

Oregon Constitution Reading Guide

The Oregon Constitution, as first written, has been amended many times by the voters. But much of the Constitution still holds, and it is interesting to see what has changed! As you read through the original constitution, follow along on this reading guide and identify the clause that addresses the described issue, or fill in the blanks with the correct answer.

Bill of Rights

- ___ The State cannot pay taxpayer money to private catholic schools.
- ___ People have freedom of speech, with some reasonable restrictions.
- ___ People who are arrested or placed in jail cannot be tortured.
- ___ A law stating that rich people can speed would be unconstitutional.
- ___ You can't be prosecuted for an act that was outlawed after you did it.
- ___ The State cannot outlaw the ownership of a personal gun.
- ___ The Legislature can outlaw immigration by non-US citizens to Oregon.

Elections

- ___ Only white males over 21 could vote
- ___ Chinese people could not vote.
- ___ A person could not serve in more than one paid government position at a time.
- ___ The person with the most votes wins, so if nobody runs and the person with the most votes gets write-in votes, that person wins.

Distribution of Powers

The three branches of State government are:

Legislative Department

- ___ The State Senate only has up to 30 Senators.
- ___ A person who moved to Lane County 6 months ago cannot serve as a Senator or Representative in the Oregon Legislature.
- ___ Legislative sessions are held every two years.

___ Two-thirds of the members of a chamber have to be present to do business.

___ The proceedings of the legislature are public.

___ All tax bills must start in the House of Representatives.

___ The Legislature cannot make laws for a specific city or county.

Executive Department

___ The Governor served for four years, with an 8-year term limit.

___ The Secretary of State succeeds the Governor, if they leave office early.

___ The Governor controls the Oregon National Guard.

___ The Governor can call a special session of the legislature.

___ A Governor veto can be over-ridden by a 2/3 vote of both chambers.

___ If a vacancy in an office occurs when the Legislature is not in session, the Governor can appoint a temporary replacement.

Administrative Department

___ The Secretary of State audits all the governmental departments, to ensure they are acting accountably.

___ Every county had to have an elected county clerk, Treasurer, Sheriff, Coroner, and Surveyor.

Judicial Department

What are the three major state-level courts that the constitution created?

___ Judges of the Oregon Supreme Court are elected.

___ The number of supreme court justices could not be more than 7 (no longer limited, but we have 7 currently).

___ The Supreme Court can only reconsider Circuit Court decisions.

___ A decision at a County Court may be appealed to a Circuit Court.

___ Most public officers cannot be impeached.

___ Supreme Court judges can be impeached by a 2/3 vote of each chamber.

Education and School Lands

___ By default, the Governor is the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

___ The Common School fund is supported by revenues from public lands.

Finance

___ If expenses in one year exceed income, the legislature must pay it off the following year.

Militia

___ The Militia could call up most males from 18 to 45 years of age.

Corporations and Internal Improvements

___ The state cannot print money.

___ The legislature can prescribe how towns can tax their citizens.

___ The State cannot buy stock in a company.

State Printer

How was the State Printer chosen for the job?

Salaries

Who was paid the most salary?

___ Governor

___ Secretary of State

___ Treasurer

___ Supreme Court Justice

Seat of Government

Once established, the Seat of Government (currently Salem) could not be changed for how long?

Miscellaneous

___ The legislature can't create new elected offices for terms longer than four years.

___ All Constitutional officers must take an oath to uphold the federal and state constitutions.

___ A city cannot establish a lottery program.

___ Newly arriving ethnic Chinese could not own property.

Boundaries

Three rivers are specifically mentioned as forming part of the boundary for Oregon. They are:

Amendments

If the state has one million electors, how many does it take to ratify a new amendment?

Schedule

_____ Provides for an up or down vote to allow slavery to Oregon.

What was the date of this constitution?

Who was the President of the Oregon Constitution Convention?
