



# Revolutionary Times



Containing the Latest News from the Sons of the American Revolution

## United States Constitution

The Continental Congress adopted the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, the first constitution of the United States, on November 15, 1777.

The weakness of this confederation became increasingly apparent when the War for Independence was over and the staggering debt repayment, which Congress under the Articles could proportionally assess but not directly collect, became a point of conflict between the states and a source of intense domestic strife within several of the states.

The Constitutional Convention assembled in Philadelphia in May of 1787.

Although they had gathered to revise the Articles of Confederation, by mid-June they had decided to completely redesign the government.

There was little agreement about what form it would take.

After five weeks of debate over the committee of detail's draft Constitution, the Constitutional Convention appointed a committee of style to prepare a final version.

Thirty-nine of the 42 men present signed the Constitution.

George Washington was first, followed by each state delegation descending from north to south. (George Reed signed for John Dickinson of Delaware, who was absent.)

They called for special ratifying conventions in each state. Ratification by 9 of the 13 states enacted the new government.

Congress responded by appointing a committee to schedule the first federal elections and fix the date when the new government would begin operation in New York City. This was the last major act of the Continental Congress.

The Constitution of the United States contains a preamble and seven articles that describe the way the government is structured and how it operates.

The preamble sets the stage for the Constitution. The preamble is an introduction to the highest law of the land; it is not the law. It does not define government powers or individual rights.

"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."

The first three articles establish the three branches of government:

- Legislative - Congress
- Executive - offices of President
- Judicial - Federal court system

A system of checks and balances prevents any one of these separate powers from becoming dominant.

Articles four through seven describe the relationship of the states to the Federal Government, establish the Constitution as the supreme law of the land, and define the amendment and ratification processes.

To date, the Constitution has been amended 27 times, most recently in 1992.

This broadsheet is dedicated to the 250th Anniversary Celebration of the Declaration of Independence for more information visit the National Society Sons of the American Revolution website at: [www.sar.org](http://www.sar.org)

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