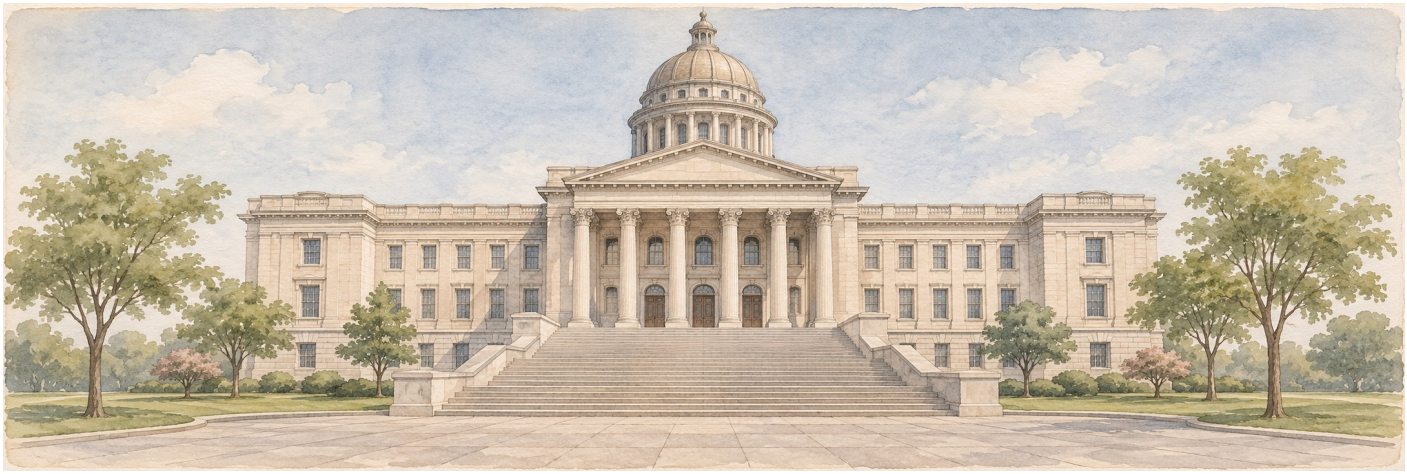
THE CONSTITUTION WITH CARL

Volume 18 - The Seventeenth Amendment - Electing Senators Directly

Electing Senators Directly

Central question: Who picks a senator, the people or the state legislature?





For the first 124 years of the Constitution, the voters of a state never voted for a United States senator. They could not. The Constitution gave that job to the state legislature, the lawmakers at the state capitol, and ordinary citizens had no ballot in it at all.

The Seventeenth Amendment changed the chooser. It did not change the Senate's size, the length of a senator's term, or the number of votes a senator casts. It changed one thing: whose hand is on the choice. Five words of the old rule came out, and five new words went in. This book reads both versions side by side, tells why the Framers wrote the first one, tells what went wrong with it, and lets you judge the change for yourself.

Read the change honestly, in both directions. Something real was gained in 1913, and something real was given up. Carl's job in this volume is to show you both, standing on the capitol steps where the choice used to be made.

For ages 7 to 11. Level Up boxes reach to age 13.

START HERE

Meet Carl and the Four Strands

Carl the Cardinal is Senator Carl in this volume. He stands on the steps of a state capitol, waving with one wing and holding a blank ballot in the other. The steps are the right place for him. Under the old rule, the choice of a senator happened inside that building, among the legislators. Under the new rule, the choice happens out in the open, among the people the steps lead down to. Carl holds the ballot because the ballot is what the amendment moved.

The four strands, kept separate

Strand	What it is
THE WORDS	The amendment itself, in ORIGINAL WORDS, plus a PLAIN LANGUAGE EXPLANATION set apart from it.
THE HISTORY	Evidence from before and around 1913 about why the words were added.
COURTS HAVE SAID	Named cases with years. This is interpretation by judges, labeled as interpretation.
STILL DEBATED	Real disputes that remain. Stated fairly, never as settled fact.

How to use this book

- Read the words aloud first. Then read the explanation.
- Write, draw, point, or dictate your answers. All of those count.
- Every election in the activities is fictional, played with family or classmates. The real elections, deadlocks, and scandals are on the History pages, with their real names and dates.
- Two cross references keep this book from reteaching its neighbors. Book 13 owns electors and voters in presidential elections. Civics No. 3 owns voting and elections today. This book owns one change: who votes for senators.
- Family Talk is where the family viewpoint lives. It is never presented as a court holding.

CARL'S ONE COMPARISON

Every page of this book comes back to one comparison. Under the old rule, a few dozen or a few hundred legislators chose. Under the new rule, every qualified voter in the state chooses. Ask of every story you read here: who held the choice, and what did that do to the choice? The two activities on pages 15 and 16 are built on that question, and you will feel the difference in your own hands before you judge it.

MEET CARL BOX

Carl in this volume is a greeter on the steps. A senator chosen by a legislature owed his seat to the men in the chamber behind Carl. A senator chosen by the people owes his seat to the crowd in front of Carl. Same steps, same building, same office. A different direction to face. Watch which way the stories in this book turn.