

# Petitioning The Government

**Designed by Emily Green**

**Content Area: U.S. History**

**Grade Level Options: 11**

## **Summary of Lesson**

Students begin the lesson by brainstorming events in history where citizens have worked to alter the law based on changing social values. They then use a graphic organizer to analyze four documents from citizens petitioning the government. Finally, students will research another example of a time when citizens petitioned the government to find similarities and differences across instances and evaluate the extent of change over time in petitioning the government.

**Estimated Time to Complete:** Two 50 Minute Periods or One 85 Minute Period

## **Resources Needed:**

- [Document A: Anti-Slavery Petition](#)
- [Document B: Temperance Petition](#)
- [Document C: Sunday Movie Letter/Petition](#)
- [Resource 1: Petitions Graphic Organizer](#)

## Desired Results

What students will know, do, and understand

### Delaware Content Standards:

- **Civics 2a 9-12:** Students will understand that the functioning of the American government is a dynamic process which combines, the formal balances of power incorporated into the constitution with traditions, precedents, and interpretations which have evolved over time.
- **Civics 3a 9-12:** Students will understand that citizens are individually responsible for keeping themselves informed about public policy issues at the local, state, and federal levels; participating in the civic process; and upholding the laws of the land.

### Common Core Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

### Lesson Essential Questions:

- How have individuals and groups sought to change the government?
- How do changes to law illustrate the dynamic nature of government?

### Knowledge and Skills:

Students will be able to...

- Develop the skills of gathering, examining, analyzing, and interpreting data.
- Identify the principles and ideals underlying American democracy that are designed to promote the freedom of the American people.
- Identify effective citizens who are committed to protecting rights for themselves, other citizens, and future generations, by upholding their civic responsibilities and being aware of the potential consequences of inaction.

## Learning Plan

### Warm Up:

- Ask students to think about why the United States Constitution is often referred to as “a living document.”
  - In what ways have the laws of our nation been changed to reflect the changing values of society?
  - How were these changes accomplished?
- Have students pair share their example and make a list of ways the laws of our nation have been changed and another list of how the changes were accomplished. Students will later select one of these changes to further research.

### Procedure:

- Distribute the sources and have students complete Resource 1: [Petitions Graphic Organizer](#).
- Pair share their graphic organizers and then review as a whole group.
- Have students select a topic from the list from the warm up to research. They will then research similarities and differences between the four examples in the graphic organizer to their new researched topic to determine the extent of change over time in the way that citizens petition the government.

## Assessment Evidence

Evidence that will be collected to determine whether or not the desired results are achieved

### Closure:

- Have students answer the following question using evidence from the sources and their research,
  - To what extent has petitioning the government evolved over time?

### Document Background:

The [1845 Temperance Petition](#) can be found in Legislative Papers, (folder) Petitions - Temperance, Box 391052. The [1801 Petition Against Slavery Petition](#) can also be found in Legislative Papers, (folder) Petitions - Negroes, Slavery, Box 391015. The two [movie petition documents \(c. late 1930s\)](#) can be found in the Executive Papers Collection, Box 391150. Richard C. McMullen served as Governor of Delaware from 1937 to 1941.