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Voice of Democracy Audio-Essay Contest
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“Is Our Constitution Still Relevant?”

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Is the U.S. Constitution still relevant? In celebration and honor of the U.S. Constitution's 225th birthday I would whole-heartedly say *yes* – the U.S. Constitution is still relevant! It is not only appropriate but an honor to wish one of the greatest pieces of legislation ever written another 225 years of success. The U.S. Constitution's success and relevancy can be seen through its birth, growth and future.

No birth is easy and the U.S. Constitution is no exception. On September 17, 1787 forty-two delegates met in Philadelphia to sign what would become the U.S. Constitution. The framers of the Constitution modified Massachusetts and New Hampshire's state constitutions in how people would vote; federal census was borrowed from Pennsylvania and New York. The issue of property qualifications was taken from Pennsylvania and the outlines for executive power came from the best of the Massachusetts and New York Constitutions. After deliberating for four months, the Philadelphia Constitution of 1787 was ratified. On June 21, 1788, nine states approved the U.S. Constitution and a "more perfect union" was born. One of the most important and relevant governing documents was created.

The U.S. Constitution is relevant today because of how this living document has grown and changed during its 225 year lifespan. It is appropriate to refer to the U.S. Constitution as a living document because the Founding Fathers designed it to grow and change as the nation grew and changed. Article Five states that: "The Congress, whenever two-thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose amendments to this Constitution..." Three-fourths of the states then have to approve the amendment before it can become a law. In the past 200 years, Americans have voted only 27 times to add or rescind amendments. For example in 1865, the 13th Amendment banned the practice of slavery. In 1919, the 18th Amendment was passed to make the selling of alcohol illegal but in 1933, the 21st Amendment canceled or repealed the 18th Amendment. When it was written only white males over the age of 21 could vote and the President was able to serve as many terms as he wanted. Since then the 19th Amendment gave the right to vote to all citizens no matter of race or color or whether or not they were a slave. The 22nd Amendment limits the president to serve only 2 four year terms. This was enacted after President Franklin Roosevelt served four consecutive terms. The nation believed that the U.S. Constitution gave too much power to one person and one political party. I am convinced that there will be more amendments passed during my lifetime. In order for the U.S. Constitution to remain relevant, it must continue to change in the future.

The future of the U.S. Constitution may see many challenges. The 2012 presidential election has raised many questions. What is the relevance of the Electoral College? Is the correct term for presidents 4 years or would 6 years be better? What if members of Congress were to serve 4 years allowing members to actually work on national issues rather than focus half their term working on getting reelected? Does the office of the president need to be filled by a U.S. born citizen? As technology continues to evolve, how will the U.S. Constitution react? Perhaps voting will be done through the internet and home computers. And then there are the issues and challenges that we have yet to discover. But the U.S. Constitution is strong enough to remain relevant.

The U.S. Constitution is still relevant today. Its birth, growth and future only reinforce that what the Founding Fathers of this great nation created has more than stood the test of time. Through the past 225 years, the U.S. Constitution has governed this nation through many wars and challenges. It has protected the lives and rights of each citizen. The cornerstone of our nation stands as strong today as it was on September 19, 1787 and it will still be as strong and relevant in the year 2237!