

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview.
Voicing Vehement Vetoes (12–15 Minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Goal

Understanding the President's veto power and applying constitutional reasoning, students write brief presidential veto messages explaining why bills should be rejected as unconstitutional.

Instructions

1. Let students work individually to complete the handout. (Allow 8–10 minutes to finish.)
2. Put students in pairs/small groups, and let them exchange their veto messages. (Allow 6–8 minutes.)
3. Discuss as a class via volunteers. Especially let students read their poems for Bill D!

Suggested Key

Students should generally argue that:

- Congress may exercise only powers specifically delegated to it.
- Desirable projects do not automatically become constitutional.
- The General Welfare Clause does not grant unlimited legislative authority.
- Allowing Congress to act whenever a project seems beneficial would effectively give it a general police power rather than limited, enumerated powers.

Debrief/Wrap-Up Questions

- Which bill was easiest to veto? Why?
- Why did Madison believe broad interpretations of the Constitution were dangerous?

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You are the Vice President. One day while staring at his smartphone and walking down the street, the President falls into an open manhole cover and is never seen again. As the new President, you are presented with four bills the next week. Your job: to decide why each bill is unconstitutional according to the principle of enumerated powers, and write a 3–4 sentence veto message to Congress for each one. Your messages should do these things:

1. Respectfully reject the bill.
2. Explain why the Constitution does not authorize the action.
3. Refer to the idea that Congress only possesses its enumerated powers.
4. Use CREATIVE AND DIFFERENT WORDING for each veto message!

Bill A: National Road Construction Act – Congress passes a bill to spend \$25 billion for highways, bridges, and local roads throughout the country, because it “promotes the general welfare.” **Your Veto Message:**

Bill B: National School Improvement Act – Congress proposes a bill funding/directing curriculum standards for all Christian schools and homeschool co-ops in the U.S., because, as one representative says, “Nothing in the Constitution says we *can’t* direct Christian schools and homeschool co-ops, does it?” **Your Veto Message:**

Bill C: Federal Recreation Program – Congress proposes creating and funding public swimming pools, sports complexes, and recreation centers in every state. One senator remarks, “Of *course* the President should sign this bill; the Constitution says that laws we make are “the supreme law of the land!” **Your Veto Message:**

Bill D: National Housing Construction Act – Congress proposes using taxpayer money to send \$10 billion in aid to the nation of Kliftonistan, which suffered damage when a meteorite one mile in diameter hit that nation’s largest lake, killing seven fish and three small turtles. **NOTE: Your veto message for this bill must be written in the form of a four-line poem, with lines 1 and 2 rhyming, and lines 3 and 4 rhyming:**