

The Dos and Don'ts of Congress

Los "sí" y los "no" del Congreso

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Explain the powers given to Congress and the limitations on Congress's powers
- ✓ Discuss whether the Elastic Clause has been stretched so far that it gives Congress too much power

About the Video (2:38)

Article I of the Constitution grants powers to Congress and also sets limitations.

This viewing guide is part of a larger collection of materials that support the Constitution Explained video series. It's designed to help teachers in classes with and without bilingual students. Treat each guide as a menu of sorts and use what best meets your instructional needs. Access the video [here](#).

**Vocabulary**

Make sure students understand the word **impeachment** (**juicio político**) means "the process by which someone in government can be removed from office," but is not synonymous with removal from office. Students should understand the expression **power of the purse** (**el poder del dinero**) as "the ability to control government spending."

abolition (n.) the act of officially ending or stopping something

enumerated powers (n.) a specific list of powers

impeach (v.) to accuse and charge a public official with a crime that makes them unfit for office

implied powers (n.) powers not specifically listed

militia (n.) an army made up of citizens, not professional soldiers

Vocabulario

abolición (s. f.) el acto de eliminar o frenar algo oficialmente

poderes expresos o enumerados (s. m.) una lista de facultades o capacidades específicas

iniciar juicio político (v.) acusar y someter a juicio por un delito a un funcionario del gobierno para sacarlo del cargo

poderes implícitos (s. m.) capacidades que no se mencionan específicamente

milicia (s. f.) un ejército formado por ciudadanos, no soldados de profesión

**Guiding Questions**

PREVIEW the video by asking these questions to tap into students' background knowledge:

- Was the Congress powerful or weak under the Articles of Confederation? What problems did this cause?
- Do you think this was one reason a new Constitution was written? Why or why not?

Preguntas de guía

- ¿Era fuerte o débil la autoridad del Congreso bajo los Artículos de la Confederación? ¿Qué problemas traía esto?
- ¿Crees que puede ser una razón por la cual se escribió la nueva Constitución? ¿Por qué o por qué no?



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? Guiding Questions

Preguntas de guía

REVIEW the video with students by discussing these questions:

- What are some of the powers that Congress has according to Article I? What are some of the things Congress cannot do?
- What is the one superpower that Congress has that the other two branches cannot check?
- Do you think the Elastic Clause has been stretched too far, not far enough, or is it just right?
- Según el Artículo I, ¿cuáles son algunos de los poderes que tiene el Congreso? ¿Cuáles son algunas cosas que el Congreso no puede hacer?
- ¿Qué superpoder tiene el Congreso, que los otros dos poderes no pueden controlar?
- ¿Te parece que la Cláusula Elástica ha sido flexibilizada mucho, poco o lo justo?

Video Viewing Strategies

Think/Group/Share: After watching the video, ask students: *Do you think the Elastic Clause has been stretched too far, not far enough, or is it just right?* (¿Te parece que la Cláusula Elástica ha sido flexibilizada mucho, poco o lo justo?) Each student records their answer and a brief explanation in writing. Then, group students based on their responses: *Too far, Not enough, Just right*. Each group discusses their reasoning and shares with the whole class.

Instructional Strategies

Grouping: Have students create their infographic ([infografía](#)) in small groups. Consider strategic grouping by same first language, mixed languages, proficiency in English, or allow students to choose their own groups.

CER (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning): For the second lesson idea, have students work in pairs to find examples of when the Elastic Clause ([La Cláusula Elástica](#)) was used in history. Students should find evidence ([evidencia](#)) to support the claim ([argumento](#)) that the use of the Elastic Clause increased Congress's power. Students can then prepare a one-minute speech explaining their reasoning. They can record their speeches (video or audio) and use visuals for support.

💡 Lesson Ideas

Ideas para la enseñanza

Build a lesson around the video using any of these ideas or other iCivics lessons.

- Make a chart or infographic that lists what Congress can and cannot do.
- Find three examples in history when the Necessary and Proper Clause or Elastic Clause has been used to increase the power of Congress. Find a creative way to explain how these examples increased Congress' power.
- Haz una tabla o infografía que enumere las cosas que el Congreso puede y no puede hacer.
- Busca tres ejemplos históricos en los que la Cláusula Necesaria y Adecuada o Cláusula Elástica se haya utilizado para aumentar la autoridad del Congreso. Elige una manera creativa de explicar cómo estos ejemplos aumentaron la autoridad del Congreso.