

Vote Missouri!

ELECT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES



Representatives — The Great Compromise



What if every time someone thought Missouri needed a new law, the person had to go to Jefferson City to see the governor? Likewise, what if someone had to go to Washington, D.C., to have a voice in the United States government? That would not be practical.

The men who wrote our U.S. Constitution in 1787 decided that the best way for people to have a voice in their government was to have them elect representatives who would make the laws for them. They called this lawmaking body Congress.

HELP WANTED

Representative

He or she must be:

- 1 at least 24 years of age
- 2 a qualified Missouri voter for 2 years before election
- 3 a resident of the district chosen for representation for 1 year before election

The Framers decided there would be two parts to Congress—a House of Representatives and a Senate. But there was a disagreement between the big and small states about how many representatives a state could have. They

came up with the Great

Compromise—the number of representatives in the House of Representatives would be based on population, but every state, regardless of size, would have two senators.

When Missouri became a state in 1821, the men who wrote our state constitution adopted this same system. They called Missouri's lawmaking body the General Assembly.

Representative Facts

1. There are 163 Missouri representatives. There are 435 U.S. representatives because that is the number of chairs that will fit into the room in the U.S. Capitol.
2. Originally, the Framers had hoped each representative would represent at most 50,000 people. Based on today's population, that would mean there would be over 6,000 U.S. representatives! Each U.S. representative represents about 700,000 people. Each Missouri representative represents about 37,000 people.
3. California has the most U.S. representatives—53. Missouri has 8.

LEARNING EXTENSIONS

- 1 Find out who your Missouri and United States representatives are. For Missouri, visit www.house.mo.gov. Find the Who is your Representative link and type in your zip code. E-mail your representative and ask what he or she thinks is the most important thing about being a state representative. Do the same thing for your United States representative at www.house.gov.
- 2 As a class or in groups, read through a newspaper and look for stories that would be of interest or concern to your state representative or your U.S. representative. Is there coverage about your representatives in the newspaper?
- 3 Invite your state and United States representatives to visit your school and talk about their jobs.
- 4 Discuss the qualifications for being either a Missouri or United States representative. Are these reasonable? Should there be more, for example a requirement that a representative be a high school graduate? Why or why not?

MISSOURI STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:

GLE—SS3-A1, C, CA2, 3, 1.6 (for grades K-8)

CLE—SS2C, CA 2, 3, 1.6 (for grades 9-12)

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