

A Proclamation Constitution Week

Whereas: The Constitution of the United States, the guardian of our liberties, is a product of reflection and choice, embodying the principles of limited government in a Republic dedicated to rule by law, not by men; and

Whereas: September 17 marks the anniversary of the drafting of the Constitution of the United States of America by the Constitution Convention; and

Whereas: It is fitting and proper to accord official recognition to this memorable anniversary, and to the patriotic exercises that will commemorate the occasion; and

Whereas: Public Law 915, guarantees the issue of a proclamation each year by the President of the United States of America designating September 17th through September 23rd as Constitution Week.

NOW THEREFORE: I, as Mayor, proclaim the week of September 17 through September 23 as

Constitution Week

And urge all citizens to study the Constitution and to express gratitude for the privilege of American citizenship in our republic, functioning under the superb body of laws – the Constitution of the United States of America.

*Proclaimed this day
– Mayor*

*Georgia Signers
Abraham Baldwin and William Few
were the signers from Georgia*

We the People

*Compliments of
The Georgia Society
Sons of the American Revolution
www.sar.org/gassar • 770.952.1776*

The Sons of the American Revolution are engaged in a variety of programs to promote the patriotic, educational and historical interests resulting from the American Revolution. Programs include Essay Contests for both High School students and Eagle Scouts, presentation of medals to College and High School ROTC students, Poster Contests for Elementary School students, American Revolution presentations to Elementary and Middle School students, presentation of medals to Public Safety officials, Revolutionary War Grave Dedications, Volunteer work with Veterans, presentation of Flag Certificates to deserving organizations and schools, participation in historic battle sites observances and others.

For Information Contact:

**CONSTITUTION WEEK
SEPTEMBER 17 - 23**

History of the United States Constitution



The History of the United States Constitution

The United States Constitution is the supreme law of the land. It establishes the form of the United States Government, and the rights and liberties of the American People. The Constitution made the United States a nation. It is the shield of Democracy under which Americans govern themselves as a free people.

After the United States won its independence in the Revolutionary War, it faced the great problems of peacetime government. It had to enforce law and order, collect taxes, pay what was then a staggering public debt, and regulate and stimulate trade. The new nation also had to deal with the Indian tribes and with other governments.

It was soon clear that the *Articles of Confederation* would not work as it lacked an executive and a system of courts.

In his wisdom, Alexander Hamilton called for a confederation congress to meet in Philadelphia on May 14, 1787, for the sole purpose of revising the *Articles of Confederation*. The 55 delegates who attended the convention did far more than that, they wrote a remarkable plan of government, the United States Constitution.

The delegates were slow to attend, and finally on May 25, a quorum of seven states was present and the convention opened. All states except Rhode Island were represented. Of the 55 delegates, 39 stayed until the end and signed the Constitution on September 17, 1787.

It took a compromise on representation, combining the *Virginia Plan* and the *New Jersey Plan* into the House of Representatives and the Senate, to avoid a stalemate in the deliberations.

George Washington served as a dignified and authoritative presiding officer throughout the sessions. The astute James Madison won for himself the title of “Father of the Constitution” with his speeches, negotiations and attempts at compromise.

Other key contributors include John Dickinson, Gouverneur Morris, Edmund Randolph, Roger Sherman, James Wilson and George Wythe. Gouverneur Morris was probably the most influential delegate, after Madison and Washington. He was given the task of putting all of the convention’s resolutions and decisions into polished form. Morris actually “*wrote the Constitution.*” The original copy is preserved in the National Archives in Washington, D. C.

The federal government exercises both *delegated powers* (those listed in the Constitution) and *implied powers* (those reasonably implied by the Constitution). And it divides the powers of the government between the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

All powers not granted to the federal government and not denied to the states are reserved for the states or for the people.

The convention agreed that the new government could be organized after nine states had approved the Constitution. Less than three months after the Constitution had been signed, Delaware became the first state to ratify it, on December 7, 1787. New Hampshire was the ninth state, on June 21, 1788. However, the key states of New York and Virginia held out as critics

objected that no bill of rights had been included, the President had too much independence, the Senate too aristocratic, Congress had too many powers and the national government too much authority.

Friends of the Constitution, known as *Federalists*, rallied support and won ratification by both Virginia and New York. The *Federalists* might not have gained support if they had not promised to support amendments to the Constitution. These amendments were designed to protect individual liberties against encroachment by the new government.

The first Congress under the new Constitution met in New York City on March 4, 1789. George Washington was inaugurated as the country’s first President on April 30.

Two states – North Carolina and Rhode Island – refused to approve the Constitution and take part in the new government until the first Congress had begun to adopt a bill of rights.

Most state constitutions that were adopted during the Revolution had included a clear declaration of the rights of all persons. George Mason had been the man most responsible for the most famous American bill of rights, the Virginia Declaration of Rights of 1776.

James Madison led the new Congress in proposing 12 amendments to be adopted. By December 15, 1791, enough states had approved 10 of the 12 amendments to make them a permanent addition to the Constitution. These amendments are known as the *Bill of Rights*, although the term usually refers to the first eight amendments.

The great principles of the Constitution have been in tune with the beliefs and hopes of an expanding democracy. These principles include the sovereignty of the people, supremacy of the national government, respect for the states, division of power among three equal and independent branches, separation of church and state, and rule by a clear-cut majority.

The story of how the framers wrote the Constitution and how it met the challenges of American democracy is one that people should never forget.

