Constitutional Power Grab Game:
A Summarizing Activity for Checks and Balances in Government

Directions:

• Break up into 5 small groups.
• Each group will get a list of “power grabs.” Some are constitutional while others are not.
• The game will be played in rounds. In each round the teacher will give each group an opportunity for a "Power Grab". The remaining two groups have two minutes to find proof from the Constitution (amendments included) by Article, section and clause, why the power grab is unconstitutional or constitutional.
• When a group thinks they have found the appropriate check, they yell “check.” The group must be prepared to respond with the answer immediately by bringing their answer to the front of the room and showing the teacher where they have found the answer in the Constitution. If wrong, others may try to block the grab for power with the two minutes, alternating between branches until the two minutes are gone or the answer is correct.
• When checked correctly, the branch receives 10 points. If no one gets the correct answer, the branch grabbing power gets 5 points. No penalty for wrong answers.
• Groups should write out their “power grabs” on a piece of paper (one per page). As the group is called forward to grab for power, they will pick a grab and tape it on the front board.
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES POWER GRABS:

1. Congress decides because of the contributions of Andrew Rodriguez in baseball, they will honor him with the title, "Sir Andrew Rodriguez". (Art. I, Sec. 9, Clause 8. Unconstitutional.)

2. Congress decides to change the Constitution to allow the President to be elected to one term of six years. (Art II, Section 1. Constitutional if amendment successful.)

3. The United States is at war in the Netherlands. Congress decides to block/not pass the president’s legislation to fund weapons sent to the Netherlands. (Art. I, Sec. 9, Clause 9. Constitutional.)

4. The Southwest Jr. High administration is tired of finding students chewing gum. So Dr. Bransky and Mr. Fearing go lobby Congress. The House of Representatives decides to make a law that states chewing gum is illegal and anyone who has been sent to the office so far this year for chewing gum at school is sent to jail. (Art I, Sec. 9, Clause 3. Unconstitutional.)

5. Gas stations in Florida are charging more per gallon for customers who do not live in that state. Congress forces the Florida gas stations to stop this practice. (Art. I, Sec. 8, Clause 3. Constitutional.)
SENATE POWER GRABS:

1. Congress decides to impeach President Bush with the President Pro-Temp of the Senate presiding. (Art. I, Sec. 3, Clause 6. Unconstitutional.)
2. A House member dies, the House takes four days off to mourn but the Senate says they can only have two days off. (Art. I, Sec. 5, Clause 4. Unconstitutional.)
3. Senate declares a new act from President Barker unconstitutional. (Art. III, Section 2, Clause 1. Unconstitutional.)
5. To fight terrorism, a bill is written that says anyone found guilty of hijacking will be punished by having their fingernails ripped off. (Amendment 8. Unconstitutional.)
**Presidential Power Grabs:**

1. The President declares war on China. (Art. I, Sec. 8, Clause 11. Unconstitutional.)
2. The President appoints Mr. Kelly Barker to Senator Pat Roberts’s seat when Roberts resigns due to a personal scandal. (Amendment 17, sec. 2. Unconstitutional.)
3. The President sets a rule for the Air Force that says only people with a college degree can apply to join. (Art. I, Sec. 8, Clause 14. Unconstitutional.)
4. The President decides that Congress will meet in regular session on December 15 of each year. (Amendment 20/Art. I, Section 4, Clause 2. Unconstitutional.)
5. President Williams decides that her face is prettier than Ben Franklin and changes the $100 bill to remove Franklin and have her likeness printed on the bills instead. (Art. I, Sec. 8, Clause 5. Unconstitutional.)
SUPREME COURT POWER GRABS:

1. The Court rules that the government may not issue patents because of the need for technological advance. (Art. I, sec. 8, clause 8. Unconstitutional.)
2. Since Washington D.C. is not in any state, residents there may not vote in national elections. (Amendment 23, Unconstitutional.)
3. The Court rules that income tax is illegal and you don't have to pay. (Amendment 16. Constitutional.)
4. The Court disagrees with the way the Vice-President is running the country. They impeach him. (Art. II, Section 4. Unconstitutional.)
5. The ambassador to Spain is brought home and tried in a New York court for crimes. (Art. II, section 2, clause 2)
6. The Court decides that religion and politics don't mix. Therefore, no government official is required to take an oath of office. (Art. VI, sec. 3)
THE BUREAUCRACY POWER GRABS:

1. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee deploys troops to Canada and sets out a military strike plan to capture Montreal. (Art. II, sec 2, clause 1. Unconstitutional)
2. The President pardons a judge who was recently impeached. (Art. II, sec. 2, clause 1.)
3. President Williams appoints Judge Barker to be on the Supreme Court. Congress approves Judge Barker for a term of 25 years. (Art. III, sec. 1. Unconstitutional.)
4. A vice-president becomes president after the elected presidents died after one year in office. The former VP, now President, serves 2 full terms and runs for a 3rd term. (Amendment 22, unconstitutional.)
5. The state of Kansas argues that they’re law on healthcare should supersede the federal laws on healthcare. (Art. VI, sec. 2.)