



Name _____ ANSWER KEY

Date _____ Class _____



BACKGROUND: 1971 North Carolina Constitution



Interior of the Senate chamber with military officers addressing, 1971, N.71.3.171 folder 14, State Archives of N.C.

During the century since the 1868 Constitution, voters had ratified 69 amendments. Still, the constitution needed further change to govern the growing state more efficiently. The state's population had swelled from one million to over five million, and, with baby boomers coming of age, the proportion of youth was high. Meanwhile, the Vietnam War drafted many young men.

A constitutional study commission determined many changes were necessary, and that the amendment process alone would not be enough. Instead, the commission rewrote the existing constitution. The people of North Carolina approved the new version, along with five new amendments, with an Election Day vote in 1970. The new constitution took effect in 1971.

The amendments approved by the General Assembly and ratified by the people reorganized the executive branch, banned poll taxes, simplified the state income tax, and provided for new kinds of local taxes and borrowing by city and county governments. A national constitutional amendment in 1971 reduced the minimum age for voting from 21 to 18 years. The first amendment to the new state constitution in 1972 mirrored that provision for statewide voting.

Reflection

1. What historical events do you think influenced the need for a new state constitution?

Huge increase in state government—departments and employees; N.C. population increase; globalization and 20th-century wars

2. The 1971 Declaration of Rights had 10 more sections than the original in 1776. What new rights might you expect?

Some of the new rights date to the 1868 constitution and mention allegiance to the Union, end of slavery, etc. Rights new to 1971 are victims' rights and right to hunt, fish and land conservation.

Activity: Expanding Participation

Did you Know? The 1971 Constitution added a provision to allow the public to propose amendments:

Sec. 3. Revision or amendment by Convention of the People.

A Convention of the People of this State may be called pursuant to Section 1 of this Article to propose a new or revised Constitution or to propose amendments to this Constitution. Every new or revised Constitution and every constitutional amendment adopted by a Convention shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the State...

Try *drafting* an amendment for a change you would like to see in government. *Be sure to include* how the government could implement the change and the effect it would have on your community. *Optional:* hold a convention with your class to debate the proposed amendments.



Jill Stein, presidential candidate for the Green Party, proposed lowering the voting age to 16 years old as part of her platform in the 2024 election. Think about how this change would affect the state and nation. Below, list out the pros and cons of an amendment lowering the voting age to 16. Optional: try forming teams within your class to debate this issue.

Pros and Cons of Lowering the Voting Age to 16 Years Old

PROS	CONS