

Handout E: State Constitution Comparison

Directions:

For each topic listed, show where it is located in each state's constitution, and give a summary or paraphrase of the main ideas found there. A few items have been completed as examples for you. Each constitution has two or more distinct sections, which you may cite using the following abbreviations:

- Virginia: Bill of Rights (**Bill**), Constitution or Form of Government (**Form**)
- Pennsylvania: Preamble (**Pre**), Declaration of Rights (**Decl.**), Frame of Government (**Frame**)
- Massachusetts: Preamble (**Pre**), Declaration of Rights (**Decl.**), Frame of Government (**Frame**)
- N/A can be used for "not applicable."

Topic	Virginia 1776	Pennsylvania 1776	Massachusetts 1780
Purpose of government	Bill Sec. 1: implies that when men enter into a state of society, they must provide for protection of certain inalienable rights.		
Most powerful branch of government			
Standing army in peacetime			
Constitutional principles	Virginia 1776	Pennsylvania 1776	Massachusetts 1780
Popular sovereignty/consent			Decl. Art. V
Representation/republicanism			
Due process			
Separation of powers		N/A	
Checks and balances			

Rights of the People	Virginia 1776	Pennsylvania 1776	Massachusetts 1780
People are equally free and independent, with inherent rights			
List of inherent rights	Bill Sec. 1: life, liberty; means of acquiring and possessing property; pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety		
Suffrage			
Fair trial			
Reasonable bails, fines, and punishments			
Responsibilities of the People		(Implied) Pay taxes, serve in military, participate wisely in self-government	
Governor (VA, MA)/ President (PA)	Virginia 1776	Pennsylvania 1776	Massachusetts 1780
Manner of election			Frame Chapter II, Sec. I, Art. III: Citizens who are eligible to vote for senator and representative may vote for governor.
Powers			
Term of office			
Limits			

Judges and other state officers	Virginia 1776	Pennsylvania 1776	Massachusetts 1780
How appointed			

Summarize your discussion by listing at least three similarities and three differences among the three state constitutions.