

# My Capitol Student Self-Guide Answer Key

U.S. CAPITOL  
Visitor Center

## My Capitol Part 1: U.S. Capitol Visitor Center Exhibition Hall

### PAGE 5:

**In how many places in Exhibition Hall can you find the Great Seal of the United States?**

**Answer:** The U.S. Senate Seal appears three times in Exhibition Hall — on the wall near the model of the Capitol Dome, near the reproduction of the U.S. Constitution, and in the U.S. Senate amphitheater.



The Great Seal of the United States is used to authenticate certain documents produced by the federal government. Features of this seal served as models for the designs of the U.S. Senate Seal and the Presidential Seal, which are used for the same purpose — to authenticate important documents.

### PAGE 9/STOP 1: Plaster Model for the Statue of Freedom

**Where are the initials “U.S.” on the model for the Statue of Freedom?**

**Answer:** The initials are found on the brooch that secures the statue’s fringed robes.

**Where is the reference to the original states on the model?**

**Answer:** There are 13 stars and 13 stripes on the shield representing the original 13 states.

**What do you see on Freedom’s head?**

**Answer:** There is a helmet on Freedom’s head that is encircled by stars and features a crest composed of an eagle’s head, feathers, and talons, a reference to the costume of Native Americans.

**Why do you think the artist chose this symbol?**

**Answer:** The artist integrated symbols of the United States of America and freedom throughout the design of the statue. For the helmet, he chose the eagle, which represents national pride, unity, and the strength of the nation.

**In choosing these items, what was the sculptor saying about freedom?**

**Answer:** Citizens must always be prepared to defend this country’s freedom and democracy.

### PAGE 11/STOP 2: The Dome: An Architectural Masterpiece

**How tall is the U.S. Capitol Dome?**

**Answer:** The dome is 288 feet tall. That is the height of a 28-story building or almost the length of a football field.

**Name five other Washington, D.C. buildings or monuments that have domes.**

**Answer:** Five other buildings or monuments in Washington, D.C. with domes are: the Library of Congress, the National Gallery of Art West Building, the Smithsonian Institution’s Natural History Museum, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, and the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

### PAGE 13/STOP 3: Inside the Dome: An Artistic Masterpiece

**In *The Apotheosis of Washington*, what do you think the 13 women that surround George Washington symbolize? Why is the number 13 important to American history?**

**Answer:** The 13 women represent the 13 original American colonies. That is why the number 13 is important to American history.

**Why do you think the artist included a rainbow?**

**Answer:** The rainbow is a symbol of hope and promise.

**Benjamin Franklin is standing to the right of Minerva, the Roman goddess of science. What did Franklin invent?**

**Answer:** Benjamin Franklin invented the lightning rod, a metal-lined stove that was named after him (the “Franklin” stove), bifocal eyeglasses, and a simple odometer for measuring distance.

**The central figure in the “War” group represents Freedom. Name the elements that resemble those you saw in the model of the Statue of Freedom in Stop 1?**

**Answer:** Those elements are the sword, shield, and a helmet encircled by stars with an eagle on top.

**What does *The Apotheosis of Washington* tell you about the way America wanted to present itself to the world in the 1850s?**

**Answer:** The goal was to impress foreign visitors who came to the U.S. Capitol, to illustrate the importance of democracy, and to show the creativity and ingenuity of the American people.

## PAGE 14/STOP 4: A Home for Congress

**Name the 13 original states from north to south. Where was Washington, D.C. located in relationship to the states? Why do you think that location was chosen?**

**Answer:** The 13 original states were Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina, and Rhode Island. The location for Washington, D.C. was chosen because it was situated at the approximate mid-point between the northern and southern states. This location made traveling to the Capitol manageable for most members of Congress.

## PAGE 15

**How does Dr. Thornton's design for the Capitol reflect the two legislative bodies: the House of Representatives and the Senate?**

**Answer:** Dr. Thornton's design of the Capitol included two wings housing the House chamber and the Senate chamber that were joined by a dome and rotunda.



## PAGE 16/STOP 5: The Senate Sets Up Shop

**Why did the authors of the Constitution want senators to be chosen by state legislatures?**

**Answer:** The authors of the Constitution believed that if each state selected its own senators, state legislatures would strengthen their ties with the federal government and thus strengthen the chances for ratifying the Constitution.

**How do we select senators today?**

**Answer:** Since 1913, senators have been elected by popular vote.

**Why do you think the law was changed?**

**Answer:** Until the mid-1850's, state legislatures selected senators, usually based on who concurred with them on the issues they wanted considered in Washington. However, growing hostilities in various states resulted in some vacant Senate seats. It became clear that there were also inconsistencies in state elections. Intimidation and bribery marked some states' selections of senators. To resolve these concerns, in 1913, the 17th Amendment was passed stating that senators would be elected by popular vote.

**What makes the corn cob column capital unusual?**

**Answer:** The column depicts a native American plant. When this column and others like it were installed, they were greatly admired by members of Congress and visitors to the Capitol.



## PAGE 19/STOP 6: The House Sets Up Shop

**There were two versions of the Bill of Rights. Which version was sent to the states to be ratified?**

**Answer:** The second version with 12 amendments was sent to the states to be ratified. The first version included 17 amendments.

**What two amendments were not ratified?**

**Answer:** The two amendments not ratified concerned the number of constituents for each representative and compensation for members of Congress.

**Why do you think the First Congress was concerned about individual rights?**

**Answer:** Individual rights were not considered when the Constitution was written, and the founders soon realized that they needed to set limits on government action in regard to personal rights. There needed to be guarantees of essential rights and liberties. Several state legislatures insisted on a promise of amendments before they would ratify the Constitution. The drafting of the Bill of Rights soon followed the ratification of the Constitution.

## PAGE 20/STOP 7: Senate Chamber Desks

**How many senators serve in Congress today?**

**Answer:** One hundred senators serve in Congress today.

**How many senators represent each state?**

**Answer:** Two senators represent each state.

**What is the length of a senator's term?**

**Answer:** A senator's term is six years.

**Are all senators elected at the same time?**

**Answer:** Senators' terms are staggered so that one-third of the Senate is elected every two years.

**Why don't residents of the District of Columbia and U.S. territories have representation in the Senate?**

**Answer:** The District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.) and U.S. territories are not states. The Constitution only provides representation in the Senate for states.

## PAGE 21/STOP 8: House Chamber Desks and Chairs

**What determines the number of representatives from each state?**

**Answer:** The number of representatives from each state is based on population. Every ten years, a census is conducted to determine the number of people in each state. Today, 435 representatives represent 300 million American citizens. This means that on average, a representative serves a constituency of approximately 690,000 people.

**What is the length of a representative's term?**

**Answer:** A representative's term is two years.

**How does that compare with a senator's term?**

**Answer:** A representative's term is four years shorter than a senator's.

**How many representatives currently serve in Congress?**

**Answer:** The number of voting representatives in the House of Representatives is fixed by law at no more than 435. Currently, there are also five delegates representing the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. A resident commissioner represents Puerto Rico.

## PAGE 24/STOP 10: First African American Representative: Joseph Rainey, South Carolina

**How is seating in the House of Representative decided today?**

**Answer:** Individual desks on the House chamber floor have been eliminated due to the number of representatives and limited space. Long benches have replaced the desks. Members of the House have no assigned seats but are by tradition divided by party. Members of the Democratic Party sit to the Speaker's right, and members of the Republican Party sit to the Speaker's left.

## PAGE 25/STOP 11: Challenges of a Growing Nation

**What jobs are the children doing?**

**Answer:** The children are working in the field picking cotton and resetting spools of thread in a textile factory.

**Looking at the model of the Capitol (1913), what changes do you see that tell you that congressional membership had increased? What changes do you see to the Capitol Grounds?**

**Answer:** By 1913, office buildings for members of Congress and staff had been built; Union Station had been constructed, making train travel convenient for members of Congress and visitors to the Capitol; the Library of Congress had been completed; and landscaping had begun on the Capitol Grounds.



## PAGE 27/STOP 13: First Woman Elected to the House: Jeannette Rankin, Montana

**The Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees women the right to vote, was ratified in 1920. How was it possible for Jeannette Rankin to be elected to Congress in 1916?**

**Answer:** By 1916, some western states, including Rankin's home state of Montana, had already granted women the right to vote in state and local elections. Rankin was elected to the House of Representatives with the support of women voters in her home state. One of several issues that she wanted to focus on in Congress was the right of women to vote in national elections.

## PAGE 29/STOP 17: Civil Rights for All Americans

**What do the pen and desk have to do with the Voting Rights Act of 1965?**

**Answer:** President Johnson used the pen and desk (a replica) to sign this legislation into law, making illegal any tactics used by states to prevent minorities and other disadvantaged citizens from voting.



**Why was passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 so important?**

**Answer:** The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to discriminate against anyone based on gender, race, religion, national origin, disabilities, or age and required those states that were not honoring past civil rights laws to do so.

**What role did citizen action play in passing the act?**

**Answer:** Citizen actions such as protests, petitions, marches, and sit-ins brought to the attention of Congress the injustices that people faced which prevented them from exercising their civil liberties that were protected by previously-passed legislation.



## PAGE 31/STOP 18: The Constitution and Congress

How many pages does the Constitution contain? How many articles does it include? Which one is the longest? Which of the three branches of government does that article establish?

**Answer:** The Constitution has four handwritten pages. It contains seven articles. Article 1 is the longest article in the Constitution. Article 1 establishes the legislative branch of the federal government.

Assign the following responsibilities to the House (H), the Senate (S), or both (B)?

**Answer:**

Initiates all laws concerning the raising of money by the federal government. (H)

Approves all treaties. (S)

Declares all wars. (B)

Approves all presidential nominations. (S)

Initiates the removal of federal officials suspected of "high crimes and misdemeanors." (H)

Makes all laws. (B)

Why do you think the authors of the Constitution chose the House instead of the Senate to create bills that impose federal taxes?

**Answer:** The House is most connected to the people in hearing their concerns and opinions about government spending.

True or False? Any U.S. citizen can introduce a bill into Congress.

**Answer:** False. Citizens may petition their representatives and ask them to enact a bill. But only an elected representative can introduce a bill for consideration. Laws begin as ideas. These ideas may come from a representative or senator or from a citizen. Citizens who have ideas for laws may contact their representative or senators to discuss their ideas. If the representative or senator agrees, the idea is researched and potentially introduced as legislation.

## PAGE 32/STOP 19: Working at the Capitol

How many jobs can you identify?

**Answer:** To learn about the numerous jobs at the U.S. Capitol, visit the Website for the Architect of the Capitol, [www.aoc.gov](http://www.aoc.gov), and discover occupations like horticulturist, electrician, curator, historian, architect, or mason. The Architect of the Capitol is responsible for the maintenance of the buildings and grounds of the U.S. Capitol.

## My Capitol Part 2: Explore the U.S. Capitol Grounds

### PAGE 40/STOP 1: United States Capitol

What features of the Capitol's architecture resemble buildings from ancient Greece and Rome?

**Answer:** The architectural features of the U.S. Capitol that resemble structures in ancient Greece and Rome are the dome, rotunda, columns, pediments, windows, arches, tholos, and building materials like marble.



Why do you think those buildings appealed to the Founding Fathers?

**Answer:** The Founding Fathers were inspired and attracted to the grandeur and size of important structures. They also wanted to compete with European architectural structures.

### PAGE 41/STOP 3: Summerhouse

What patterns do you see on the walls of the Summerhouse?

**Answer:** The patterns that you see on the walls of the Summerhouse are geometric and artistic patterns forming shapes to create a "basket-weave" texture.

### PAGE 43/STOP 6: The Peace Monument

How can you tell which figure symbolizes Grief, History, Victory or Peace?

**Answer:** The figure that symbolizes Grief holds her covered face and weeps in mourning. The History figure holds a stylus and a tablet with the inscription, "They died that their country might live." The Victory figure holds a laurel wreath and carries an oak branch, signifying strength. The figure symbolizing Peace faces the U.S. Capitol, holding an olive sprig.

Interested in learning more about Congress and the U.S. Capitol? Visit the Capitol Visitor Center's online exhibits at [www.visitthecapitol/exhibitions](http://www.visitthecapitol/exhibitions).