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## the Charters of Freedom

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### From Loyal Subjects to Traitorous Rebels ~ A Royal Proclamation

*When the last dutiful & humble petition from Congress received no other Answer than declaring us Rebels, and o of the King's protection. I from that Moment look'd forward to a Revolution & Independence, as the only means of Salvation; and will risque the last Penny of my Fortune. & the last Drop of my Blood upon the Issue.*

George Mason, October 2, 1778

In 1761, fifteen years before the United States of America burst onto the world stage with the Declaration of Independence, the American colonists were loyal British subjects who celebrated the coronation of their new King, George III. The colonies that stretched from present-day Maine to Georgia were distinctly English in character although they had been settled by Scots, Welsh, Irish, Dutch, Swedes, Finns, Africans, French, Germans, and Swiss, as well as English.

As English men and women, the American colonists were heirs to the thirteenth-century English document, the Magna Carta, which established the principles that no one is above the law (not even the King), and that no one can take away certain rights. So in 1763, when the King began to assert his authority over the colonies to make them share the cost of the Seven Years' War England had just fought and won, the English colonists protested by invoking their rights as free men and loyal subjects. It was only after a decade of repeated efforts on the part of the colonists to defend their rights that they resorted to armed conflict and, eventually, to the unthinkable—separation from the motherland.

**A Proclamation by the King for Suppressing Rebellion and Seditious Practices**  
August 23, 1775 [learn more...](#)

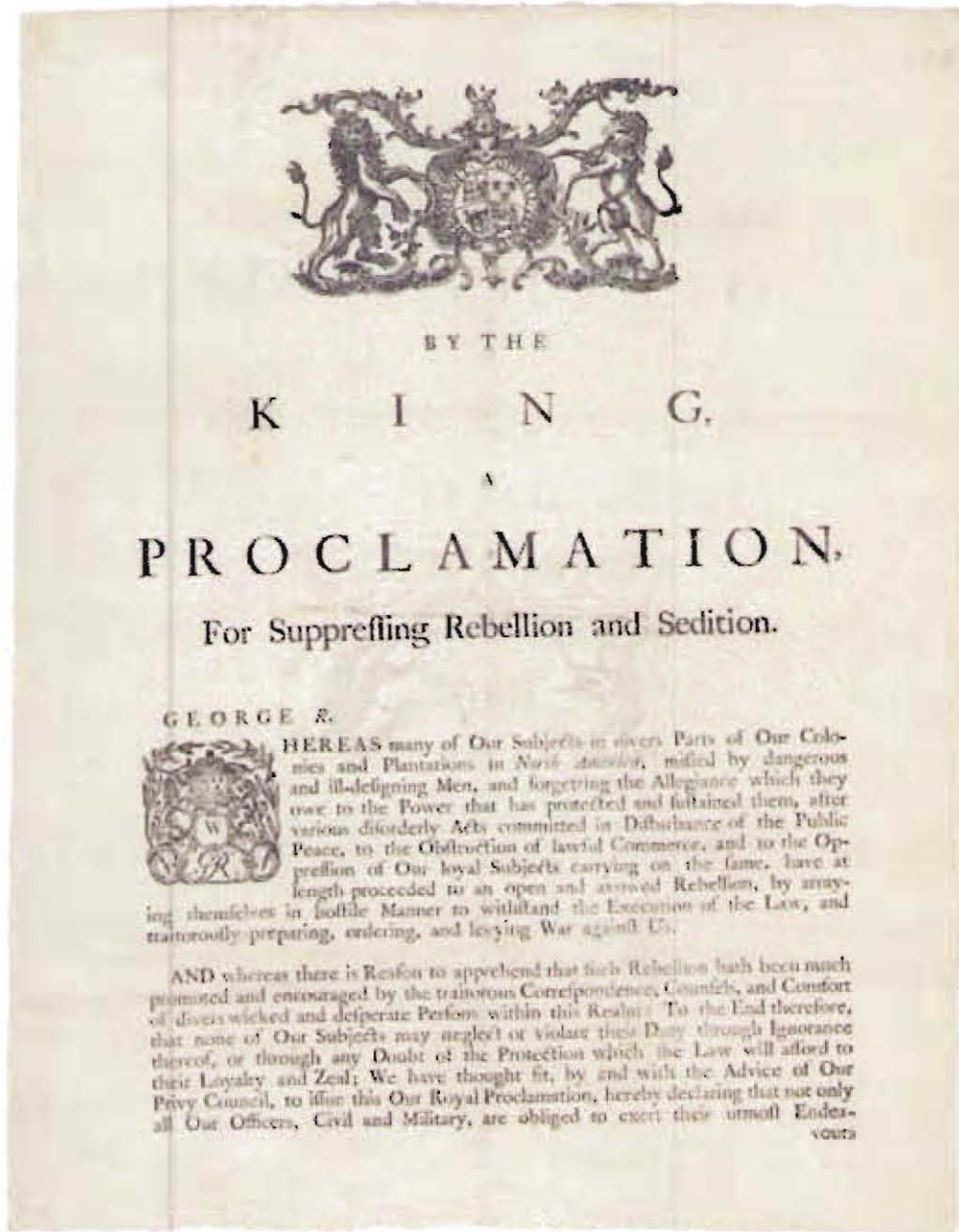
**Pulling Down the Statue of George III at Bowling Green in Lower Manhattan, oil painting (reproduction) by William Walcott**  
1857 [learn more...](#)

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**A Proclamation by the King for Suppressing  
 Rebellion and Sedition, August 23, 1775**

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By the spring of 1775, peace gave way to armed conflict and Concord. Ignoring one plea for peace in a message to the Olive Branch Petition, they proclaimed in this document the colonies stood in open rebellion and were subject to penalty, as was any British subject who failed to report the knowledge of rebellion or conspiracy. This literally transformed loyal subjects into traitorous rebels.

National Archives, Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and Constitutional Convention

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## **Pulling Down the Statue of George III at Bowling Green in Lower Manhattan, painting (reproduction) by William Walcutt, 1857**



After hearing the news about independence on July 9, 1776, New York City celebrated by pulling down a statue of the King that they viewed as a tyrant.

Courtesy of Lafayette College Art Collection, Easton, Pennsylvania

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### Courage of the Founders ~ The Perilous Road to Independence

*Perhaps our Congress will be Exalted on a high Gallows.*

Abraham Clark, signer of the Declaration of Independence, August 6, 1776

The sole governing authority presiding over the tumultuous events of the American Revolution between 1774 and 1789 was a body known as Congress. With no power to regulate commerce or lay taxes, and with little ability to enforce any of its decisions, this group, representing the thirteen colonies, declared independence, conducted a war that defeated one of the greatest military powers of its day, and invented a new political entity that became a sovereign independent nation. Its members pondered everything from the rightness of independence to the number of flints needed by the armies—sometimes with the enemy not far from their doorstep. Asserting their rights, they found themselves labeled as traitors.

The fifty-four men who composed the First Continental Congress represented different interests, religions, and regions; they held conflicting opinions as to how best restore their rights. Most did not know each other; some did not like each other. With no history of successful cooperation, they struggled to overcome their differences and, without any way of knowing if the future held success or nooses for them all, they started down a long and perilous road toward independence.

The Agreement of Secrecy,  
November 9, 1775 [learn more...](#)

In the Old Raleigh Tavern, a  
correspondence committee at work  
hand-colored engraving  
(reproduction) after illustration  
Howard Pyle, ca. 1896 [learn mo](#)

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**In the Old Raleigh Tavern, a correspondence committee at work, hand-colored engraving (reproduction) after illustration by Howard Pyle, ca. 1896**



While none of the members of the Continental Congress was accused of treason, fifteen who signed the Declaration of Independence had their homes destroyed, four were taken captive, and one spent the winter of 1776 in the woods, pursued by British soldiers who had burned his home. Before the end of the Revolutionary War, many of those who served the Continental Congress suffered personal consequences for their role in the fight for American liberty and independence.

Courtesy of The Granger Collection, New York

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### The Spirit of the Revolution ~ The Declaration of Independence

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*

From the Declaration of Independence, adopted July 4, 1776

In June 1776, as Thomas Jefferson composed a draft of the Declaration of Independence from a second floor parlor of a bricklayer's house in Philadelphia, the largest invasion force in British military history was headed for New York Harbor. By the time the last of the fifty-six signers had affixed their names to the final, edited document months later, an invading force of British soldiers had landed at Staten Island, the British had taken New York City, and the American patriots had committed themselves to a long and bloody struggle for liberty and independence.

The Declaration announced to the world the separation of the thirteen colonies from Great Britain and the establishment of the United States of America. It explained the causes of this radical move with a long list of charges against the King. In justifying the Revolution, it asserted a universal truth about human rights in words that have inspired downtrodden people through the ages and throughout the world to rise up against their oppressors.

Jefferson was not aiming at originality. The Declaration articulates the highest ideals of the Revolution, beliefs in liberty, equality, and the right to self-determination. Americans embraced a view of the world in which a person's position was determined, not by birth, rank, or title, but by talent, ability, and enterprise. It was a widely held view, circulated in newspapers, pamphlets, sermons, and schoolbooks; but it was Thomas Jefferson, the 33-year-old planter from Virginia, who put the immortal words to it.

On July 4, 1776, Congress completed its editing of the document that reduced the text by 25 percent ("mutilations" is what Jefferson called it) and formally adopted the Declaration; on July 19, Congress ordered that a formal copy of the Declaration be prepared for members to sign;

**Print of the Declaration of Independence made in 1976 for nation's 200th anniversary [learn more...](#)**

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## Print of the Declaration of Independence made in 1976 for the nation's 200th anniversary

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

### The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a solemn appeal is made to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of their intentions. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to amend it. — That the Declaration of Independence is hereby declared to be the act of the Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, on the fourth day of July, 1776.

John Hancock  
John Adams  
Samuel Adams  
John Jay  
George Washington  
Benjamin Franklin  
Thomas Jefferson  
Richard Stockton  
John Witherspoon  
Robert Livingston  
Francis Pickens  
George Mifflin  
James Wilson  
George Clinton  
John Hancock  
John Adams  
Samuel Adams  
John Jay  
George Washington  
Benjamin Franklin  
Thomas Jefferson  
Richard Stockton  
John Witherspoon  
Robert Livingston  
Francis Pickens  
George Mifflin  
James Wilson  
George Clinton

This print suggests what the parchment looked like when presented to Congress for the to sign on August 2, 1776.

John Hancock, the President Congress, was the first to sign signature is larger than any o page and directly centered be text. The signatures of the ot delegates are arranged from 1 according to the geographic | their states, beginning with N Hampshire, the northernmost right, and ending with Georg southernmost, on the left. Ev fifty-six delegates signed, alt all of them were present on / some who were present for tl July 4 never signed.

The original, signed Declarat signs of fading, handling, an a symbol of the Revolution's ideals, it has been lovingly h proudly displayed over many present condition is evidence indifference or neglect—but devotion. To preserve it for f generations, today it is on di sealed in the most scientific advanced housing that preser technology can provide.

National Archives, Unaccessione

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### The First Constitution ~ The Articles of Confederation

*We have it in our power to begin the world over again.  
A situation, similar to the present, hath not happened since the days of Noah until now.  
The birthday of a new world is at hand.*

Thomas Paine, February 14, 1776

Throwing off the British monarchy on July 4, 1776, left the United States with no central government. It had to design and install a new government—and quickly. As early as May 1776, Congress advised each of the colonies to draw up plans for state governments; by 1780, all thirteen states had adopted written constitutions. In June 1776, the Continental Congress began to work on a plan for a central government. It took five years for it to be approved, first by members of Congress and then by the states. The first attempt at a constitution for the United States was called the Articles of Confederation.

This first constitution was composed by a body that directed most of its attention to fighting and winning the War for Independence. It came into being at a time when Americans had a deep-seated fear of a central authority and long-standing loyalty to the state in which they lived and often called their "country." Ultimately, the Articles of Confederation proved unwieldy and inadequate to resolve the issues that faced the United States in its earliest years; but in granting any Federal powers to a central authority—the Confederation Congress—this document marked a crucial step toward nationhood. The Articles of Confederation were in force from March 1, 1781, until March 4, 1789, when the present Constitution went into effect.

Articles of Confederation, ratified  
March 1, 1781 [learn more...](#)

Assembly Room, Pennsylvania State  
House, later named Independence  
Hall, meeting place of Congress  
[learn more...](#)



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## Articles of Confederation, ratified March 1, 1781

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During the more than five years that the Articles were in effect, the United States fought and won the war for Independence, negotiated a peace settlement, and created a functioning bureaucracy. The achievement of the government under the Articles of Confederation and the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, which provided for the orderly expansion of a republican form of government into western territories.

This document consists of thirteen sheets of parchment stitched together.

The last sheet bears the signatures of delegates from all thirteen states.

National Archives, Records of the United States and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention

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### Slavery and the American Revolution ~ Voices of Protest

*I beheld a middle aged African raised and exposed on one of the stalls in the shambles of Philadelphia market at Public Sale, as a Slave for life! and this is the capital of Pennsylvania, a land high in the profession of Liberty and Christianity.*

Colonist quoted in Pennsylvania Packet, a Philadelphia newspaper, February 7, 1774

The Revolution's ideals of liberty and equality existed side by side with the brutal realities of human slavery. By the time of the Revolution, slavery existed in all the colonies, slaves made up 20 percent of the population, and their labor had become a vital contribution to the physical and economic development of the colonies. The existence of slavery created tensions that would strain the integrity of the United States for many decades to come.

The Society of Friends, a religious group also known as the Quakers, formed the first formal antislavery society in 1775. Throughout the Revolution, as the states struggled to find common ground, the issue of slavery was so divisive that it threatened to shatter their fragile union. Some prominent leaders of the Revolution raised their voices to oppose slavery on moral grounds. Slaves and free Africans embraced the principles of liberty and equality embedded in the Declaration as their own best hope for freedom and better treatment. Many, fighting as soldiers in the American armies, helped to defeat the British, while earning their freedom and gaining the respect and gratitude of some whites. And clinging to their own understanding of "all men are created equal," they pushed the country closer to living out the full promise of its words.

Quaker petition to Congress, October 4, 1783 [learn more...](#)

Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman, watercolor (reproduction) by St Anne Livingston Ridley Sedgwick 1811 [learn more...](#)

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## Quaker petition to Congress, October 4, 1783

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As early as 1688, the Quakers were expressing their opposition to the slave trade, which they considered to be a violation of the Declaration of Independence. The petition, asking that Congress prohibit the slave trade, was signed by more than five hundred Quakers. Citing the Declaration of Independence, the petition states that the slave trade "is in opposition to the sole declaration often repeated in the Declaration of Independence of universal liberty." The petition was presented in Congress on October 8 and subsequently tabled.

National Archives, Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention

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**Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman, watercolor (reproduction) by Susan Anne Livingston Ridley Sedgwick, 1811**



In states where slaves were considered as persons before the law, they sometimes won, their freedom. Elizabeth Freeman became free after petitioning the Massachusetts in 1781. "Any time I was a slave," she said, "if freedom had been offered to me, had been told I must die at that minute, I would have taken stand one minute . . . on God's name, I would be a free woman. I would."

Courtesy Massachusetts Historical Society  
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### The Constitutional Convention ~ Creating the Constitution

*[The Constitution of the United States] was not, like the fabled Goddess of Wisdom, the offspring of a single brain. It ought to be regarded as the work of many heads and many hands.*

James Madison, March 10, 1834

Eleven years after the Declaration of Independence announced the birth of the United States, the survival of the young country seemed in doubt. The War for Independence had been won, but economic depression, social unrest, interstate rivalries, and foreign intrigue appeared to be unraveling the fragile confederation. In early 1787, Congress called for a special convention of all the states to revise the Articles of Confederation. On September 17, 1787, after four months of secret meetings, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention emerged from their Philadelphia meetingroom with an entirely new plan of government—the U.S. Constitution—that they hoped would ensure the survival of the experiment they had launched in 1776.

They proposed a strong central government made up of three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial; each would be perpetually restrained by a sophisticated set of checks and balances. They reached compromises on the issue of slavery that left its final resolution to future generations. As for ratification, they devised a procedure that maximized the odds: the Constitution would be enacted when it was ratified by nine, not thirteen, states. The Framers knew they had not created a perfect plan, but it could be revised. The Constitution has been amended twenty-seven times and stands today as the longest-lasting written constitution in the world.

On September 17, 1787, two days after the final vote, the delegates signed the engrossed parchment shown in the [Rotunda's centerpiece case](#).

First printed draft of the Constitution, August 6, 1787, selected pages [learn more...](#)

The Scene at the Signing of the Constitution, oil painting (reproduction) by Howard Chandler Christy, 1940 [learn more...](#)

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## The Scene at the Signing of the Constitution, oil painting (reproduction) by Howard Chandler Christy, 1940



In drafting the Constitution, the delegates consulted the wisdom of the ages, sifting through the conflicting political tracts of their own day as well as the histories of ancient civilizations. They understood power to be a force that humans and humans to be subject to its instincts.

The debates inside the meeting were heated and contentious. The delegates examined every phrase of the constitution through the prism of their conflicting interests they represented: large states and small states, commercially based economies and states with slave-based agricultural economies. History, political philosophy, their own interests, and devotion to the American experiment, all informed their thinking, as they hammered out a practical scheme of government.

Courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, DC

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### The Bill of Rights ~ The First Ten Amendments to the Constitution

*The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for, among old parchments, or musty records. They are written, as with a sun beam in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the divinity itself; and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.*

Alexander Hamilton, 1775

Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, the right to a fair and speedy trial—the ringing phrases that inventory some of Americans' most treasured personal freedoms—were not initially part of the U.S. Constitution. At the Constitutional Convention, the proposal to include a bill of rights was considered and defeated. The Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution as the first ten amendments on December 15, 1791.

The fact that the Constitution did not include a bill of rights to specifically protect Americans' hard-won rights sparked the most heated debates during the ratification process. To the Federalists, those who favored the Constitution, a bill of rights was unnecessary because the Federal Government was limited in its powers and could not interfere with the rights of the people or the states; also, most states had bills of rights. To the Anti-Federalists, those who opposed the Constitution, the prospect of establishing a strong central government without an explicit list of rights guaranteed to the people was unthinkable. Throughout the ratification process, individuals and state ratification conventions called for the adoption of a bill of rights.

The First Federal Congress took up the question of a bill of rights almost immediately. Congress proposed twelve amendments to the states. Ten of these were added to the Constitution on December 15, 1791.

The Bill of Rights that is on permanent display here is the Joint Resolution passed by Congress on September 25, 1789, proposing twelve—not ten—amendments. The first article, concerning the ratio of constituents to each congressional representative, was never ratified by the states; the second article listed, concerning congressional pay, was

**Report of the Conference Committee, appointed to settle differences between the House and Senate versions of the proposed bill of rights, September 24, 1789 [learn more...](#)**

**"In the Reading Room of an 181 Century New York Coffee House hand-colored engraving (reproduction) after illustration Howard Pyle, ca. 1890 [learn more...](#)**

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## Report of the Conference Committee, appointed to settle the differences between House and Senate versions of the proposed bill of rights, September 24, 1789

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This report, in the handwriting of Connecticut Senator Oliver Ellsworth, shows the final wording on which the House and Senate agreed to become the First Amendment to the Constitution.

National Archives, Records of the House of Representatives, Exhibited with the permission of the Senate

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**"In the Reading Room of an 18th Century New York Coffee House," hand-col engraving (reproduction) after illustration by Howard Pyle, ca. 1890**



The fate of the proposed constitution was decided in the state ratification conventions (nine states had the Constitution to take effect) everywhere—in homes, taverns, coffeehouses, and newspapers. At the time New Hampshire became the first state to ratify the Constitution in 1788, it had become clear that the people of the United States demanded a bill of rights.

Courtesy of The Granger Collection, New York

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### *Declaration of Independence*

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Drafted by Thomas Jefferson between June 11 and June 28, 1776, the Declaration of Independence is at once the nation's most cherished symbol of liberty and Jefferson's most enduring monument. Here, in exalted and unforgettable phrases, Jefferson expressed the convictions in the minds and hearts of the American people. The political philosophy of the Declaration was not new; its ideals of individual liberty had already been expressed by John Locke and the Continental philosophers. What Jefferson did was to summarize this philosophy in "self-evident truths" and set forth a list of grievances against the King in order to justify before the world the breaking of ties between the colonies and the mother country. We invite you to [read a transcription](#) of the complete text of the Declaration.

[visit the declaration in person ▶](#)

#### Learn More About the Declaration

The article "[The Declaration of Independence: A History](#)," provides a detailed account of the Declaration, from its drafting through its preservation today at the National Archives.

"[The Stylistic Artistry of the Declaration of Independence](#)" by Stephen Lucas. By closely examining its language, this perceptive article sheds light on the Declaration as a work of literature and of

[\(Click Image to Enlarge\)](#)

Note: The above image of the Declaration is taken from an engraving made by printer William J. Stone in 1823 and the most frequently reproduced version of the document. The original Declaration (pictured below), now [exhibited the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom](#) in Washington

persuasion. From Prologue, Spring 1990.

The [Virginia Declaration of Rights](#) strongly influenced Thomas Jefferson in writing the first part of the Declaration of Independence. It later provided the foundation for the Bill of Rights.

Learn about [Our National Treasure](#), interesting and informative facts about the Declaration and its history.

*...and on other web sites...*

Learn more about the [Writing and Publicizing of the Declaration of Independence](#), the [Articles of Confederation](#), and the [Constitution of the United States](#) by visiting the Independence National Historical Park (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) web site.

View documents from the [Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention](#), part of the Library of Congress' American Memory web site. This site also provides related manuscript, printed, and iconographic materials.

DC, has faded badly—largely because of poor preservation techniques during the 19th century. Today, this priceless document is maintained under the most exacting archival conditions possible.



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## *Declaration of Independence*

### THE STYLISTIC ARTISTRY

#### The Stylistic Artistry of the Declaration of Independence

[printer-friendly version](#)

by Stephen E. Lucas

The Declaration of Independence is perhaps the most masterfully written state paper of Western civilization. As Moses Coit Tyler noted almost a century ago, no assessment of it can be complete without taking into account its extraordinary merits as a work of political prose style. Although many scholars have recognized those merits, there are surprisingly few sustained studies of the stylistic artistry of the Declaration.(1) This essay seeks to illuminate that artistry by probing the Declaration microscopically—at the level of the sentence, phrase, word, and syllable. By approaching the Declaration in this way, we can shed light both on its literary qualities and on its rhetorical power as a work designed to convince a "cold world" that the American colonies were justified in seeking to establish themselves as an independent nation.(2)

The text of the Declaration can be divided into five sections—the introduction, the preamble, the indictment of George III, the denunciation of the British people, and the conclusion. Because space does not permit us to explicate each section in full detail, we shall select features from each that illustrate the stylistic artistry of the Declaration as a whole.(3)

The introduction consists of the first paragraph—a single, lengthy, periodic sentence:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.(4)

Taken out of context, this sentence is so general it could be used as the introduction to a declaration by any "oppressed" people. Seen within its original context, however, it is a model of subtlety, nuance, and implication that works on several levels of meaning and allusion to orient readers toward a favorable view of America and to prepare them for the rest of the Declaration. From its magisterial opening phrase, which sets the American Revolution within the whole "course of human events," to its assertion that "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" entitle America to a "separate and equal station among the powers of the earth," to its quest for sanction from "the opinions of mankind," the introduction elevates the quarrel with England from a petty political dispute to a major event in the grand sweep of history. It dignifies the Revolution as a contest of principle and implies that the American cause has a special claim to moral legitimacy—all

without mentioning England or America by name.

Rather than defining the Declaration's task as one of persuasion, which would doubtless raise the defenses of readers well as imply that there was more than one publicly credible view of the British-American conflict, the introduction identifies the purpose of the Declaration as simply to "declare"--to announce publicly in explicit terms--the "causes" impelling America to leave the British empire. This gives the Declaration, at the outset, an aura of philosophical (in eighteenth-century sense of the term) objectivity that it will seek to maintain throughout. Rather than presenting one in a public controversy on which good and decent people could differ, the Declaration purports to do no more than a natural philosopher would do in reporting the causes of any physical event. The issue, it implies, is not one of interpretation but of observation.

The most important word in the introduction is "necessary," which in the eighteenth century carried strongly deterministic overtones. To say an act was necessary implied that it was impelled by fate or determined by the opera of inextricable natural laws and was beyond the control of human agents. Thus Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* defined "necessary" as "that which cannot but be, or cannot be otherwise." "The common notion of necessity and impossibili Jonathan Edwards wrote in *Freedom of the Will*, "implies something that frustrates endeavor or desire. . . . That is necessary in the original and proper sense of the word, which is, or will be, notwithstanding all supposable oppositio Characterizing the Revolution as necessary suggested that it resulted from constraints that operated with lawlike forc throughout the material universe and within the sphere of human action. The Revolution was not merely preferable, defensible, or justifiable. It was as inescapable, as inevitable, as unavoidable within the course of human events as th motions of the tides or the changing of the seasons within the course of natural events.(5)

Investing the Revolution with connotations of necessity was particularly important because, according to the law of nations, recourse to war was lawful only when it became "necessary"--only when amicable negotiation had failed an other alternatives for settling the differences between two states had been exhausted. Nor was the burden of necessit limited to monarchs and established nations. At the start of the English Civil War in 1642, Parliament defended its recourse to military action against Charles I in a lengthy declaration demonstrating the "Necessity to take up Arms." Following this tradition, in July 1775 the Continental Congress issued its own Declaration Setting Forth the Causes : Necessity of Their Taking Up Arms. When, a year later, Congress decided the colonies could no longer retain their liberty within the British empire, it adhered to long-established rhetorical convention by describing independence as matter of absolute and inescapable necessity.(6) Indeed, the notion of necessity was so important that in addition to appearing in the introduction of the Declaration, it was invoked twice more at crucial junctures in the rest of the text appeared frequently in other congressional papers after July 4, 1776.(7)

Labeling the Americans "one people" and the British "another" was also laden with implication and performed sever important strategic functions within the Declaration. First, because two alien peoples cannot be made one, it reinforce the notion that breaking the "political bands" with England was a necessary step in the course of human events. Ame and England were already separated by the more basic fact that they had become two different peoples. The gulf bet them was much more than political; it was intellectual, social, moral, cultural and, according to the principles of nati could no more be repaired, as Thomas Paine said, than one could "restore to us the time that is past" or "give to prostitution its former innocence." To try to perpetuate a purely political connection would be "forced and unnatural "repugnant to reason, to the universal order of things."(8)

Second, once it is granted that Americans and Englishmen are two distinct peoples, the conflict between them is less likely to be seen as a civil war. The Continental Congress knew America could not withstand Britain's military migh without foreign assistance. But they also knew America could not receive assistance as long as the colonies were fig a civil war as part of the British empire. To help the colonies would constitute interference in Great Britain's internal affairs. As Samuel Adams explained, "no foreign Power can consistently yield Comfort to Rebels, or enter into any l of Treaty with these Colonies till they declare themselves free and independent." The crucial factor in opening the w for foreign aid was the act of declaring independence. But by defining America and England as two separate peoples Declaration reinforced the perception that the conflict was not a civil war, thereby, as Congress noted in its debates c independence, making it more "consistent with European delicacy for European powers to treat with us, or even to receive an Ambassador."(9)

Third, defining the Americans as a separate people in the introduction eased the task of invoking the right of revolud in the preamble. That right, according to eighteenth-century revolutionary principles, could be invoked only in the m dire of circumstances--when "resistance was absolutely necessary in order to preserve the nation from slavery, miser and ruin"--and then only by "the Body of the People." If America and Great Britain were seen as one people, Congre could not justify revolution against the British government for the simple reason that the body of the people (of whic Americans would be only one part) did not support the American cause. For America to move against the governme such circumstances would not be a justifiable act of resistance but "a sort of Sedition, Tumult, and War . . . aiming o at the satisfaction of private Lust, without regard to the public Good." By defining the Americans as a separate peop Congress could more readily satisfy the requirement for invoking the right of revolution that "the whole Body of Subjects" rise up against the government "to rescue themselves from the most violent and illegal oppressions."(10)

Like the introduction, the next section of the Declaration--usually referred to as the preamble--is universal in tone and scope. It contains no explicit reference to the British- American conflict, but outlines a general philosophy of government that makes revolution justifiable, even meritorious:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

Like the rest of the Declaration, the preamble is "brief, free of verbiage, a model of clear, concise, simple statement." It capsulizes in five sentences--202--words what it took John Locke thousands of words to explain in his *Second Treatise of Government*. Each word is chosen and placed to achieve maximum impact. Each clause is indispensable to the progression of thought. Each sentence is carefully constructed internally and in relation to what precedes and follows: its ability to compress complex ideas into a brief, clear statement, the preamble is a paradigm of eighteenth-century Enlightenment prose style, in which purity, simplicity, directness, precision, and, above all, perspicuity were the high rhetorical and literary virtues. One word follows another with complete inevitability of sound and meaning. Not one word can be moved or replaced without disrupting the balance and harmony of the entire preamble.

The stately and dignified tone of the preamble--like that of the introduction--comes partly from what the eighteenth century called *Style Periodique*, in which, as Hugh Blair explained in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, "if sentences are composed of several members linked together, and hanging upon one another, so that the sense of the whole is not brought out till the close." This, Blair said, "is the most pompous, musical, and oratorical manner of composing" and "gives an air of gravity and dignity to composition." The gravity and dignity of the preamble were reinforced by its conformance with the rhetorical precept that "when we aim at dignity or elevation, the sound [of each sentence] should be made to grow to the last; the longest members of the period, and the fullest and most sonorous words, should be reserved to the conclusion." None of the sentences of the preamble end on a single-syllable word; the first, the second (and least euphonious), ends on a two-syllable word. Of the other four, one ends with a four-syllable word ("security"), while three end with three-syllable words. Moreover, in each of the three-syllable words the closing syllable is at least a medium-length four-letter syllable, which helps bring the sentences to "a full and harmonious close."<sup>(12)</sup>

It is unlikely that any of this was accidental. Thoroughly versed in classical oratory and rhetorical theory as well as in belletristic treatises of his own time, Thomas Jefferson, draftsman of the Declaration, was a diligent student of rhythm, accent, timing, and cadence in discourse. This can be seen most clearly in his "Thoughts on English Prosody," a remarkable twenty-eight-page unpublished essay written in Paris during the fall of 1786. Prompted by a discussion of language with the Marquis de Chastellux at Monticello four years earlier, it was a careful inquiry designed "to find out the real circumstance which gives harmony to English prose and laws to those who make it." Using roughly the same system of diacritical notation he had employed in 1776 in his reading draft of the Declaration, Jefferson systematically analyzed the patterns of accentuation in a wide range of English writers, including Milton, Pope, Shakespeare, Addison, Gray, and Garth. Although "Thoughts on English Prosody" deals with poetry, it displays Jefferson's keen sense of the interplay between sound and sense in language. There can be little doubt that, like many accomplished writers, he consciously composed for the ear as well as for the eye--a trait that is nowhere better illustrated than in the eloquent cadences of the preamble in the Declaration of Independence.<sup>(13)</sup>

The preamble also has a powerful sense of structural unity. This is achieved partly by the latent chronological progression of thought, in which the reader is moved from the creation of mankind, to the institution of government, to the throwing off of government when it fails to protect the people's unalienable rights, to the creation of new government that will better secure the people's safety and happiness. This dramatic scenario, with its first act implicitly set in the Garden of Eden (where man was "created equal"), may, for some readers, have contained mythic overtones of human fall from divine grace. At the very least, it gives an almost archetypal quality to the ideas of the preamble and confirms the notion, broached in the introduction, that the American Revolution is a major development in "the course of human events."

Because of their concern with the philosophy of the Declaration, many modern scholars have dealt with the opening sentence of the preamble out of context, as if Jefferson and the Continental Congress intended it to stand alone. Seen in context, however, it is part of a series of five propositions that build upon one another through the first three sentences

the preamble to establish the right of revolution against tyrannical authority:

- Proposition 1: All men are created equal.
- Proposition 2: They [all men, from proposition 1] are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights
- Proposition 3: Among these [man's unalienable rights, from proposition 2] are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness
- Proposition 4: To secure these rights [man's unalienable rights, from propositions 2 and 3] governments are instituted among men
- Proposition 5: Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends [securing man's unalienable rights, from propositions 2-4], it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it.

When we look at all five propositions, we see they are meant to be read together and have been meticulously written to achieve a specific rhetorical purpose. The first three lead into the fourth, which in turn leads into the fifth. And it is the fifth, proclaiming the right of revolution when a government becomes destructive of the people's unalienable rights, that is most crucial in the overall argument of the Declaration. The first four propositions are merely preliminary steps designed to give philosophical grounding to the fifth.

At first glance, these propositions appear to comprise what was known in the eighteenth century as a *sorites*--"a Way of Argument in which a great Number of Propositions are so linked together, that the Predicate of one becomes continued the Subject of the next following, until at last a Conclusion is formed by bringing together the Subject of the First Proposition and the Predicate of the last." In his *Elements of Logick*, William Duncan provided the following example of a *sorites*:

God is omnipotent.  
An omnipotent Being can do every thing possible.  
He that can do every thing possible, can do whatever  
involves not a Contradiction.  
Therefore God can do whatever involves not a  
Contradiction.(14)

Although the section of the preamble we have been considering is not a *sorites* (because it does not bring together the subject of the first proposition and the predicate of the last), its propositions are written in such a way as to take on the appearance of a logical demonstration. They are so tightly interwoven linguistically that they seem to make up a sequence in which the final proposition--asserting the right of revolution--is logically derived from the first four propositions. This is accomplished partly by the mimicry of the form of a *sorites* and partly by the sheer number of propositions, the accumulation of which is reinforced by the slow, deliberate pace of the text and by the use of "that" to introduce each proposition. There is also a step-like progression from proposition to proposition, a progression that is accentuated by the skillful use of demonstrative pronouns to make each succeeding proposition appear to be an inevitable consequence of the preceding proposition. Although the preamble is the best known part of the Declaration today, it attracted considerably less attention in its own time. For most eighteenth-century readers, it was an unobjectionable statement of commonplace political principles. As Jefferson explained years later, the purpose of the Declaration was "not to find out new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of . . . but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take."(15)

Far from being a weakness of the preamble, the lack of new ideas was perhaps its greatest strength. If one overlooks the introductory first paragraph, the Declaration as a whole is structured along the lines of a deductive argument that can easily be put in syllogistic form:

- Major premise: When government deliberately seeks to reduce the people under absolute despotism, the people have a right, indeed a duty, to alter or abolish

	that form of government and to create new guards for their future security.
Minor premise:	The government of Great Britain has deliberately sought to reduce the American people under absolute despotism.
Conclusion:	Therefore the American people have a right, indeed a duty, to abolish their present form of government and to create new guards for their future security.

As the major premise in this argument, the preamble allowed Jefferson and the Congress to reason from self-evident principles of government accepted by almost all eighteenth-century readers of the Declaration.<sup>(16)</sup>

The key premise, however, was the minor premise. Since virtually everyone agreed the people had a right to overthrow tyrannical ruler when all other remedies had failed, the crucial question in July 1776 was whether the necessary conditions for revolution existed in the colonies. Congress answered this question with a sustained attack on George III, an attack that makes up almost exactly two-thirds of the text.

The indictment of George III begins with a transitional sentence immediately following the preamble:

Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government.

Now, 273 words into the Declaration, appears the first explicit reference to the British-American conflict. The parallel structure of the sentence reinforces the parallel movement of ideas from the preamble to the indictment of the king, and the next sentence states that indictment with the force of a legal accusation:

The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these states.

Unlike the preamble, however, which most eighteenth-century readers could readily accept as self-evident, the indictment of the king required proof. In keeping with the rhetorical conventions Englishmen had followed for centuries when dethroning a "tyrannical" monarch, the Declaration contains a bill of particulars documenting the king's "repeated injuries and usurpations" of the Americans' rights and liberties. The bill of particulars lists twenty-eight specific grievances and is introduced with the shortest sentence of the Declaration:

To prove this [the king's tyranny], let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

This sentence is so innocuous one can easily overlook its artistry and importance. The opening phrase—"To prove this" indicates the "facts" to follow will indeed prove that George III is a tyrant. But prove to whom? To a "candid world" that is, to readers who are free from bias or malice, who are fair, impartial, and just. The implication is that any such reader will see the "facts" as demonstrating beyond doubt that the king has sought to establish an absolute tyranny in America. If a reader is not convinced, it is not because the "facts" are untrue or are insufficient to prove the king's villainy; it is because the reader is not "candid."

The pivotal word in the sentence, though, is "facts." As a term in eighteenth-century jurisprudence (Jefferson, like many of his colleagues in Congress, was a lawyer), it meant the circumstances and incidents of a legal case, looked at apart from their legal meaning. This usage fits with the Declaration's similarity to a legal declaration, the plaintiff's written statement of charges showing a "plain and certain" indictment against a defendant. If the Declaration were considered analogous to a legal declaration or a bill of impeachment, the issue of dispute would not be the status of the law (the status of revolution as expressed in the preamble) but the facts of the specific case at hand (the king's actions to erect a "tyranny" in America).<sup>(17)</sup>

In ordinary usage "fact" had by 1776 taken on its current meaning of something that had actually occurred, a truth known by observation, reality rather than supposition or speculation.<sup>18</sup> By characterizing the colonists' grievances against George III as "facts," the Declaration implies that they are unmediated representations of empirical reality rather than interpretations of reality. They are the objective constraints that make the Revolution "necessary." This is reinforced by the passive voice in "let Facts be submitted to a candid world." Who is submitting the facts? No one. They have not been gathered, structured, rendered, or in any way contaminated by human agents—least of all by the Continental Congress.



They are just being "submitted," direct from experience without the corrupting intervention of any observer or interpreter.

But "fact" had yet another connotation in the eighteenth century. The word derived from the Latin *facere*, to do. Its earliest meaning in English was "a thing done or performed"--an action or deed. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was used most frequently to denote an evil deed or a crime, a usage still in evidence at the time of the Revolution. In 1769, for example, Blackstone, in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, noted that "accessories to the fact" were "allowed the benefit of clergy in all cases." The *Annual Register* for 1772 wrote of a thief who was committed to prison for the "fact" of horse stealing. There is no way to know whether Jefferson and the Congress had this sense of "fact" in mind when they adopted the Declaration. Yet regardless of their intentions, for some eighteenth-century readers "facts" many have had a powerful double-edged meaning when applied to George III's actions toward America.(19)

Although one English critic assailed the Declaration for its "studied confusion in the arrangement" of the grievances against George III, they are not listed in random order but fall into four distinct groups.(20) The first group, consisting of charges 1-12, refers to such abuses of the king's executive power as suspending colonial laws, dissolving colonial legislatures, obstructing the administration of justice, and maintaining a standing army during peacetime. The second group, consisting of charges 13-22, attacks the king for combining with "others" (Parliament) to subject America to a variety of unconstitutional measures, including taxing the colonists without consent, cutting off their trade with the rest of the world, curtailing their right to trial by jury, and altering their charters.

The third set of charges, numbers 23-27, assails the king's violence and cruelty in waging war against his American subjects. They burden him with a litany of venal deeds that is worth quoting in full:

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the Lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

The war grievances are followed by the final charge against the king--that the colonists' "repeated Petitions" for redress of their grievances have produced only "repeated injury."

The presentation of what Samuel Adams called George III's "Catalogue of Crimes" is among the Declaration's most skillful features. First, the grievances could have been arranged chronologically, as Congress had done in all but one of its former state papers. Instead they are arranged topically and are listed serially, in sixteen successive sentences beginning "He has" or, in the case of one grievance, "He is." Throughout this section of the Declaration, form and content reinforce one another to magnify the perfidy of the king. The steady, laborious piling up of "facts" without comment takes on the character of a legal indictment, while the repetition of "He has" slows the movement of the text, draws attention to the accumulation of grievances, and accentuates George III's role as the prime conspirator against American liberty.(21)

Second, as Thomas Hutchinson complained, the charges were "most wickedly presented to cast reproach upon the King. Consider, for example, grievance 10: "He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance." The language is Biblical and conjures up Old Testament images of "swarms" of flies and locusts covering the face of the earth, "so that the land was darkened," and devouring all they found until "there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field" (Exodus 10:14-15). It also recalls the denunciation, in Psalms 53:4, of "the workers of iniquity . . . who eat up my people as they eat bread," and the prophecy of Deuteronomy 28:51 that an enemy nation "shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land until it be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy she until he have destroyed thee." For some readers the religious connotations may have been enhanced by "substance," which was used in theological discourse to signify "the Essence or Substance of the Godhead" and to describe the Holy Eucharist, in which Christ had "coupled the substance of his flesh and the substance of bread together, so we should receive both."(22)

From the revolutionaries' view, however, the primary advantage of the wording of charge 10 was probably its purposeful ambiguity. The "multitude of New Offices" referred to the customs posts that had been created in the 1760s to control

colonial smuggling. The "swarms of Officers" that were purportedly eating out the substance of the colonies' three million people numbered about fifty in the entire continent. But Congress could hardly assail George III as a tyrant for appointing a few dozen men to enforce the laws against smuggling, so it clothed the charge in vague, evocative imagery that gave significance and emotional resonance to what otherwise might have seemed a rather paltry grievance.(23)

Third, although scholars often downplay the war grievances as "the weakest part of the Declaration," they were vital to its rhetorical strategy. They came last partly because they were the most recent of George III's "abuses and usurpations" but also because they constituted the ultimate proof of his plan to reduce the colonies under "absolute despotism." Whereas the first twenty-two grievances describe the king's acts with such temperate verbs as "refused," "called together," "dissolved," "endeavored," "made," "erected," "kept," and "affected," the war grievances use emotionally charged verbs such as "plundered," "ravaged," "burnt," and "destroyed." With the exception of grievance 10, there is nothing in the earlier charges to compare with the evocative accusation that George III was spreading "death, desolation and tyranny . . . with circumstances of Cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages," or with the characterization of "the merciless Indian Savages, whose known mode of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions." Coming on the heels of the previous twenty-two charges, the war grievances make George III out as little better than the notorious Richard III, who had forfeited his crown in 1485 for "unnatural, mischievous, great Perjuries, Treasons, Homicides and Murders, in shedding of Infants' blood, with many other Wrongs, odious Offences, and abominations against God and Man."(24)

To some extent, of course, the emotional intensity of the war grievances was a natural outgrowth of their subject. It is hard to write about warfare without using strong language. Moreover, as Jefferson explained a decade later in his far "Head and Heart" letter to Maria Cosway, for many of the revolutionaries independence was, at bottom, an emotionally sentimental issue. But the emotional pitch of the war grievances was also part of a rhetorical strategy designed to solidify support for independence in those parts of America that had yet to suffer the physical and economic hardships of war. As late as May 1776 John Adams lamented that while independence had strong support in New England and the South, it was less secure in the middle colonies, which "have never tasted the bitter Cup; they have never Smarted--and are therefore a little cooler." As Thomas Paine recognized, "the evil" of British domination was not yet "sufficiently brought to their doors to make them feel the precariousness with which all American property is possessed." Paine sought to bring the evil home to readers of *Common Sense* by inducing them to identify with the "horror" inflicted on other Americans by the British forces "that hath carried fire and sword" into the land. In similar fashion, the Declaration of Independence used images of terror to magnify the wickedness of George III, to arouse "the passions and feelings" of readers, and to awaken "from fatal and unmanly slumbers" those Americans who had yet to be directly touched by the ravages of war.(25)

Fourth, all of the charges against George III contain a substantial amount of strategic ambiguity. While they have a certain specificity in that they refer to actual historical events, they do not identify names, dates, or places. This magnified the seriousness of the grievances by making it seem as if each charge referred not to a particular piece of legislation or to an isolated act in a single colony, but to a violation of the constitution that had been repeated on many occasions throughout America.

The ambiguity of the grievances also made them more difficult to refute. In order to build a convincing case against the king, defenders of the king had to clarify each charge and what specific act or events it referred to, and then explain why the charge was not true. Thus it took John Lind, who composed the most sustained British response to the Declaration, 110 pages to answer the charges set forth by the Continental Congress in fewer than two dozen sentences. Although Lind deftly exposed many of the charges to be flimsy at best, his detailed and complex rebuttal did not stand up as a challenge against the Declaration as a propaganda document. Nor has Lind's work fared much better since 1776. While the Declaration continues to command an international audience and has created an indelible popular image of George III as a tyrant, Lind's tract remains a piece of arcane, buried in the dustheap of history.(26)

In addition to petitioning Parliament and George III, Whig leaders had also worked hard to cultivate friends of the American cause in England. But the British people had proved no more receptive to the Whigs than had the government, and so the Declaration follows the attack on George III by noting that the colonies had also appealed in vain to the people of Great Britain:

Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

This is one of the most artfully written sections of the Declaration. The first sentence, beginning "Nor . . .," shifts

attention quickly and cleanly away from George III to the colonists' "British brethren." The "have we" of the first sentence is neatly reversed in the "We have" at the start of the second. Sentences two through four, containing four successive clauses beginning "We Have . . .," give a pronounced sense of momentum to the paragraph while underlining the colonists' active efforts to reach the British people. The repetition of "We have" here also parallels the repetition "He has" in the grievances against George III.

The fifth sentence--"They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity"--contains one of the few metaphors in the Declaration and acquires added force by its simplicity and brevity, which contrast with the greater length and complexity of the preceding sentence. The final sentence unifies the paragraph by returning to the pattern beginning with "We," and its intricate periodic structure plays off the simple structure of the fifth sentence so as to strengthen the cadence of the entire paragraph. The closing words--"Enemies in War, in Peace Friends"--employ chiasmus, a favorite rhetorical device of eighteenth-century writers. How effective the device is in this case can be gauged by rearranging the final words to read, "Enemies in War, Friends in Peace," which weakens both the force and harmony of the Declaration's phrasing.

It is worth noting, as well, that this is the only part of the Declaration to employ much alliteration: "British brethren," "time to time," "common kindred," "which would," "connections and correspondence." The euphony gained by these phrases is fortified by the heavy repetition of medial and terminal consonants in adjoining words: "been wanting in attentions to," "them from time to time," "to their native justice," "disavow these usurpations," "have been deaf to the voice of." Finally, this paragraph, like the rest of the Declaration, contains a high proportion of one- and two-syllable words (82 percent). Of those words, an overwhelming number (eighty-one of ninety-six) contain only one syllable. The rest of the paragraph contains nine three-syllable words, eight four-syllable words, and four five-syllable words. This felicitous blend of a large number of very short words with a few very long ones is reminiscent of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and contributes greatly to the harmony, cadence, and eloquence of the Declaration, much as it contributes to the same features in Lincoln's immortal speech.

The British brethren section essentially finished the case for independence. Congress had set forth the conditions that justified revolution and had shown, as best it could, that those conditions existed in Great Britain's thirteen North American colonies. All that remained was for Congress to conclude the Declaration:

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

This final section of the Declaration is highly formulaic and has attracted attention primarily because of its closing sentence. Carl Becker deemed this sentence "perfection itself":

It is true (assuming that men value life more than property, which is doubtful) that the statement violates the rhetorical rule of climax; but it was a sure sense that made Jefferson place "lives" first and "fortunes" second. How much weaker if he had written "our fortunes, our lives, and our sacred honor"! Or suppose him to have used the word "property" instead of "fortunes"! Or suppose him to have omitted "sacred"! Consider the effect of omitting any of the words, such as the last two "ours"--"our lives, fortunes, and sacred honor." No, the sentence can hardly be improved.(27)

Becker is correct in his judgment about the wording and rhythm of the sentence, but he errs in attributing high marks to Jefferson for his "sure sense" in placing "lives" before "fortunes." "Lives and fortunes" was one of the most hackneyed phrases of eighteenth-century Anglo-American political discourse. Colonial writers had used it with numbing regularity throughout the dispute with England (along with other stock phrases such as "liberties and estates" and "life, liberty, property"). Its appearance in the Declaration can hardly be taken as a measure of Jefferson's felicity of expression. What marks Jefferson's "happy talent for composition" in this case is the coupling of "our sacred Honor" with "our Lives" and "our Fortunes" to create the eloquent trilogy that closes the Declaration. The concept of honor (and its cognates fame and glory) exerted a powerful hold on the eighteenth-century mind. Writers of all kinds--philosophers, preachers, politicians, playwrights, poets--repeatedly speculated about the sources of honor and how to achieve it. Virtually every educated man in England or America was schooled in the classical maxim, "What is left when honor is lost?" Or as Joseph Addison wrote in his *Cato*, whose sentiments were widely admired throughout the eighteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic: "Better to die ten thousand deaths/Than wound my honour." The cult of honor was so

strong that in English judicial proceedings a peer of the realm did not answer to bills in chancery or give a verdict "u oath, like an ordinary jurymen, but upon his honor."(28)

By pledging "our sacred Honor" in support of the Declaration, Congress made a particularly solemn vow. The pledge also carried a latent message that the revolutionaries, contrary to the claims of their detractors, were men of honor whose motives and actions could not only withstand the closest scrutiny by contemporary persons of quality and merit but would also deserve the approbation of posterity. If the Revolution succeeded, its leaders stood to achieve lasting honor what Francis Bacon called "*Liberatores* or *Salvatores*"—men who "compound the long Miseries of Civil Wars, or deliver their Countries from Servitude of Strangers or Tyrants." Historical examples included Augustus Caesar, Henry VII of England, and Henry IV of France. On Bacon's five-point scale of supreme honor, such heroes ranked below only "*Conditores Imperiorum*, Founders of States and Commonwealths," such as Romulus, Caesar, and Ottoman, and "Lawgivers" such as Solon, Lycurgus, and Justinian, "also called Second Founders, or *Perpetui Principes*, because they Govern by their Ordinances after they are gone." Seen in this way, "our sacred Honor" lifts the motives of Congress above the more immediate concerns of "our Lives" and "our Fortunes" and places the revolutionaries in the footsteps of history's most honorable figures. As a result it also unifies the whole text by subtly playing out the notion that the Revolution is a major turn in the broad "course of human events."(29)

At the same time, the final sentence completes a crucial metamorphosis in the text. Although the Declaration begins in an impersonal, even philosophical voice, it gradually becomes a kind of drama, with its tensions expressed more and more in personal terms. This transformation begins with the appearance of the villain, "the present King of Great Britain," who dominates the stage through the first nine grievances, all of which note what "He has" done without identifying the victim of his evil deeds. Beginning with grievance 10 the king is joined on stage by the American colonists, who are identified as the victim by some form of first person plural reference: The king has sent "swarms of officers to harass our people," has quartered "armed troops among us," has imposed "taxes on us without our consent," "has taken away our charters, abolished our most valuable laws," and altered "the Forms of our Governments." He has "plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, . . . destroyed the lives of our people," and "excited domestic insurrections among us." The word "our" is used twenty-six times from its first appearance in grievance 10 through the last sentence of the Declaration, while "us" occurs eleven times from its first appearance in grievance 11 through the rest of the Declaration (30)

Throughout the grievances action is instigated by the king, as the colonists passively accept blow after blow without wavering in their loyalty. His villainy complete, George III leaves the stage and it is occupied next by the colonists as their "British brethren." The heavy use of personal pronouns continues, but by now the colonists have become the instigators of action as they actively seek redress of their grievances. This is marked by a shift in idiom from "He has" to "We have": "We have petitioned for redress . . .," "We have reminded them . . .," "We have appealed to their . . .," and "We have conjured them." But "they have been deaf" to all pleas, so "We must . . . hold them" as enemies. By the conclusion, only the colonists remain on stage to pronounce their dramatic closing lines: "We . . . solemnly publish and declare . . ." And to support this declaration, "we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

The persistent use of "he" and "them," "us" and "our," "we" and "they" personalizes the British-American conflict and transfigures it from a complex struggle of multifarious origins and diverse motives to a simple moral drama in which patriotically suffering people courageously defend their liberty against a cruel and vicious tyrant. It also reduces the psychological distance between the reader and the text and coaxes the reader into seeing the dispute with Great Britain through the eyes of the revolutionaries. As the drama of the Declaration unfolds, the reader is increasingly solicited to identify with Congress and "the good People of these Colonies," to share their sense of victimage, to participate vicariously in the struggle, and ultimately to act with them in their heroic quest for freedom. In this respect, as in others, the Declaration is a work of consummate artistry. From its eloquent introduction to its aphoristic maxims of government, to its relentless accumulation of charges against George III, to its elegiac denunciation of the British people, to its heroic closing sentence, it sustains an almost perfect synthesis of style, form, and content. Its solemn and dignified tone, its graceful unhurried cadence, its symmetry, energy, and confidence, its combination of logical structure and dramatic appeal, its adroit use of nuance and implication all contribute to its rhetorical power. And all help to explain why the Declaration remains one of the handful of American political documents that, in addition to meeting the immediate needs of the moment, continues to enjoy a lustrous literary reputation.

## NOTES

c 1989 by Stephen E. Lucas

Stephen E. Lucas is professor of communication arts at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI. The present essay is derived from a more comprehensive study, "Justifying America: The Declaration of Independence as a Rhetorical Document," in Thomas W. Benson, ed., *American Rhetoric: Context and Criticism* (1989).

(1) Moses Coit Tyler, *The Literary History of the American Revolution* (1897), vol. 1, p. 520. The best known study of the style of the Declaration is Carl Becker's "The Literary Qualities of the Declaration," in his *The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas* (1922), pp. 194-223. Useful also are Robert Ginsberg, "The

Declaration as Rhetoric," in Robert Ginsberg, ed., *A Casebook on the Declaration of Independence* (1967), pp. 219-256; Edwin Gittleman, "Jefferson's 'Slave Narrative': The Declaration of Independence as a Literary Text," *Early American Literature* 8 (1974): 239-256; and James Boyd White, *When Words Lose Their Meaning: Constitutions and Reconstitutions of Language, Character, and Community* (1984), 231-240. Although most books on the Declaration contain a chapter on the "style" of the document, those chapters are typically historical accounts of the evolution of the text from its drafting by Thomas Jefferson through its approval by the Continental Congress or philosophical speculations about the meaning of its famous passages.

(2) As Garry Wills demonstrates in *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence* (1978), there are two Declarations of Independence: the version drafted by Thomas Jefferson and that revised and adopted on July 4, 1776, by the Continental Congress sitting as a committee of the whole. Altogether Congress deleted 630 words from Jefferson's draft and added 146, producing a final text of 1,322 words (excluding the title). Although Jefferson complained that Congress "mangled" his manuscript and altered it "much for the worse," the judgment of posterity, stated well by Bevis, is that "Congress left the Declaration better than it found it" (*Declaration of Independence*, p. 209). In any event, for better or worse, it was Congress's text that presented America's case to the world, and it is that text with which we are concerned in this essay.

(3) Nothing in this essay should be interpreted to mean that a firm line can be drawn between style and substance in the Declaration or in any other work of political or literary discourse. As Peter Gay has noted, style is "form and content woven into the texture of every art and craft. . . . Apart from a few mechanical tricks of rhetoric, manner is indissolubly linked to matter; style shapes and is in turn shaped by, substance" (*Style in History* [1974], p. 3).

(4) All quotations from the Declaration follow the text as presented in Julian P. Boyd et al., eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (1950), vol. 1, pp. 429-432.

(5) Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia: Or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (1728), vol. 2, p. 621; Jonath Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey (1957), p. 149.

(6) Declaration of the Lords and Commons to Justify Their Taking Up Arms, August 1642, in John Rushworth, ed., *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State, Weighty Matters in Law, Remarkable Proceedings in Five Parliaments* (1680-1722), vol. 4, pp. 761-768; Declaration of the Continental Congress Setting Forth the Causes and Necessity of Their Taking Up Arms, July 1775, in James H. Hutson, ed., *A Decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind: Congressional State Papers, 1774-1776* (1975), pp. 89-98. The importance of necessity as a justification for war among nations is evident in the many declarations of war issued by European monarchs throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and is discussed in Tavers Twiss, *The Law of Nations Considered as Independent Political Communities* (1863), pp. 54-55.

(7) The first additional invocation of the doctrine of necessity in the Declaration comes immediately after the preamble when Congress states, "Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of Government." The second is at the end of the penultimate section, in which Congress ends its denunciation of the British people by announcing, "We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends."

(8) [Thomas Paine], *Common Sense: Addressed to the Inhabitants of America . . .* (1776), pp. 41, 43.

(9) Samuel Adams to Joseph Hawley, Apr. 15, 1776, *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, ed. Paul H. Smith (1976), vol. 3, p. 528; Thomas Jefferson, *Notes of Proceedings in the Continental Congress*, *Jefferson Papers* 1: 312

(10) Jonathan Mayhew, *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Nonresistance to the Higher Powers . . .* (1750), p. 45; [John, Lord Somers], *The Judgment of Whole Kingdoms and Nations, Concerning the Rights, Power & Prerogative of Kings, and the Rights, Privileges and Properties of the People* (1710), par. 186; Algernon Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government* (1693), p. 181; John Hoadly, ed., *The Works of Benjamin Hoadly* (1773), vol. 2, 36; "Pacificus," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 14, 1774.

(11) Becker, *Declaration of Independence*, p. 201. (12) Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), 1, pp. 206-207, 259.

(13) "Thoughts on English Prosody" was enclosed in an undated letter of ca. October 1786 to the Marquis de Chastellux. The letter is printed in *Jefferson Papers* 10: 498; the draft of Jefferson's essay, which has not been printed, is with the letter to Chastellux in the *Thomas Jefferson Papers*, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Julian P. Boyd, "The Declaration of Independence: The Mystery of the Lost Original," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (1976): 455-462, discusses "Thoughts on English Prosody" and its relation to Jefferson's reading text of the Declaration. Given the changes made by Congress in some sections of the Declaration, it should be noted that the style of the preamble is distinctly Jeffersonian and was approved by Congress with only two minor changes in wording from Jefferson's fair copy as reported by the Committee of Five.

- (14) William Duncan, *The Elements of Logick* (1748), p. 242. See also Isaac Watts, *Logick: or, The Right Use of Reason in the Enquiry After Truth*, 8th ed. (1745), p. 304; [Henry Aldrich], *A Compendium of Logic*, 3d ed. (1790), p. 23.
- (15) Jefferson to Henry Lee, May 5, 1825, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (1892-1899), v. 10, p. 343.
- (16) Wilbur Samuel Howell, "The Declaration of Independence and Eighteenth-Century Logic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser. 18 (1961): 463-484, claims Jefferson consciously structured the Declaration as a syllogism with a evident major premise to fit the standards for scientific proof advanced in William Duncan's *Elements of Logick*, a leading logical treatise of the eighteenth century. As I argue in a forthcoming essay, however, there is no hard evidence to connect Duncan's book with the Declaration. Jefferson may have read *Elements of Logick* while he was a student at the College of William and Mary, but we are not certain that he did. He owned a copy of it, but we cannot establish when the edition he owned was purchased before or after 1776. We cannot even say with complete confidence that Jefferson inserted the words "self-evident" in the Declaration; if he did, it was only as an afterthought in the process of polishing his original draft. Moreover, upon close examination it becomes clear that the Declaration does not fit the method of scientific reasoning recommended in Duncan's *Logick*. Its "self-evident" truths are not self-evident in the rigorous technical sense used by Duncan; it does not provide the definitions of terms that Duncan regards as the crucial first step in syllogistic demonstration; and it does not follow Duncan's injunction that both the minor premise and the major premise must be self-evident if a conclusion is to be demonstrated in a single act of reasoning. The syllogism had been part of the intellectual baggage of Western civilization for two thousand years, and the notion of self-evident truth was central to eighteenth-century philosophy. Jefferson could readily have used both without turning to Duncan's *Logick* instruction.
- (17) "Declaration" in John Cowell, *Nomothetes. The Interpreter, Concerning the Genuine Signification of Such Obscure Words and Terms Used Either in the Common or Statute Laws of This Realm . . .* (1684). For the requirements of legal declarations in various kinds of civil suits during the eighteenth century, see William Selwyn, *An Abridgement of the Law of Nisi Prius*, 4th ed. (1817).
- (18) "Fact" in Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: In Which the Words are Deduced from Their Origins and Illustrated in Their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers* (1755).
- (19) *Oxford English Dictionary* (1933), vol. 4, pp. 11-12; Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1771), vol. 4, p. 39; *The Annual Register, Or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1772* (1772): 57.
- (20) John Lind, *Answer to the Declaration of the American Congress . . .*, 5th ed. (1776), p. 123. Because the grievances are not numbered in the Declaration, there has been disagreement over how many there are and how they should be numbered. I have followed Sidney George Fisher, "The Twenty-Eight Charges against the King in the Declaration of Independence," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 31 (1907): 257-303. An alternative numbering system is used by Wills, *Inventing America*, pp. 68-75.
- (21) Samuel Adams to John Pitts, ca. July 9, 1776, *Letters of Delegates* 4: 417. The sole congressional paper before the Declaration of Independence to list grievances topically was the 1774 Bill of Rights (Hutson, *Decent Respect*, pp. 45).
- (22) [Thomas Hutchinson], *Strictures upon the Declaration of the Congress at Philadelphia . . .* (1776), p. 16; Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), p. 601; Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594-1596), vol. 5, sec. 67, p. 178.
- (23) Between 1764 and 1766 England added twenty-five comptrollers, four surveyors general, and one plantation clerk to its customs service in America. It added seventeen more officials in 1767 with the creation of a Board of Customs Commissioners to reside in Boston. These appointments may also have generated a mild ripple effect, resulting in the hiring of a few lesser employees to help with office chores and customs searches, but there is no way to know, since records are now lost. See Thomas C. Barrow, *Trade and Empire: The British Customs Service in Colonial America, 1775* (1967), pp. 186-187, 220-221.
- (24) Howard Mumford Jones, "The Declaration of Independence: A Critique," in *The Declaration of Independence: Essays* (1976), p. 7; sentence against Richard III in *Rotuli Parliamentorum; ut et petitiones placita in Parlamento* (1832), vol. 6, p. 276.
- (25) Thomas Jefferson to Maria Cosway, Oct. 12, 1786, *Jefferson Papers* 10: 451; John Adams to Benjamin Hitchcock, May 29, 1776, *Letters of Delegates* 4: 96; Paine, *Common Sense*, pp. 40-42.
- (26) See note 20 for bibliographic information on Lind's pamphlet.
- (27) Becker, *Declaration of Independence*, p. 197.
- (28) For the importance of fame and honor to the revolutionaries, see Douglass Adair, "Fame and the Founding Fathers"

in *Fame and the Founding Fathers*, ed. Trevor Colbourn (1974), pp. 3-26; Garry Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (1984), pp. 109-148; Bruce Miroff, "John Adams: Merit, Fame, and Political Leadership," *Journal of Politics* 48 (1986): 116-132. The quotation about Jefferson's "happy talent for composition" is from John Adams to Timothy Pickering, Aug. 6, 1822, *The Works of John Adams*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (1850), vol. 2, p. 511. The statement about peers of the realm is from *Blackstone, Commentaries* 1: 40.

(29) Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall* . . . (1625), pp. 313-314. See Adair, "Fame and the Founding Fathers," pp. 114-115, for the importance of Bacon's essay on honor among the revolutionaries.

(30) Cf. Ginsberg, "The Declaration as Rhetoric," p. 228.

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## *the Charters of Freedom* "A NEW WORLD IS AT HAND"



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### *Declaration of Independence*

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#### The Declaration of Independence: A Transcription

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**IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.**

**The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,**

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government and to provide new Guards for their future security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.  
He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to



attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petition have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempt their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured the by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections & correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in F Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to th Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent S they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts : Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on th protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

*The 56 signatures on the Declaration appear in the positions indicated:*

### **Column 1**

#### **Georgia:**

Button Gwinnett  
Lyman Hall  
George Walton

### **Column 2**

#### **North Carolina:**

William Hooper  
Joseph Hewes  
John Penn

#### **South Carolina:**

Edward Rutledge  
Thomas Heyward, Jr.  
Thomas Lynch, Jr.  
Arthur Middleton

### **Column 3**

#### **Massachusetts:**

John Hancock

#### **Maryland:**

Samuel Chase  
William Paca  
Thomas Stone  
Charles Carroll of Carrollton

#### **Virginia:**

George Wythe  
Richard Henry Lee  
Thomas Jefferson  
Benjamin Harrison  
Thomas Nelson, Jr.  
Francis Lightfoot Lee  
Carter Braxton

### **Column 4**

#### **Pennsylvania:**

Robert Morris  
Benjamin Rush  
Benjamin Franklin  
John Morton  
George Clymer  
James Smith  
George Taylor  
James Wilson  
George Ross

#### **Delaware:**

Caesar Rodney  
George Read  
Thomas McKean

### **Column 5**

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## the Charters of Freedom

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During the debates on the adoption of the Constitution, its opponents repeatedly charged that the Constitution as drafted would open the way to tyranny by the central government. Fresh in their minds was the memory of the British violation of civil rights before and during the Revolution. They demanded a "bill of rights" that would spell out the immunities of individual citizens. Several state conventions in their formal ratification of the Constitution asked for such amendments; others ratified the Constitution with the understanding that the amendments would be offered.

On September 25, 1789, the First Congress of the United States therefore proposed to the state legislatures 12 amendments to the Constitution that met arguments most frequently advanced against it. The first two proposed amendments, which concerned the number of constituents for each Representative and the compensation of Congressmen, were not ratified. Articles 3 to 12, however, ratified by three-fourths of the state legislatures, constitute the first 10 amendments of the Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights.

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ratification process, and the adoption of the Bill of Rights.

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## A Voice of Dissent: George Mason



As the delegates gathered at the Pennsylvania State House in May 1787 to "revise" the **Articles of Confederation**, Virginia delegate George Mason wrote, "The Eyes of the United States are turned upon this Assembly and their Expectations raised to a very anxious Degree." Mason had

earlier written the **Virginia Declaration of Rights** that strongly influenced Thomas Jefferson in writing the first part of the **Declaration of Independence**. He left the convention bitterly disappointed, however, and became one of the Constitution's most vocal opponents. "It has no declaration of rights," he was to state. Ultimately, George Mason's views prevailed. When James Madison drafted the amendments to the Constitution that were to become the Bill of Rights, he drew heavily upon the ideas put forth in the **Virginia Declaration of Rights**.

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### *Bill of Rights*

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#### **The Preamble to The Bill of Rights**

##### **Congress of the United States**

begun and held at the City of New-York, on  
Wednesday the fourth of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty nine.

**THE** Conventions of a number of the States, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added: And as extending the ground of public confidence in the Government, will best ensure the beneficent ends of its institution.

**RESOLVED** by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, two thirds of both Houses concurring, that the following Articles be proposed to the Legislatures of the several States, as amendments to the Constitution of the United States, all, or any of which Articles, when ratified by three fourths of the said Legislatures, to be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of the said Constitution; viz.

**ARTICLES** in addition to, and Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, proposed by Congress, and ratified by the Legislatures of the several States, pursuant to the fifth Article of the original Constitution.

#### **The Bill of Rights: A Transcription**

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**Note:** The following text is a transcription of the first ten amendments to the Constitution in their original form. The amendments were ratified December 15, 1791, and form what is known as the "Bill of Rights."

---

### **Amendment I**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

---

### **Amendment II**

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed.

---

### **Amendment III**

No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

---

### **Amendment IV**

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

---

### **Amendment V**

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

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### **Amendment VI**

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.

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### **Amendment VII**

In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

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### **Amendment VIII**

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

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### **Amendment IX**

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

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### **Amendment X**

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

**Amendments 11-27**

**Note:** The capitalization and punctuation in this version is from the enrolled original of the Joint Resolution of Congress proposing the Bill of Rights, is on permanent display in the Rotunda of the National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.

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## *Constitution of the United States* AMENDMENTS 11-27

### **The Constitution: Amendments 11-27**

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Constitutional Amendments 1-10 make up what is known as [The Bill of Rights](#). Amendments 11-27 are listed below.

#### **AMENDMENT XI**

*Passed by Congress March 4, 1794. Ratified February 7, 1795.*

**Note:** Article III, section 2, of the Constitution was modified by amendment 11.

The Judicial power of the United States shall not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity, commenced or prosecuted against one of the United States by Citizens of another State, or by Citizens or Subjects of any Foreign State.

#### **AMENDMENT XII**

*Passed by Congress December 9, 1803. Ratified June 15, 1804.*

**Note:** A portion of Article II, section 1 of the Constitution was superseded by the 12th amendment.

The Electors shall meet in their respective states and vote by ballot for President and Vice-President, one of whom, at least, shall not be an inhabitant of the same state with themselves; they shall name in their ballots the person voted for as President, and in distinct ballots the person voted for as Vice-President, and they shall make distinct lists of all persons voted for as President, and of all persons voted for as Vice-President, and of the number of votes for each, which lists they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the seat of the government of the United States, directed to the President of the Senate; -- the President of the Senate shall, in the presence of the Senate and House of Representatives open all the certificates and the votes shall then be counted; -- The person having the greatest number of votes for President, shall be the President, if such number be a majority of the whole number of Electors appointed; and if no person have such majority, then from the persons having the highest numbers not exceeding three on the list of those voted for as President, the House of Representatives shall choose immediately, by ballot, the President. But in choosing the President, the votes shall be taken by states, the representation from each state having one vote; a quorum for this



purpose shall consist of a member or members from two-thirds of the states, and a majority of all the states shall be necessary to a choice. [And if the House of Representatives shall not choose a President whenever the right of choice shall devolve upon them, before the fourth day of March next following, then the Vice-President shall act as President in case of the death or other constitutional disability of the President. --]\* The person having the greatest number of votes as Vice-President, shall be the Vice-President, if such number be a majority of the whole number of Electors appointed, and if no person have a majority, then from the two highest numbers on the list, the Senate shall choose the Vice-President; a quorum for the purpose shall consist of two-thirds of the whole number of Senators, and a majority of the whole number shall be necessary to a choice. But no person constitutionally ineligible to the office of President shall be eligible to that of Vice-President of the United States.

*\*Superseded by section 3 of the 20th amendment.*

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### AMENDMENT XIII

*Passed by Congress January 31, 1865. Ratified December 6, 1865.*

**Note:** A portion of Article IV, section 2, of the Constitution was superseded by the 13th amendment.

#### Section 1.

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

#### Section 2.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

---

### AMENDMENT XIV

*Passed by Congress June 13, 1866. Ratified July 9, 1868.*

**Note:** Article I, section 2, of the Constitution was modified by section 2 of the 14th amendment.

#### Section 1.

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

#### Section 2.

Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice-President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, twenty-one years of age,\* and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.

#### Section 3.

No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

#### Section 4.

The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned. But neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.

#### Section 5.

The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

*\*Changed by section 1 of the 26th amendment.*

**AMENDMENT XV**

*Passed by Congress February 26, 1869. Ratified February 3, 1870.*

**Section 1.**

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude--

**Section 2.**

The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

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**AMENDMENT XVI**

*Passed by Congress July 2, 1909. Ratified February 3, 1913.*

**Note:** Article I, section 9, of the Constitution was modified by amendment 16.

The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several States, and without regard to any census or enumeration.

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**AMENDMENT XVII**

*Passed by Congress May 13, 1912. Ratified April 8, 1913.*

**Note:** Article I, section 3, of the Constitution was modified by the 17th amendment.

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof, for years; and each Senator shall have one vote. The electors in each State shall have the qualifications requisite for elect of the most numerous branch of the State legislatures.

When vacancies happen in the representation of any State in the Senate, the executive authority of such State shall issue writs of election to fill such vacancies: *Provided*, That the legislature of any State may empower the executive thereof to make temporary appointments until the people fill the vacancies by election as the legislature may direct.

This amendment shall not be so construed as to affect the election or term of any Senator chosen before it becomes a part of the Constitution.

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**AMENDMENT XVIII**

*Passed by Congress December 18, 1917. Ratified January 16, 1919. Repealed by amendment 21.*

**Section 1.**

After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

**Section 2.**

The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

**Section 3.**

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

---

**AMENDMENT XIX**

*Passed by Congress June 4, 1919. Ratified August 18, 1920.*

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State account of sex.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

---

## AMENDMENT XX

*Passed by Congress March 2, 1932. Ratified January 23, 1933.*

**Note:** Article I, section 4, of the Constitution was modified by section 2 of this amendment. In addition, a portion of 12th amendment was superseded by section 3.

### Section 1.

The terms of the President and the Vice President shall end at noon on the 20th day of January, and the terms of Sen and Representatives at noon on the 3d day of January, of the years in which such terms would have ended if this arti had not been ratified; and the terms of their successors shall then begin.

### Section 2.

The Congress shall assemble at least once in every year, and such meeting shall begin at noon on the 3d day of Janu unless they shall by law appoint a different day.

### Section 3.

If, at the time fixed for the beginning of the term of the President, the President elect shall have died, the Vice Presid elect shall become President. If a President shall not have been chosen before the time fixed for the beginning of his term, or if the President elect shall have failed to qualify, then the Vice President elect shall act as President until a President shall have qualified; and the Congress may by law provide for the case wherein neither a President elect n Vice President shall have qualified, declaring who shall then act as President, or the manner in which one who is to shall be selected, and such person shall act accordingly until a President or Vice President shall have qualified.

### Section 4.

The Congress may by law provide for the case of the death of any of the persons from whom the House of Representatives may choose a President whenever the right of choice shall have devolved upon them, and for the cas the death of any of the persons from whom the Senate may choose a Vice President whenever the right of choice sha have devolved upon them.

### Section 5.

Sections 1 and 2 shall take effect on the 15th day of October following the ratification of this article.

### Section 6.

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislat of three-fourths of the several States within seven years from the date of its submission.

---

## AMENDMENT XXI

*Passed by Congress February 20, 1933. Ratified December 5, 1933.*

### Section 1.

The eighteenth article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.

### Section 2.

The transportation or importation into any State, Territory, or Possession of the United States for delivery or use thei of intoxicating liquors, in violation of the laws thereof, is hereby prohibited.

### Section 3.

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by convention the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the S by the Congress.

---

## AMENDMENT XXII

*Passed by Congress March 21, 1947. Ratified February 27, 1951.*

### Section 1.

No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice, and no person who has held the office of President, or acted as President, for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected President be elected to the office of President more than once. But this Article shall not apply to any person holding the office President when this Article was proposed by Congress, and shall not prevent any person who may be holding the off of President, or acting as President, during the term within which this Article becomes operative from holding the of of President or acting as President during the remainder of such term.

**Section 2.**

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States within seven years from the date of its submission to the States by the Congress

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**AMENDMENT XXIII**

*Passed by Congress June 16, 1960. Ratified March 29, 1961.*

**Section 1.**

The District constituting the seat of Government of the United States shall appoint in such manner as Congress may direct:

A number of electors of President and Vice President equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives in Congress to which the District would be entitled if it were a State, but in no event more than the least populous State they shall be in addition to those appointed by the States, but they shall be considered, for the purposes of the election of President and Vice President, to be electors appointed by a State; and they shall meet in the District and perform such duties as provided by the twelfth article of amendment.

**Section 2.**

The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

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**AMENDMENT XXIV**

*Passed by Congress August 27, 1962. Ratified January 23, 1964.*

**Section 1.**

The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other election for President or Vice President, for electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Representative in Congress, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay poll tax or other tax.

**Section 2.**

The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

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**AMENDMENT XXV**

*Passed by Congress July 6, 1965. Ratified February 10, 1967.*

**Note:** Article II, section 1, of the Constitution was affected by the 25th amendment.

**Section 1.**

In case of the removal of the President from office or of his death or resignation, the Vice President shall become President.

**Section 2.**

Whenever there is a vacancy in the office of the Vice President, the President shall nominate a Vice President who shall take office upon confirmation by a majority vote of both Houses of Congress.

**Section 3.**

Whenever the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that he is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, and until he transmits to them a written declaration to the contrary, such powers and duties shall be discharged by the Vice President as Acting President.

**Section 4.**

Whenever the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive departments or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President.

Thereafter, when the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that no inability exists, he shall resume the powers and duties of his office unless the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive department or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit within four days to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties

his office. Thereupon Congress shall decide the issue, assembling within forty-eight hours for that purpose if not in session. If the Congress, within twenty-one days after receipt of the latter written declaration, or, if Congress is not in session, within twenty-one days after Congress is required to assemble, determines by two-thirds vote of both House that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall continue to discharge the same as Acting President; otherwise, the President shall resume the powers and duties of his office.

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## AMENDMENT XXVI

*Passed by Congress March 23, 1971. Ratified July 1, 1971.*

**Note:** Amendment 14, section 2, of the Constitution was modified by section 1 of the 26th amendment.

### Section 1.

The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.

### Section 2.

The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

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## AMENDMENT XXVII

*Originally proposed Sept. 25, 1789. Ratified May 7, 1992.*

No law, varying the compensation for the services of the Senators and Representatives, shall take effect, until an election of representatives shall have intervened.

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### Constitution of the United States

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#### The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription

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*Note: The following text is a transcription of the Constitution in its original form. Items that are hyperlinked have since been amended or superseded.*

**We the People** of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

#### Article. I.

##### Section. 1.

All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

##### Section. 2.

The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and after every subsequent Term of Years.

States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at Least one Representative and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New Hampshire shall be entitled to chuse three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New-York six, New Jersey four, Pennsylvania eight, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three.

When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.

The House of Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.

### Section. 3.

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.

Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The Seats of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Class at the Expiration of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second Year; and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or otherwise, during the Reception of the Legislature of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such Vacancies.

No Person shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen.

The Vice President of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided.

The Senate shall chuse their other Officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the Absence of the Vice President, and when he shall exercise the Office of President of the United States.

The Senate shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments. When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmation. When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members present.

Judgment in Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States: but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment and Punishment, according to Law.

### Section. 4.

The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators.

The Congress shall assemble at least once in every Year, and such Meeting shall be on the first Monday in December unless they shall by Law appoint a different Day.

### Section. 5.

Each House shall be the Judge of the Elections, Returns and Qualifications of its own Members, and a Majority of each shall constitute a Quorum to do Business; but a smaller Number may adjourn from day to day, and may be authorized to compel the Attendance of absent Members, in such Manner, and under such Penalties as each House may provide.

Each House may determine the Rules of its Proceedings, punish its Members for disorderly Behaviour, and, with the Concurrence of two thirds, expel a Member.

Each House shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such Parts as in their Judgment require Secrecy; and the Yeas and Nays of the Members of either House on any question shall, at the Desire of one fifth of those Present, be entered on the Journal.

Neither House, during the Session of Congress, shall, without the Consent of the other, adjourn for more than three Days, nor to any other Place than that in which the two Houses shall be sitting.

### Section. 6.

The Senators and Representatives shall receive a Compensation for their Services, to be ascertained by Law, and paid

of the Treasury of the United States. They shall in all Cases, except Treason, Felony and Breach of the Peace, be privileged from Arrest during their Attendance at the Session of their respective Houses, and in going to and returning from the same; and for any Speech or Debate in either House, they shall not be questioned in any other Place.

No Senator or Representative shall, during the Time for which he was elected, be appointed to any civil Office under Authority of the United States, which shall have been created, or the Emoluments whereof shall have been increased during such time; and no Person holding any Office under the United States, shall be a Member of either House during his Continuance in Office.

#### Section. 7.

All Bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives; but the Senate may propose or concur with Amendments as on other Bills.

Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the President of the United States: If he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it, with his Objections to that House in which it shall have originated, who shall enter the Objections at large on their Journal, and proceed to reconsider it. If after such Reconsideration two thirds of that House shall agree to pass the Bill, it shall be together with the Objections, to the other House, by which it shall likewise be reconsidered, and if approved by two thirds of that House, it shall become a Law. But in all such Cases the Votes of both Houses shall be determined by yeas and Nays, and the Names of the Persons voting for and against the Bill shall be entered on the Journal of each House respectively. If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the Same shall be a Law, in like Manner as if he had signed it, unless the Congress by their Adjournment prevent its Return, in which Case it shall not be a Law.

Every Order, Resolution, or Vote to which the Concurrence of the Senate and House of Representatives may be necessary (except on a question of Adjournment) shall be presented to the President of the United States; and before Same shall take Effect, shall be approved by him, or being disapproved by him, shall be repassed by two thirds of the Senate and House of Representatives, according to the Rules and Limitations prescribed in the Case of a Bill.

#### Section. 8.

The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;

To borrow Money on the credit of the United States;

To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes;

To establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization, and uniform Laws on the subject of Bankruptcies throughout the United States;

To coin Money, regulate the Value thereof, and of foreign Coin, and fix the Standard of Weights and Measures;

To provide for the Punishment of counterfeiting the Securities and current Coin of the United States;

To establish Post Offices and post Roads;

To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries;

To constitute Tribunals inferior to the supreme Court;

To define and punish Piracies and Felonies committed on the high Seas, and Offences against the Law of Nations;

To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water;

To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years;

To provide and maintain a Navy;

To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces;

To provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions;

To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress;



To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may be ceded by the particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States; and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings;--And

To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

#### Section. 9.

The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.

The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it.

No Bill of Attainder or ex post facto Law shall be passed.

No Capitation, or other direct, Tax shall be laid, unless in Proportion to the Census or enumeration herein before directed to be taken.

No Tax or Duty shall be laid on Articles exported from any State.

No Preference shall be given by any Regulation of Commerce or Revenue to the Ports of one State over those of another; nor shall Vessels bound to, or from, one State, be obliged to enter, clear, or pay Duties in another.

No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time.

No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States: And no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State.

#### Section. 10.

No State shall enter into any Treaty, Alliance, or Confederation; grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal; coin Money; emit Bills of Credit; make any Thing but gold and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts; pass any Bill of Attainder, ex post facto Law, or Law impairing the Obligation of Contracts, or grant any Title of Nobility.

No State shall, without the Consent of the Congress, lay any Imposts or Duties on Imports or Exports, except what may be absolutely necessary for executing its inspection Laws: and the net Produce of all Duties and Imposts, laid by any State on Imports or Exports, shall be for the Use of the Treasury of the United States; and all such Laws shall be subject to the Revision and Controul of the Congress.

No State shall, without the Consent of Congress, lay any Duty of Tonnage, keep Troops, or Ships of War in time of Peace, enter into any Agreement or Compact with another State, or with a foreign Power, or engage in War, unless actually invaded, or in such imminent Danger as will not admit of delay.

### Article. II.

#### Section. 1.

The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term, be elected, as follows:

Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector.

The Electors shall meet in their respective States, and vote by Ballot for two Persons, of whom one at least shall not be an Inhabitant of the same State with themselves. And they shall make a List of all the Persons voted for, and of the Number of Votes for each; which List they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the Seat of the Government of the United States, directed to the President of the Senate. The President of the Senate shall, in the Presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the Certificates, and the Votes shall then be counted. The Person having the greatest Number of Votes shall be the President, if such Number be a Majority of the whole Number of Electors appointed; and if there be more than one who have such Majority, and have an equal Number of Votes, then the House

Representatives shall immediately chuse by Ballot one of them for President; and if no Person have a Majority, then the five highest on the List the said House shall in like Manner chuse the President. But in chusing the President, the Votes shall be taken by States, the Representation from each State having one Vote; A quorum for this purpose shall consist of a Member or Members from two thirds of the States, and a Majority of all the States shall be necessary to Choice. In every Case, after the Choice of the President, the Person having the greatest Number of Votes of the Elec shall be the Vice President. But if there should remain two or more who have equal Votes, the Senate shall chuse from them by Ballot the Vice President.

The Congress may determine the Time of chusing the Electors, and the Day on which they shall give their Votes; w<sup>h</sup> Day shall be the same throughout the United States.

No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any Person be eligible to that Office who shall have attained to the Age of thirty five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States.

In Case of the Removal of the President from Office, or of his Death, Resignation, or Inability to discharge the Powe and Duties of the said Office, the Same shall devolve on the Vice President, and the Congress may by Law provide f the Case of Removal, Death, Resignation or Inability, both of the President and Vice President, declaring what Office shall then act as President, and such Officer shall act accordingly, until the Disability be removed, or a President sha elected.

The President shall, at stated Times, receive for his Services, a Compensation, which shall neither be increased nor diminished during the Period for which he shall have been elected, and he shall not receive within that Period any ot Emolument from the United States, or any of them.

Before he enter on the Execution of his Office, he shall take the following Oath or Affirmation:--"I do solemnly swe (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Abilit<sup>y</sup> preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

#### **Section. 2.**

The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the sev States, when called into the actual Service of the United States; he may require the Opinion, in writing, of the princip<sup>l</sup> Officer in each of the executive Departments, upon any Subject relating to the Duties of their respective Offices, and shall have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offences against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment.

He shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for, and which shall be established by Law: but the Congress may by Law vest the Appointment of such inferior Officers, as they think proper, in the President alone, in Courts of Law, or in the Heads of Departments.

The President shall have Power to fill up all Vacancies that may happen during the Recess of the Senate, by granting Commissions which shall expire at the End of their next Session.

#### **Section. 3.**

He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient; he may, on extraordinary Occasions, conve both Houses, or either of them, and in Case of Disagreement between them, with Respect to the Time of Adjournme he may adjourn them to such Time as he shall think proper; he shall receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed, and shall Commission all the Officers of the United States.

#### **Section. 4.**

The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachm<sup>t</sup> for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.

### **Article III.**

#### **Section. 1.**

The judicial Power of the United States shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Con may from time to time ordain and establish. The Judges, both of the supreme and inferior Courts, shall hold their Of during good Behaviour, and shall, at stated Times, receive for their Services a Compensation, which shall not be

diminished during their Continuance in Office.

### Section. 2.

The judicial Power shall extend to all Cases, in Law and Equity, arising under this Constitution, the Laws of the United States, and Treaties made, or which shall be made, under their Authority;--to all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls;--to all Cases of admiralty and maritime Jurisdiction;--to Controversies to which the United States shall be a Party;--to Controversies between two or more States;-- between a State and Citizens of another State between Citizens of different States;--between Citizens of the same State claiming Lands under Grants of different States, and between a State, or the Citizens thereof, and foreign States, Citizens or Subjects.

In all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, and those in which a State shall be Party, the supreme Court shall have original Jurisdiction. In all the other Cases before mentioned, the supreme Court shall have appellate Jurisdiction, both as to Law and Fact, with such Exceptions, and under such Regulations as the Congress shall make.

The Trial of all Crimes, except in Cases of Impeachment, shall be by Jury; and such Trial shall be held in the State where the said Crimes shall have been committed; but when not committed within any State, the Trial shall be at such Place or Places as the Congress may by Law have directed.

### Section. 3.

Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.

The Congress shall have Power to declare the Punishment of Treason, but no Attainder of Treason shall work Corruption of Blood, or Forfeiture except during the Life of the Person attainted.

## Article. IV.

### Section. 1.

Full Faith and Credit shall be given in each State to the public Acts, Records, and judicial Proceedings of every other State. And the Congress may by general Laws prescribe the Manner in which such Acts, Records and Proceedings shall be proved, and the Effect thereof.

### Section. 2.

The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States.

A Person charged in any State with Treason, Felony, or other Crime, who shall flee from Justice, and be found in another State, shall on Demand of the executive Authority of the State from which he fled, be delivered up, to be removed to the State having Jurisdiction of the Crime.

No Person held to Service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due.

### Section. 3.

New States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union; but no new State shall be formed or erected within the Jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the Junction of two or more States, or Parts of States, without the Consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned as well as of the Congress.

The Congress shall have Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States; and nothing in this Constitution shall be so construed as to Prejudice the Claims of the United States, or of any particular State.

### Section. 4.

The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened), against domestic Violence.

## Article. V.

The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as one or the other Mode of Ratification may be proposed by the Congress; Provided that no Amendment which may be made prior to the Year One thousand eight hundred and eight shall in any Manner affect the first and fourth Clauses the Ninth Section of the first Article; and that no State, without its Consent, shall be deprived of its equal Suffrage in Senate.

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### Article. VI.

All Debts contracted and Engagements entered into, before the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be as valid against United States under this Constitution, as under the Confederation.

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all exec and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

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### Article. VII.

The Ratification of the Conventions of nine States, shall be sufficient for the Establishment of this Constitution between the States so ratifying the Same.

The Word, "the," being interlined between the seventh and eighth Lines of the first Page, the Word "Thirty" being printed on an Erasure in the fifteenth Line of the first Page, The Words "is tried" being interlined between the thirty second and thirty third Lines of the first Page and the Word "the" being interlined between the forty third and forty fourth Lines of the second Page.

Attest William Jackson Secretary

Done in Convention by the Unanimous Consent of the States present the Seventeenth Day of September in the Year our Lord one thousand seven hundred and Eighty seven and of the Independence of the United States of America the Twelfth In witness whereof We have hereunto subscribed our Names,

G<sup>o</sup>. Washington

*President and deputy from Virginia*

**Delaware**

Geo: Read

Gunning Bedford jun

John Dickinson

Richard Bassett

Jaco: Broom

**Maryland**

James McHenry

Dan of St Thos. Jenifer

Danl. Carroll

**Virginia**

John Blair

James Madison Jr.

**North Carolina**

Wm. Blount

Richd. Dobbs Spaight

Hu Williamson

**South Carolina**

J. Rutledge

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## *the* Charters of Freedom "A NEW WORLD IS AT HAND"

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### The Power of the Courts ~ Marbury v. Madison, 1803

*The people made the Constitution, and the people can unmake it.  
It is the creature of their will, and lives only by their will.*

Chief Justice John Marshall, 1821

Although most of the Framers of the Constitution anticipated that the Federal judiciary would be the weakest branch of Government, the U.S. Supreme Court has come to wield enormous power with decisions that have reached into the lives of every citizen and resolved some of the most dramatic confrontations in U.S. history. The word of the Supreme Court is final. Overturning its decisions often requires an amendment to the Constitution or a revision of Federal law.

The power of the Supreme Court has evolved over time, through a series of milestone court cases. One of the Court's most fundamental powers is judicial review—the power to judge the constitutionality of any act or law of the executive or legislative branch. Some of the Framers expected the Supreme Court to take on the role of determining the constitutionality of Congress's laws, but the Constitution did not explicitly assign it to the Court. Marbury v. Madison, the 1803 landmark Supreme Court case, established the power of judicial review. From the modest claim of William Marbury, who sought a low-paying appointment as a District of Columbia Justice of the Peace, emerged a Supreme Court decision that established one of the cornerstones of the American constitutional system.

Order served on Secretary of St James Madison by the U.S. Supreme Court, March 22, 1803  
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John Marshall, oil painting (reproduction) by Rembrandt Peale, 1826  
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**Order served on Secretary of State James Madison by the U.S. Supreme Court  
March 22, 1802**

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In March 1801, in the final days of the Adams administration, President John Adams appointed William Marbury the Justice of the Peace in the District of Columbia. But the Secretary of State, John Marshall, failed to deliver it. The incoming Secretary of State, James Madison, refused to deliver the commission. Marbury sued to force the commission. He asked the Supreme Court to force Madison to deliver the commission.

John Marshall, who became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, wrote the landmark decision. The Court's opinion declared that the Court was authorized to issue the commission on Marbury's behalf to be unconstitutional. Never before had the Supreme Court exercised its authority to declare an act of Congress to be unconstitutional. This ruling on an apparently technical matter, Marshall set the course for the judiciary to be a coequal branch of government.

This document bears the marks of the Capitol fire of 1898.

National Archives, Records of the Court of the United States

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**John Marshall, oil painting (reproduction) by Rembrandt Peale, 1826**



During the thirty-five years that Marshall served as Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, he asserted the power of the judiciary as a separate branch of government and the supremacy of Federal authority.

Courtesy of the Supreme Court of the United States, Washington, DC

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### Westward Expansion ~ The Louisiana Purchase

*Let the Land rejoice, for you have bought Louisiana for a Song.*

Gen. Horatio Gates to President Thomas Jefferson, July 18, 1803

In 1803, with one bold move, President Thomas Jefferson's administration doubled the size of the United States. France's offer of the Louisiana Territory—828,000 square miles of land extending west of the Mississippi River, in exchange for \$15 million—was simply too good to resist. The Treaty, dated April 30, 1803, was signed in Paris by Robert Livingston and James Monroe and ratified by Congress on October 20. Fifteen states or parts of states were carved from the vast territory, which was the single largest acquisition of land in U.S. history.

Sixteen years earlier, critics of the Constitution had argued that the original thirteen states already covered too vast a territory to be under a single government. In 1803, some European powers predicted that the huge addition of land would be the death knell of the American experiment and would cause the Union to degenerate into competing and warring factions. Jefferson, however, believed it would provide "a wide-spread field for the blessings of freedom." The Louisiana Territory added to the United States a wealth of natural resources beyond anyone's calculations. Westward expansion was a disaster for the many indigenous peoples who had no say in the sale of lands they had inhabited for generations. But the Louisiana Purchase did not weaken the Union; it strengthened it. The transaction was more than a brilliant act of diplomacy or a shrewd real estate deal. It was a vote of confidence in the future of a fledgling nation.

[Louisiana Purchase, April 30, 1803, 1: learn more...](#)

[Territory of Louisiana ceded by France to the United States by treaty of April 30, 1803, reprint from the pamphlet "Historical Sketch of Louisiana," published the General Land Office, 1933 1: more...](#)



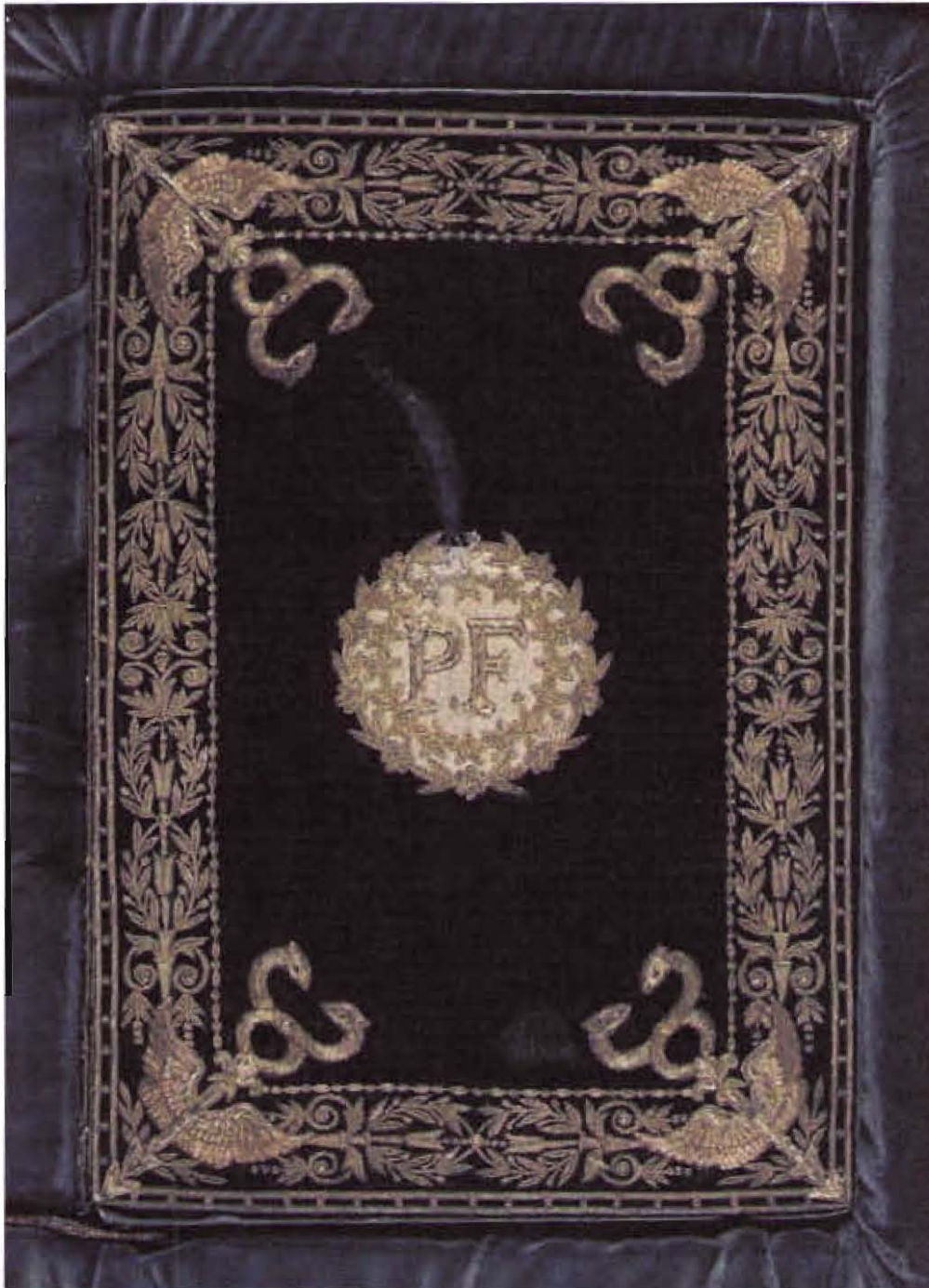
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## Louisiana Purchase, April 30, 1803

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Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Texas, Mexico, and Minnesota are parts of states that were carved from territory ceded to the United States in this treaty. This agreement set a precedent of the Federal Government acquiring land by purchase.

The Louisiana Purchase agreement was made up of many documents, some in English, some in French. The French copy of the agreement transferred territory to the United States. The initials, "P.F." embroidered on the front and back covers, stand for "Peuple Français," which translated means "French People." With a flourish, Napoleon, First Consul of the Republic, signed his name "Napoléon" on the final page of the document, thus creating a vast nation that would stand against Great Britain.

National Archives, General Records Administration  
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**Territory of Louisiana ceded by France to the United States by treaty of April 1803, reprinted from the pamphlet "Historical Sketch of Louisiana," published by the General Land Office, 1933**



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### The Civil War ~ The Union Sealed in Blood

*The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. . . . In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best, hope of earth.*

President Abraham Lincoln, December 1, 1862

September 17, 1862, was the bloodiest single day in U.S. history. An estimated 6,300 Union and Confederate soldiers died at Antietam, Maryland, in a savage battle that took place nearly a year and a half into the Civil War. It was one day in a war that raged from 1861–65 and cost some 623,000 lives. In a total national population of twenty-seven million in 1860, that number would be proportionately equivalent to losing more than five million today. That bloody day marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Constitution.

At stake in the Civil War was the survival of the United States of America as a single nation. Eleven Southern states, invoking the spirit of 1776, seceded from the Union in 1861 to form a nation they named the Confederate States of America. The Federal Government refused to allow it. Massive armies representing the Union and the Confederacy squared off in a conflict that tested the experiment in self-government as never before. At the end of the Civil War's carnage, the primacy of the Federal Government over the states was indisputably upheld.

Americans had been wrestling with the fundamental question of nationhood since the earliest days of the Revolution. In 1774, as the British colonists struggled to unite in the cause of American liberty, Patrick Henry rose to address the Continental Congress in one of its earliest sessions: "The distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians and New Englanders are no more. I am not a Virginian, but an American." It took the Civil War to make it so.

President Abraham Lincoln's Message to Congress on the State of the Union, December 1, 1862, selected pages [learn more...](#)

Abraham Lincoln, ca. 1860–65 [learn more...](#)

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**President Abraham Lincoln's Message to Congress on the State of the Union,  
December 1, 1862, selected pages**

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The Constitution requires the President "... shall from time to time give to the Congress Information on the State of the Union." As was the case in the nineteenth century, the President delivered his message in writing and a congressional clerk read it aloud at the final portion of President Lincoln's State of the Union message for 1862.

As the Union lay in shambles, Lincoln's shining vision of the nation's future persisted in the mind of President Lincoln. Throughout the war, he exercised extraordinary power and iron will to preserve for mankind the best, hope of earth."

National Archives, Records of the President  
Exhibited with the permission of the Senate

Fellow citizens, we cannot escape  
 history. We of this Congress and this  
 administration, will be remembered in  
 spite of ourselves. No personal significance,  
 or insignificance, can spare one or another  
 of us. The fiery trial through which we  
 pass, will light us down, in honor or  
 dishonor, to the latest generation. We say  
 we are for the Union. The world will not  
 forget that we say this. We know how  
 to save the Union. The world knows we do  
 know how to save it. We - even we here -  
 hold the power, and bear the responsibility.  
 In giving freedom to the Slave, we give  
 freedom to the free - honorable alike in what  
 we give and what we preserve. We shall  
 nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best  
 hope of earth. Other means may succeed.

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## Abraham Lincoln, ca. 1860-65



In his first inaugural address, President Abraham Lincoln stated that secession was unconstitutional. He said the Union of the states was perpetual and that states could not leave it at will.

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### The End of Slavery in the United States ~ The Thirteenth Amendment

*The more men you make free, the more freedom is strengthened,  
and the . . . greater is the security of the State.*

Frederick Douglass, abolitionist, statesman, and former slave, November 17, 1864

The four years of Civil War that ripped apart the nation from 1861–65 achieved what seventy-five years of compromise could not: it resolved once and for all the question of slavery in the United States. By 1860, there were 4.5 million slaves in the United States. Military necessity and the force of human passion for liberty pushed emancipation to the top of the nation's agenda. Two major milestones marked slavery's final destruction during the war years: the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, declaring that "all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious areas "are and henceforward shall be free." It also announced the acceptance of former slaves into the Union's armed forces. The Constitution grants extended powers to the President during times of war, and although it would not permit the President to interfere with slavery in the states under normal circumstances, it would do so during wartime.

President Lincoln feared that the Emancipation Proclamation would be overturned once the war ended. A constitutional amendment would ensure that slavery could never again resurface. Congress formally proposed the Thirteenth Amendment outlawing slavery on January 31, 1865; it was ratified on December 6, 1865.

Proclamation of the Secretary of State announcing the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, December 18, 1865; selected pages [learn more...](#)

"Watch Meeting—Dec. 31st, 1865," slaves awaiting the moment when the Emancipation Proclamation takes effect, oil painting (reproduction by William Tolman Carlton, not dated); [learn more...](#)

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**Proclamation of the Secretary of State announcing the ratification of the Third Amendment to the Constitution, December 18, 1865, selected pages**

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In less than fifty words, the Third Amendment outlawed slavery in the United States.

**Amendment XIII**

**Section 1.** Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

**Section 2.** Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

National Archives, General Records of the Government



William H. Seward,  
Secretary of State of the United States

To all to whom these presents may come,  
Greetings:

Know Ye, that, whereas  
the Congress of the United States,  
on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, last,  
passed a Resolution which is  
in the words following, to-wit:

"A Resolution submitting  
to the Legislatures of the several  
States a Proposition to amend  
the Constitution of the United  
States.

Resolved by the Senate and

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### United States as a Beacon of Liberty ~ Immigration

*The bosom of America is open to receive not only the Opulent & respectable Stranger.  
but the oppressed & persecuted of all Nations & Religions:  
whom we shall wellcome to a participation of all our rights & privileges.*

George Washington, Address to Irish Immigrants, draft handwritten by David Humphries, December 2, 1783

America's earliest settlers who came in search of religious freedom in the seventeenth century passed on a vision of America as a shining beacon of hope to the world that still shines today. Between 1820 and 2001, more than sixty-seven million people came to the United States from every corner of the globe, lured by the promise of liberty and opportunity. The open-door policies of the early years of the republic eventually gave way in the late-nineteenth century to more restrictive measures driven by concerns for the nation's economy and security. Fear of foreigners and racial prejudice have also influenced policies that excluded rather than welcomed immigrants. But the wish to honor the ideal of America as a safe haven persists. Two-thirds of the seventy million people who have left Europe since 1600 have come to America. Millions more have come from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Today, the United States pulses with the energy of a dizzying mix of cultures, races, religions, and languages. The people of the United States are joined together, not by religion, race, or genealogy, but by a shared set of beliefs about freedom. In 1989, the fortieth President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, reflected on the current state of the American Dream: "After 200 years . . . [America's] still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom, for all the pilgrims from all the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness, toward home."

Deed of Gift, Statue of Liberty,  
4, 1884 [learn more...](#)

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## Deed of Gift, Statue of Liberty, July 4, 1884



"Liberty Enlightening the World" commonly known as the Statue of Liberty, was a gift from the people of France to the people of the United States. It stands in New York City. Conceived by the French sculptor Frédéric de Bartholdi, it celebrates a century of friendship between nations. In her left arm, Lady Liberty holds a tablet inscribed with the Declaration of Independence of 1776.

Built on a colossal scale, the Statue of Liberty has become one of the most potent symbols of human freedom. The famous poem composed by Emma Lazarus and inscribed on the pedestal gives voice to a strain of idealism that celebrates the United States as a refuge for the oppressed peoples of the world.

**"Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."**

From "The New Colossus," by Emma Lazarus

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## the Charters of Freedom

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### Expansion of Rights and Liberties ~ The Right of Suffrage

*It was we, the people, not we, the white male citizens, nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed this Union.*

Susan B. Anthony, 1873, "Is It a Crime for a U.S. Citizen to Vote?" speech delivered following her arrest for voting in the election of 1

When the Constitution took effect in 1789, it did not "secure the blessings of liberty" to all people. The expansion of rights and liberties has been achieved over time, as people once excluded from the protections of the Constitution asserted their rights set forth in the Declaration of Independence. These Americans have fostered movements resulting in laws, Supreme Court decisions, and constitutional amendments that have narrowed the gap between the ideal and the reality of American freedom.

At the time of the first Presidential election in 1789, only 6 percent of the population—white, male property owners—was eligible to vote. The Fifteenth Amendment extended the right to vote to former male slaves in 1870; American Indians gained the vote under a law passed by Congress in 1924; and women gained the vote with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

Susan B. Anthony devoted some fifty years of her life to the cause of woman suffrage. After casting her ballot in the 1872 election in her hometown of Rochester, New York, she was arrested, indicted, tried, and convicted for voting illegally. At her two-day trial in June 1873, which she described as "the greatest judicial outrage history has ever recorded," she was convicted and sentenced to pay a fine of \$100 and court costs.

Anthony took full advantage of the high-profile case to promote the cause of woman suffrage. In a speech delivered repeatedly in 1872–73, she exhorted her listeners to "fight our battle for the ballot—all peaceably, but nevertheless persistently through to complete triumph, when all United States citizens shall be recognized as equals before the law." Women gained the vote with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, fourteen years after Anthony's

Transcript of Susan B. Anthony testimony in a pre-trial hearing before a U.S. Commissioner, November 29, 1872, selected page [learn more...](#)

Susan B. Anthony, not dated [learn more...](#)

Objected to on the grounds that it is not material over an cross-examination of the direct evidence; Objection overruled. I did not directly ask her to go and register. Did you do so indirectly? I did not. You say you took a poll list for the Democratic party? I did. Did you take Susan B. Anthony's name on your canvass? — Canvass? You mean out what is ordinarily called a poll list? Yes, sir. Where is that canvass? at my house. Didn't you know the paper which you took is commonly denominated a poll list? No, sir. Didn't you collect — I — that list you took down the names of all persons who had a right to vote? Yes, sir. And which way they would vote? Yes, sir. Among others you took the name of Miss Anthony? Yes, sir. Didn't you give Miss Lydon some advice on the subject of registry? Yes, sir. Did you tell her she had better — to go register; that the thing might as well be tried out in that Ward as anywhere? Yes, sir. In so many words. You have written articles for the newspapers on this subject? Yes, I have. How many? Two.

Re direct examination:

You did have a talk on the subject of registration? Yes, sir. Where was it? At her residence on Reynolds Street. More than one?

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# *the Charters of Freedom*

"A NEW WORLD IS AT HAND"

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## Susan B. Anthony, not dated



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MAKING OF THE CHARTERS THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE THE CONSTITUTION THE BILL OF RIGHTS IMPACT OF THE CHARTERS HIGH

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## *the* Charters of Freedom "A NEW WORLD IS AT HAND"

### Global Impact of the Charters of Freedom

*The flames kindled on the Fourth of July, 1776, have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism; on the contrary, they will consume these engines and all who work them.*

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 1821

From the earliest days of the Republic, this nation's Founders believed that the United States had a special mission in the world. George Washington spoke of it on April 30, 1789, moments after taking the oath of office as first President of the United States. "The preservation of the sacred fire of liberty, and the destiny of the Republican model of Government, are justly considered as deeply, perhaps as finally staked, on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people." The success of their experiment, these early Americans hoped, would hasten the spread of liberty around the globe.

In the first century following the Declaration of Independence, movements in France, Belgium, Poland, Norway, Switzerland, as well as in Venezuela, Mexico, and Argentina drew both inspiration and practical lessons from the American Revolution and its landmark documents. During the nineteenth century, the adoption of written constitutions often accompanied changes in governments in Europe and Latin America.

In 1917, there were approximately a dozen democracies in the world. Today, there are more than one hundred, and most of them have written constitutions. While the charters of many of these nations vary greatly from the U.S. Constitution, its endurance and stability has surely lent encouragement and credibility to the cause of freedom-loving people everywhere who have labored to throw off tyrannical regimes and devise for themselves a system of self-determination and government based on the consent of the governed.

President George Bush's State of the Union Address, January 31, 1990, selected pages [learn more](#).

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"A NEW WORLD IS AT HAND"

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**President George Bush's State of the Union Address, January 31, 1990, selected pages**

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AND ONE YEAR AGO, ERICH HONECKER OF EAST GERMANY CLAIMED HISTORY AS HIS GUIDE. HE PREDICTED THE BERLIN WALL WOULD LAST ANOTHER HUNDRED YEARS. TODAY -- LESS THAN ONE YEAR LATER -- IT'S THE WALL THAT'S HISTORY. \*

///

REMARKABLE EVENTS -- EVENTS THAT FULFILL THE LONG-HELD HOPES OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE... EVENTS THAT VALIDATE THE LONG-STANDING GOALS OF AMERICAN POLICY -- A POLICY BASED ON A SINGLE, SHINING PRINCIPLE: THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM. \*

AMERICA -- NOT JUST THE NATION -- BUT AN IDEA, // ALIVE IN THE MINDS OF PEOPLE EVERYWHERE. AS THIS NEW WORLD TAKES SHAPE, AMERICA STANDS AT THE CENTER OF A WIDENING CIRCLE OF FREEDOM -- TODAY, TOMORROW AND INTO THE NEXT CENTURY. \* //

In 1989, a series of revolutions through central Eastern Europe as the peoples of Poland, Hungary, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and others threw off the communist regimes had held their countries in an iron grip for more than forty

years. Delivering his State of the Union Address in 1990, President Bush remarked on the stunning achievement of freedom that had captured the attention over the previous year. He recalled an incident that took place in the midst of the revolution in Czechoslovakia. At a worker's meeting outside Prague, a brewer went to the podium and began to read the words of the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident . . ." Speaking of more than one thousand workers, he said, "Americans understood rights more than 200 years ago. We are only now learning to believe we are entitled to the same rights."

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**President George Bush's State of the Union Address, January 31, 1990, select pages**

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OUR NATION IS THE ENDURING DREAM OF EVERY IMMIGRANT WHO EVER SET FOOT ON THESE SHORES -- AND THE MILLIONS STILL STRUGGLING TO BE FREE. THIS NATION -- THIS IDEA CALLED AMERICA -- WAS AND ALWAYS WILL BE -- A NEW WORLD. OUR NEW WORLD. ///

AT A WORKERS' RALLY -- IN A PLACE CALLED BRANIK (BRAH-NEEK) ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF PRAGUE -- THE IDEA CALLED AMERICA IS ALIVE. A WORKER, DRESSED IN GRIMY OVERALLS, RISES TO SPEAK AT THE FACTORY GATES. HE BEGINS HIS SPEECH TO HIS FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THESE WORDS -- WORDS OF A DISTANT REVOLUTION:

"WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT. THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL, THAT THEY ARE ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN UNALIENABLE RIGHTS, [AND] THAT AMONG THESE ARE LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS." ////

In 1989, a series of revolutions through central Eastern European peoples of Poland, Hungary, Germany, Czechoslovakia, threw off the communist regime that had held their countries in an iron grip for more than forty

Delivering his State of the Union Address in 1990, President Bush remarked on the stunning achievement of freedom that had captured the attention over the previous year; he recalled an incident that took place in the midst of the revolution in Czechoslovakia. At a worker's rally outside Prague, a worker stepped onto the platform and began to recite the words of the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident . . ." Speaking to a crowd of more than one thousand workers, he said, "Americans understood the meaning of rights more than 200 years ago; only now learning to believe we are entitled to the same rights."

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