amendment repealed, or took back the eighteenth amendment which made alcohol illegal.

Amendment 22 No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice, and no person who has held the office of President, or acted as President, for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected President shall be elected to the office of President more than once.

This amendment makes it so that a president can only serve for two terms in his lifetime. This keeps the United States from ever having a dictatorship.

Amendment 26 The right of citizens of the United States, who are 18 years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of age. The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation. This amendment, made in 1971, lowers the voting age from 21 to 18.

The Presidents of the United States

President Election Years in Political Party Home

State

Year Office

George Washington 1788 1789-1793 None Virginia

George Washington 1792 1793-1797 None Virginia

John Adams 1796 1797-1801 Federalist Massachusetts

Thomas Jefferson 1800 1801-1805 Republican Virginia

Thomas Jefferson 1804 1805-1809 Republican Virginia

James Madison 1808 1809-1813 Republican Virginia

James Madison 1812 1813-1817 Republican Virginia

James Monroe 1816 1817-1821 Republican Virginia

James Monroe 1820 1821-1825 Republican Virginia

John Quincy Adams 1824 1825-1829 Republican Massachusetts

Andrew Jackson 1828 1829-1833 Democrat Tennessee

Andrew Jackson 1832 1833-1837 Democrat Tennessee

Martin Van Buren 1836 1837-1841 Democrat New York

William H. Harrison 1840 1841 Whig Ohio

John Tyler 1841-1845 Whig Virginia

James K. Polk 1844 1845-1849 Democrat Tennessee

Zachary Taylor 1848 1849-1850 Whig Louisiana

Millard Fillmore 1850-1853 Whig New

York

Franklin Pierce 1852 1853-1857 Democrat New Hampshire

James Buchanan 1856 1857-1861 Democrat Pennsylvania

Abraham Lincoln 1860 1861-1865 Republican Illinois

Abraham Lincoln 1864 1865 Republican Illinois

Andrew Johnson 1865-1869 Republican Tennessee

Ulysses S. Grant 1868 1869-1873 Republican Illinois

Ulysses S. Grant 1872 1873-1877 Republican Illinois

Rutherford B. Hayes 1876 1877-1881 Republican Ohio

James A. Garfield 1880 1881 Republican Ohio

Chester A. Arthur 1881-1885 Republican New York

Grover Cleveland 1884 1885-1889 Democrat New York

Benjamin Harrison 1888 1889-1893 Republican Indiana

Grover Cleveland 1892 1893-1897 Democrat New York

William McKinley 1896 1897-1901 Republican Ohio

William McKinley 1900 1901 Republican Ohio

Theodore Roosevelt 1901-1905 Republican New York

Theodore Roosevelt 1904 1905-1909 Republican New York

William H. Taft 1908 1909-1913 Republican Ohio

Woodrow Wilson 1912 1913-1917 Democrat New Jersey

Woodrow Wilson 1916 1917-1921 Democrat New Jersey

Warren G. Harding 1920 1921-1923 Republican Ohio

Calvin Coolidge 1923-1924 Republican Massachusetts

Calvin Coolidge 1924 1925-1929 Republican Massachusetts

Herbert Hoover 1928 1929-1933 Republican California

Franklin D. Roosevelt 1932 1933-1937 Democrat New York

Franklin D. Roosevelt 1936 1937-1941 Democrat New York

Franklin D. Roosevelt 1940 1941-1945 Democrat New York

Franklin D. Roosevelt 1944 1945 Democrat New York

Harry S. Truman 1945-1949 Democrat Missouri

Harry S. Truman 1948 1949-1953 Democrat Missouri

Dwight D. Eisenhower 1952 1953-1957 Republican Pennsylvania

Dwight D. Eisenhower 1956 1957-1961 Republican Pennsylvania

John F. Kennedy 1960 1961-1963 Democrat Massachusetts

Lyndon B. Johnson 1963-1965 Democrat Texas

Lyndon B. Johnson 1964 1965-1969 Democrat Texas

Richard M. Nixon 1968 1969-1973 Republican California

Richard M. Nixon 1972 1973-1974 Republican California

Gerald R. Ford 1974-1977 Republican Michigan

Jimmy Carter 1976 1977-1981 Democrat Georgia

Ronald Reagan 1980 1981-1985 Republican California

Ronald Reagan 1984 1985-1989 Republican California

George Bush 1988 1989-1993 Republican Texas

Bill Clinton 1992 1993- Democrat Arkansas

The Executive Branch

The executive branch of the government is led by the president, currently Bill Clinton. His main duties are to:

A) Enforce laws. It is the in the oath of office of the president to ?uphold the laws and constitution of the United States.?

B) Act as Commander in chief of the armed forces. The president has this title because he is the ?head honcho? in the military. The buck stops there. The president can ask congress for the right to go to war as did Franklin Delano Roosevelt after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Congress voted yes and the United States entered WWII.

C) Appoint key officials in the government. Among the many that the president appoints are Supreme Court Justices, the surgeon general, and the attorney general.

D) Recommend laws to congress. The president can introduce a bill to congress. The Senate and the House will vote on the bill. If both approve it, it goes back to the president for him to sign. Once he has signed it, it is a law. Either part of Congress may introduce a bill as well. If it passes through both the House and the Senate, it goes to the president for him to sign. If he disagrees with the bill, he may choose to veto it. Veto is a combination of the words vote no. When the president vetoes a bill, it goes back to Congress for them to review it. In order to check the president?s power and pass the bill into law, there must be a two-thirds majority when the ballots are cast.

The president also has the power to grant a reprieve or pardon to any convicted criminal or even someone who has not been charged yet. This is illustrated by Gerald Ford?s pardon of Richard Nixon before he was to be charged for any involvement of his in the Watergate scandal. The pardon was granted to keep the United States from being embarrassed at having one of their presidents on trial. On the upside, Nixon was respected globally for his efforts to open and establish relations with China.

The president of the United states has a four year term. He may serve up to two terms in his lifetime. The salary for the president is $200,000 per year. The president must also be a natural born citizen and must have lived in the United States for 14 years before running.

Jack Metcalf

Jack Metcalf, a Washington State senator, attended the University of Washington between 1944 and 1948. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Pacific Lutheran University in 1951 and then later in 1965-66 went back to the University of Washington. He also patriotically served his country in the armed forces between 1946 and 1947. Metcalf, a teacher and bed & breakfast owner, has a wife, Norma, and four children.

Metcalf has a colorful background as a good Republican public servant. His political career began in 1958 when he received the Republican nomination for one of the Washington House of Representatives positions. Between the years of 1961 and 1965, Jack Metcalf served his state in the Washington House of Representatives. In 1964, however, he was defeated for re-election. Never a quitter, though, Metcalf ran for a Washington State senator position, and won. He served as a senator between 1967 and 1975. In 1968 and 74, Metcalf, now a seasoned politician, received the Republican nomination for the Senate. He served in the Washington Senate from 1981 to 1993. He was the Republican nominee for the United States House of Representatives in 1992.

At the age of 67, he took his House of Representatives oath, and was the oldest member of the ?Class of ?94.? In his 1992 campaign for the Congressional seat against Democratic challenger Al Swift, he promised to limit his terms to six years in Congress. He has described himself as a ?guy willing to take some kamikaze runs.? Metcalf has stated a call for the restoration of the gold standard, and criticizes the Federal Reserve System.

In 1994, it did not look like Metcalf was indeed going to again win the Republican nomination. He had to survive direct attacks from Republican rival Senator Tom Erwin in the primaries. He won the nomination, however, but it looked bleak for Metcalf against State Senator Harriet Spanel. However, most of her financial backing came from unions, environmentalists, and women?s groups. 1994 was the wrong year to be a liberal. Although Spanel had the better funding, she was hurt by her support of the assault weapons ban and the Brady Bill. Metcalf opposed both. Another thing that helped Metcalf was his total opposition to abortion, which made him popular among conservatives. Spanel won support from San Juan County, but Metcalf won the rest of the counties in the district.

Review

There are three branches of the United States Government. The legislative, judicial, and the executive. Ideally, no one is more powerful than the other two. They are all equal. They all have certain powers as well as certain checks on powers. Congress is the main body of the legislative branch, and is composed of two parts: the Senate and the House of Representatives. The judicial branch consists of all of the courts in the United States, but is headed by the Supreme Court. The president is the leader of the Executive branch. In order to become a president, one must be at least 35 years of age and a natural born citizen living in the United States for 14 years. The term of office for a president is 4 years.

The term of office for the Unites States House of Representative members is 2 years, while Senators enjoy 6 years in a term. In order to be in the House, you must be at least 25 years of age, for Senators the minimum age is 30. There are 100 members of the Senate, two for every state. The House of Representatives, however, has 435 members, plus one from Washington D.C., but he/she is not allowed to vote.

In order for a bill to become law, it must pass the Senate, House of Representatives, and the President must sign it. If the president vetoes a bill, it is kicked back into Congress, where it may undergo revision, or simply be voted upon again. If Congress votes and both halves get a 2/3 majority, the bill is passed into law without the president being able to do anything about it.

Some of the president?s jobs are to be the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, to enforces laws, and to grant pardons to criminals. Congress sets and collects taxes, has the power to borrow money, declares war, provides for an army and a navy, creates lesser courts, and coins money.

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