

TEXAS VS MASSACHUSETTS

The Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, which predates the U.S. Constitution by nearly ten years, is the oldest written constitution still in use not only in the United States but also anywhere in the world. The framers of the Massachusetts Constitution included three heroes of the American Revolution: John Adams, Samuel Adams, and James Bowdoin. These larger-than-life heroes established a pattern that many states now follow for state constitutions: a preamble, a declaration of the rights of citizens, a framework for government, and amendments to the constitution. The virtues of the relatively broad language of the Massachusetts Constitution have served the state well, as opposed to the highly specific and technical language of the Texas Constitution. Fewer constitutional amendments (120 total) have been passed in Massachusetts than in almost half of the states—certainly fewer than Texas’s 483 amendments. Also unlike Texas, Massachusetts still uses its original document, while Texas is on its fifth constitution since statehood (and its sixth if you add the short-lived Constitution of the Republic of Texas).

THINKING Critically

- ★ Why do you think the Massachusetts Constitution is a model for other states?
- ★ What aspects of the Massachusetts Constitution seem unusual to you?
- ★ What aspects seem familiar?
- ★ Do some features in the Texas Constitution seem preferable to you?

A Constitutional Comparison of Massachusetts and Texas

Feature	Massachusetts	Texas
Year adopted	1780	1876
Word length	45,000	87,000
Amendments	120	483
Major sections	4	17
Executive offices elected		
Governor	✓	✓
Lieutenant governor	✓	✓
Secretary of state	✓	✗
Attorney general	✓	✓
Treasurer/Comptroller	✓	✓
Other	✓ (1)	✓ (2)
Legislature	General Court	Texas
Senate		Legislature
Size	40	31
Length of term	2 years	4 years
House		
Size	160	150
Length of term	2 years	2 years
Judiciary	Appointed	Elected
Statewide referendum to amend constitution	✓	✓
Statewide referendum to make general laws	✓	✗
Initiative petition to amend constitution	✓	✗
Initiative petition to make general laws	✓	✗