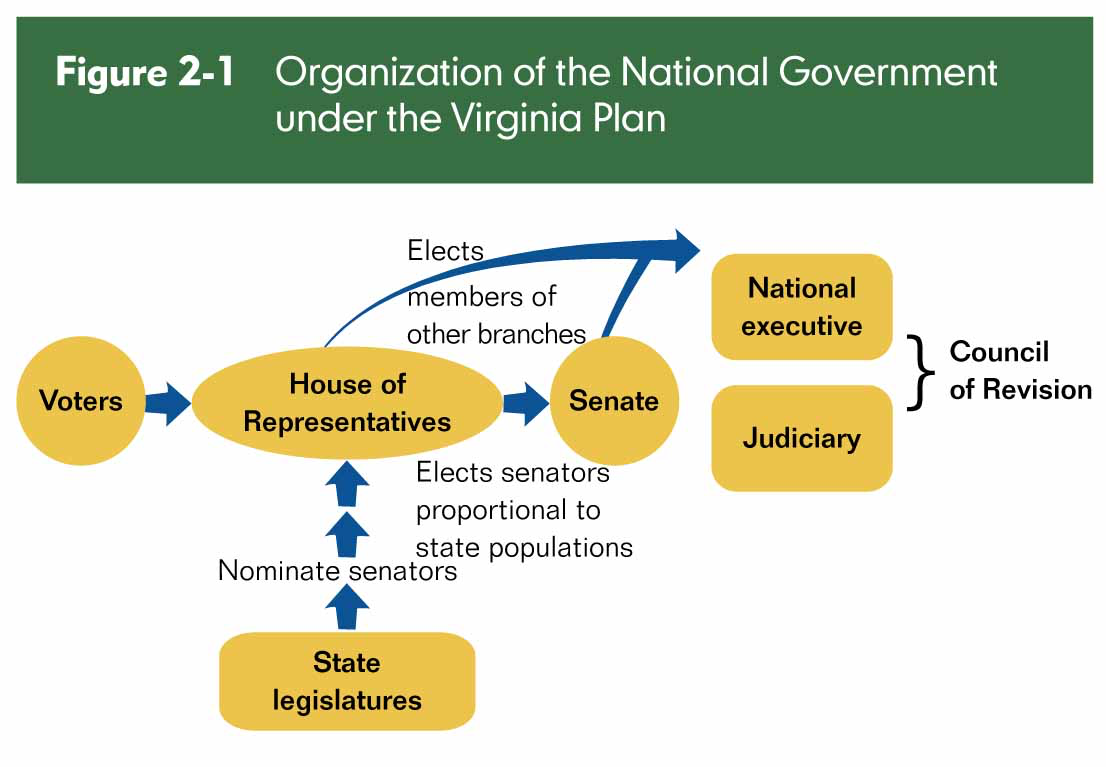
*The Logic of American Politics*, 7th Edition

Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck

Data Literacy Exercises: Chapter 2

 Figure 2-1:



**Learning Objective:** 2.3 Identify the issues the Founders considered when drafting the Constitution.

The Virginia Plan, one of the original proposals the Framers considered for creating a national government, would have created a bicameral system in which all power began with each state’s voters.  Those voters would directly elect members of the lower house of the U.S. legislature (House of Representatives), who would then be responsible for nominating members of the upper chamber (Senate). Representatives and senators together would select the president and members of the U.S. Supreme Court. The Founders struggled with how direct a democracy the United States should have, and the final plan under which the government is organized maintains some, but not all, of the elements in the Virginia Plan.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Under the Virginia Plan, both the members of the U.S. House and Senate would be chosen directly by the voters of each state.

a. True

\*b. False

@ Feedback: Only the House of Representatives would be chosen directly by voters.

2. Unlike the eventual institutional design of the Constitution, under the Virginia Plan states would be given representation in both national legislative chambers in proportion to their population.

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: The eventual allocation of seats to the U.S. Congress was a compromise between the Virginia Plan, and the more state friendly New Jersey Plan.  The number of U.S. House representatives for each state would be determined roughly by population.  Each state, however, would be given equal apportionment (2) in the U.S Senate, a provision which cannot be changed by a single Constitutional amendment (Article V).

Given Madison’s hope that the Senate would be a more exclusive body, enhanced by the Constitutional Convention’s decision to give each member longer terms of office than House members, he eventually had to agree to equal Senate representation in order to maintain the more exclusive nature of the Senate (see Daniel Wirls and Steven Wirls, *The Creation of the U.S. Senate*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

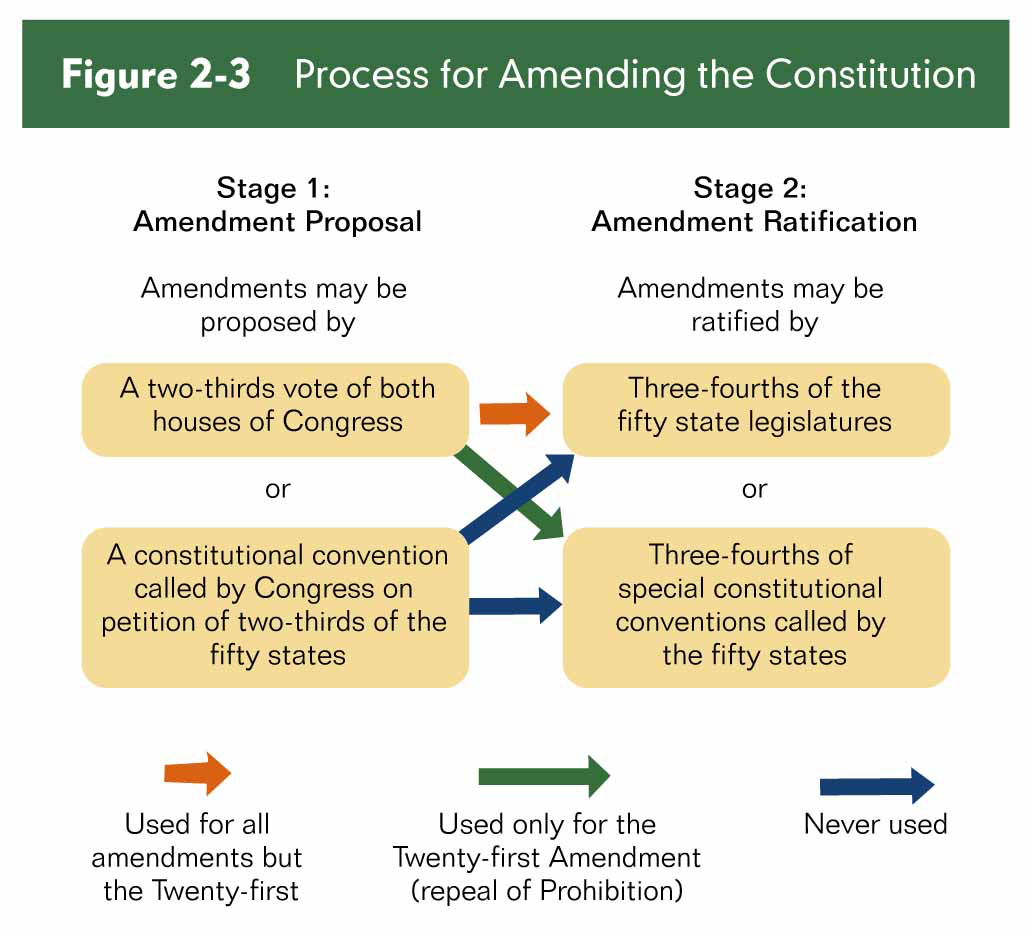
3. Under the Virginia Plan, the executive and judicial branches would be chosen directly by the voters of each state.

a. True

\*b. False

@ Feedback: Their selection would be indirect, mediated by the choice of U.S. House members (the only officials directly elected by the voters) and Senators (selected by the House).

Figure 2-3:



**Learning Objective:** 2.3 Identify the issues the Founders considered when drafting the Constitution

Only twenty two amendments have been added to the U.S. Constitution, twelve if the original ten Bill of Rights are not included (many considered there Congressional proposal to be part of the bargain to achieve ratification by a sufficient number of states).  Two cancel each other out (the XXI repealed the 18th) and the XXVII was actually part of the original bundle proposed with the Bill of Rights. Given all of the changes in U.S. political culture, why have we formally changed the Constitution so few times?  One reason may have to do with the brevity and vagueness of the original document.  Enough flexibility existed to allow for broadening interpretations of the legitimate exercise of national power by congresses, presidents and courts. One other reason, however, lies in the difficulty inherent in both formally proposing an amendment and then ratifying it.

It is obvious that the Framers intended that there be amendments to the Constitution, but that those amendments would require greater support than the mere passage of legislation. Taken to the extreme, the amendment process can be thwarted by senators and legislatures representing a very small proportion of the population. Senators (~~or~~state legislatures) representing 17 states (1/3+1) can prevent an amendment from being officially proposed. If those 17 states were those with the least populations, those senators would represent slightly over 23 million residents (based on 2010 Census figures), less than the population of California or Texas. To prevent ratification, the legislatures (or state conventions) of only 13 states (1/4+1) would be required. Again, if those 13 are the states with the smallest populations, they would contain fewer than 14 million residents, less than 4.5% of the total U.S. population. Of course, amendments are usually preferred by states across the population spectrum but, viewed in this context; we can understand the potential difficulty with amending the U.S. Constitution. Concentrated minorities can easily hold veto power over the process.

Figures do not include the population of Washington, D.C. as it is not a state and has no ability to vote on amendments.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. States have an equal ability to add or stop a Constitutional amendment:

a. only at the proposition stage

\*b. only at the ratification stage

c. at both stages

d. states do not have an equal ability

@ Feedback: Each state has one vote in the ratification process.  Amendments can be proposed either on petition of two-thirds of the equally weighed states, or by two-thirds of *each* chamber of the U.S. Congress, including the senate where each state has equal representation.

2. It is possible for the state legislatures representing less than twenty percent of the U.S. population to stop an amendment from being ratified.

\*a. True

b. False

@ Feedback: Each state, regardless of its population, has an equal vote in the ratification process.