



Freedom's Feast PRESIDENTS' DAY

On-line Ceremonies to get the most out of your AMERICAN holiday Celebrations.

CELEBRATING OUR PRESIDENTS AND OUR FREEDOM

Together, we sing:

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

*This land is your land,
this land is my land
From California to the New York Island
From the Redwood Forest
to the Gulf Stream Water
This land was made for you and me.*



GEORGE WASHINGTON



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

We have it in our power to begin the world again.

THOMAS PAINE
1737-1809
REVOLUTIONARY,
FOUNDING FATHER

Great Britain: taxed the colonies without representation in parliament; forced colonists to house British soldiers; ruled with a brutal king from afar; put British interests before diverse American ones; worked on a system of inherited privilege.

One country, one constitution, one destiny

HON. DANIEL WEBSTER
1782-1852
US SENATOR

Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.

JOHN ADAMS
1735-1826
PRESIDENT
NEGOTIATED END OF
REVOLUTIONARY WAR

NOTE: The preamble which states the Constitution's purpose is followed by seven Articles. The Articles (most with sections) describe a function or characteristic of government, set limits on government, and define the rights of all citizens. See "Celebrate Your Way" for a summary of the articles and questions to relate the Constitution and Bill of Rights to your life and experience.

Reader: Presidents' Day celebrates the birthday of two of our greatest presidents, **George Washington** and **Abraham Lincoln**. Electing a president as our country's leader is natural for us. But in the late 1700s when The United States of America was created, having a president was a new idea.

Reader: America had just fought and won the American Revolutionary War against Great Britain, a very powerful nation. The men, women and children who joined the fight for independence believed that King George and the British Parliament had been unfair in their dealings with the American colonies.

Readers: Our complaints against the British were listed in **The Declaration of Independence**. We also had new ideas about the way a people should be governed. We claimed a natural right to rule ourselves. No government should be allowed to tell its people what to think or say. We would no longer accept a king as our leader.

Reader: Once we were free from British rule we had to govern ourselves.

Reader: For a while, our thirteen colonies lived with Articles of Confederation. But our new government structure soon began to fail. A Federal Convention was called to fix the problems.

Reader: After four months of heated debate, our founders agreed on a new structure defined by a set of articles called the **Constitution** for the United State of America. It reflected lessons they had learned from studying governments of other nations and from the injustices of British rule. At 4,440 words, it is the shortest and oldest national constitution in the world.

Reader: It distributed power across three branches of government: the legislative, executive, and judicial. Through checks and balances, it was designed to ensure open national debate and to keep any one branch from having too much power.

Reader: It guaranteed that we, the people, would live in a society ruled by laws created by our elected representatives.

Preamble to the Constitution

ALL: **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.**

Reader: After 9 months of debate that involved the whole country, nine colonies ratified the Constitution and it became “the law of the land.”

Reader: From the start, our founders understood that our new system was not perfect. “Thus I consent Sir, to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure that it is not the best. The opinions I have had of its errors, I sacrifice to the public good.” (Ben Franklin, at age 81 the oldest delegate at the Constitutional Convention)

Reader: George Washington, the retired commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary Army was the unanimous choice for president under the new Constitution. Some suggested he should be called “His High Mightiness.” Congress decided that our new leader should be addressed simply as “Mr. President.”

Reader: At the request of Congress, President Washington declared a national day of “public Thanksgiving and prayer” because God had favored us “with an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for [our] safety and happiness...” (George Washington, October 3, 1789 1st day of national Thanksgiving)

Reader: The delegates who voted for the Constitution knew that it did not protect individual rights so they used Article 5 to create ten amendments called the “**Bill of Rights**.”

Reader: The primary author was **James Madison**, often called “The Father of the Constitution.” He identified ten important areas of individual rights. He and others thought these were the rights that government might try to take away from us. That’s why they needed to be protected.

Reader: Although the Constitution was limited at first to only white male property owners, many believe that the delegates were thinking of a time when “the people” would truly mean all the people.

Reader: The Constitution and Bill of Rights are so special that they are on display in helium filled cases at the **National Archives** in Washington DC. Over 1,000,000 visitors see them each year.

Together we sing:
MY COUNTRY 'TIS OF THEE/AMERICA
(FIRST OF FOUR STANZAS)
*My country 'Tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty
Of thee I sing:
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the Pilgrims' pride,
From every mountainside
Let freedom ring!*



Reader: Many Americans believe that the first amendment is most important because it protects our freedom to disagree with our government, believe what we want and say what we believe. It guarantees freedom of religion, of conscience, of speech, and of the press. It protects our right to assemble peacefully and petition the government.

Reader: “The very aim and end of our institutions is just this: that we may think what we like and say what we think.” (Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes)

Reader: Abraham Lincoln was president during the civil war. He worried that the war might tear our country apart and destroy our Constitution. When he signed the **Emancipation Proclamation** to free all slaves in the states that seceded from the union he wrote, “I never, in my life, felt more certain that I was doing right, than I do in signing this paper.”

Reader: He declared that it “was an act of justice...warranted by the Constitution.”

Reader: We have had **44 presidents** since George Washington was first sworn in on April 30, 1789.

With congress, every time they make a joke it's a law. And every time they make a law, it's a joke.

WILL ROGERS
1879–1935
COWBOY PHILOSOPHER,
COLUMNIST, PERFORMER



The American Republic will endure until the day Congress discovers that it can bribe the public with the public's money.

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE
1805–1869
FRENCH HISTORIAN, OBSERVER
OF AMERICA

Reverend Samuel Francis Smith wrote “America,” a patriotic song, at the request of his friend, Lowell Mason, to a melody Smith chose from Muzio Clementi’s Symphony No 3. First performed on July 4th, 1831 in Boston, it was published in 1832. Additional stanzas have been written by abolitionists and others. **What would your stanza say?**

MY STANZA OF “MY COUNTRY TIS OF THEE”

*It was we, the people;
not we, the white male citizen;
nor yet we, the male citizens;
but we, the whole people,
who formed the Union....
Men, their rights and nothing more,
women, their rights and nothing less.*

SUSAN B. ANTHONY
1820–1906
WOMEN’S RIGHTS LEADER

It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either of them.

MARK TWAIN
1835–1910
AUTHOR, HUMORIST

If the first amendment means anything, it means that a state has no business telling a man, sitting alone in his house, what books he may read.

SUPREME COURT JUSTICE
THURGOOD MARSHALL
1908–1993

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
1929–1968
CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER

...I was not included in "We the People"...But through the process of amendment and interpretation and court decision I have finally been included in "We the People."

HON. BARBARA C. JORDAN
1936–1996
AFRICAN-AMERICAN
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Reader: We have survived a civil war, two world wars and several others. We have come through the Great Depression and many periods of civic unrest and financial difficulty.

Reader: Presidents have come and gone. Some have been disappointing, others have been truly great. And every presidential transition has been smooth despite **4 assassinations**.

Reader: Thousands of laws have been created since 1789. The Supreme Court has made hundreds of decisions.

Reader: Seventeen more constitutional amendments have been added since 1791. Some of the ways we govern our country changed. Slavery was outlawed. Alcohol was prohibited, then allowed. African Americans and women got the vote they deserved.

Reader: Eighteen year olds who are old enough to serve in the military are also now able to vote. America stays vibrant as long as everyone obeys the law—or chooses to properly challenge it. This is our strength.

Reader: The **Constitution** has given us the stability and flexibility its creators wanted.

Reader: The true power in our government rests with three simple words: "we the people..." When "we the people" take responsibility for our freedom, the United States has the best chance of being the country our founders imagined.

Reader: Hear what these presidents said about freedom and our Constitution.

Reader: The Bill of Rights, contained in the first ten amendments to the Constitution is every American's guarantee of Freedom. (**Harry S. Truman**, 33rd President)

Reader: Those who deny freedoms to others do not deserve it for themselves. (**Abraham Lincoln**, 16th President)

Reader: Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are... the voters of this country. (**Franklin Delano Roosevelt**, 32nd President)

Reader: I wish the Constitution which is offered had been made more perfect, but I sincerely believe it is the best that could be obtained at this time; and... a constitutional door is opened for amendment hereafter. (George Washington, 1st President)

Reader: Liberty without learning is always in peril and learning without liberty is always in vain. (**John F. Kennedy**, 35th President)

Reader: No man is above the law and no man is below it; nor do we ask any man's permission when we require him to obey it. Obedience to the law is demanded as a right; not asked as a favor. (**Theodore Roosevelt**, 26th President)





Reader: Public opinion sets bounds to every government, and is the real sovereign in every free one. (**James Madison**, 4th President)

Reader: Books and ideas are the most effective weapon against intolerance and ignorance. (**Lyndon B. Johnson**, 36th President)

Reader: The People...are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty. (**Thomas Jefferson**, 3rd President)

Leader: We were given a great gift over 200 years ago. On this Presidents' Day we remember that our government belongs to us. We must never take it for granted.

ALL: Why is the Constitution of the United States so exceptional? Well, the difference is so small that it almost escapes you, but it tells you the whole story in just three words: We the people. Here in America, we the people are in charge. (**Ronald Reagan**, 40th President)

Freedom is an indivisible word. If we want to enjoy it, and fight for it, we must be prepared to extend it to everyone, whether they are rich or poor, whether they agree with us or not, no matter what their race or the color of their skin.

WENDELL WILKIE
1812-1944
ATTORNEY,
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not to their own facts

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN
1927-2013
US SENATOR, CABINET MEMBER, SOCIOLOGIST

Write your own quote about freedom or the Constitution and share it on our [Facebook](#) page.



Either the United States will destroy ignorance or ignorance will destroy the United States.

W.E.B. DUBOIS
1868-1963
AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORIAN, ACTIVIST, AUTHOR

Congress is functioning the way the Founding Fathers intended—not very well.

REP. BARBER B. CONABLE, JR. 1922-2003
US CONGRESSMAN,
PRESIDENT OF WORLD BANK

Please visit "Celebrate Your Way" and enjoy using our resources to raise politically engaged citizens.

See "Create a Keepsake" to make a cause button.

Learn more about our presidents and the Constitution at "Explore More."

Enjoy your holiday and please visit us again at www.freedomfeast.us/memorial-day



MEMORIAL DAY



INDEPENDENCE DAY



LABOR DAY



THANKSGIVING



MLK DAY

