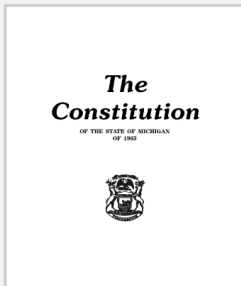


What Is the Purpose of a Constitution?

A constitution is the basic law of a nation or state. It organizes the government, gives it authority, and defines its powers. A constitution rules the actions and decisions of the government, and no laws may contradict a constitution.

In the United States, constitutions are written documents; however, some countries, such as Great Britain, function with unwritten constitutions. In simple terms, a constitution is like a recipe for government.

Find It Online



[A Brief History of the Michigan Constitution](#), Citizens Research Council

[Michigan Constitution - Current and Historical](#) (text), Michigan Legislature

[Constitution of 1835](#) (images) Michiganology.org

[Michigan Constitutional Law Collection](#), Library of Michigan

Constitution of Michigan

Michigan's current constitution was approved by the voters in 1963, following a constitutional convention in 1961–1962. It is composed of a preamble and 12 articles. Temporary provisions also ensured a smooth transition from the constitution of 1908 to that of 1963.

Writing a State Constitution

A constitution is written by delegates elected by the people. Michigan's constitution sets the number at one delegate for each state senatorial and representative electoral district. The delegates meet at a constitutional convention, sometimes shortened to "Con-Con."

Changing the Constitution

Generally speaking, state constitutions are easier to change (amend) and rewrite (general revision) than the United States Constitution. Over time, Michigan has had four different constitutions: 1835, 1850, 1908, and 1963. Every 16 years, a question regarding the general revision of the state constitution is posed during the general election. [Const 1963, Art 12, Sec 3](#). In 1978, 1994, and 2010, voters turned down such proposals. The question will appear again in 2026.

More than 30 amendments to the state constitution have been adopted by a vote of the people since 1963. Amendments related to the judicial branch of government include those that:

- Establish a judicial tenure commission to investigate and prosecute judicial misconduct. [Art 6, Sec 30](#).
- Define how judicial vacancies are filled. [Art 6, Sec 23](#).
- Provide for jury of less than 12 in misdemeanors. [Art 1, Sec 20](#).
- Allow courts to deny bail for certain circumstances related to violent crime; provide for trial to begin within 90 days. [Art 1, Sec 15](#).
- Provide for crime victims rights. [Art 1, Sec 24](#).
- Limit criminal appeals. [Art 1, Sec 20](#).
- Establish qualifications for judicial office. [Art 6, Sec 19](#).

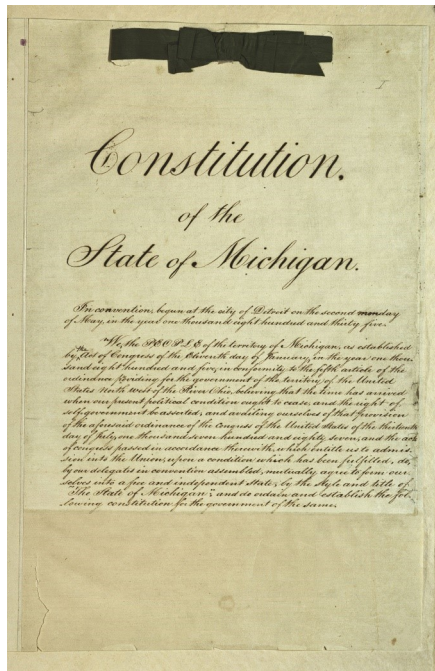


Primary Sources: Con-Con, 1961–1962



[Making Michigan's New Constitution, 1961–1962](#) by James K. Pollock, University of Michigan political science professor and constitutional convention delegate.

[Michigan Can Lead the Way](#) (video, 26:30) by Wayne State University and Michigan State University; posted by the Archives of Michigan.



[Const1835, Michiganology.org](http://Const1835.Michiganology.org)

Fast Constitution Facts

U.S. Constitution	Michigan Constitution of 1963
Signed September 17, 1787. World's oldest written constitution still in effect	Written, 1961–62; adopted, 1963; supersedes state constitutions of 1835, 1850, and 1908
Begins with "We the People"	Begins with "We the People"
Defines the roles and powers of three branches of government	Defines the roles and powers of three branches of government
Lists rights of the people in the Bill of Rights, amendments adopted in 1791	Lists rights of the people in the Declaration of Rights in Article 1, directly following the Preamble

Separation of Powers

The [Michigan Constitution](#) separates the state government into distinct and independent branches, which share power and serves as a check on the power of the others.

Branch	Power	U.S. Constitution	Michigan Constitution
Legislative	Makes	Article I Congress (Senate, Representatives)	Article IV Senate, House of Representatives
Executive	Enforces	Article II President	Article V Governor
Judicial	Interprets	Article III Supreme Court, Lower Courts Established by Congress	Article VI Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Circuit Court, Probate Court, and Courts of Limited Jurisdiction Established by the Legislature