

Happy Constitution Day!

Every September, Mid-America Christian University, along with our fellow citizens across the United States, celebrates **Constitution Day**. The US Constitution is the framework upon which our laws are built, and our rights as citizens are secured.

The Faculty and Staff of MACU encourage you to take time today to celebrate this important date in US history by considering the significance of our Constitution, and the liberty it guarantees. Follow the link below to watch a brief summary of how the Constitution came to be.

<http://www.history.com/topics/constitution>

Additionally, we have provided you with some interesting background on the Constitution, and some fascinating facts you may not have known!

### Fascinating Facts about the U.S. Constitution

The U.S. Constitution has 4,400 words. It is the oldest and shortest written Constitution of any major government in the world.

Thomas Jefferson did not sign the Constitution. He was in France during the Convention, where he served as the U.S. minister. John Adams was serving as the U.S. minister to Great Britain during the Constitutional Convention and did not attend either.

The Constitution was “penned” by Jacob Shallus, A Pennsylvania General Assembly clerk, for \$30 (\$789 today).

Constitution Day is celebrated in September, the anniversary of the day the framers signed the document.

Of the forty-two delegates who attended most of the meetings, thirty-nine actually signed the Constitution. Edmund Randolph and George Mason of Virginia and Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts refused to sign due in part due to the lack of a bill of rights.

Patrick Henry was elected as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, but declined, because he “smelt a rat.”

The oldest person to sign the Constitution was Benjamin Franklin (81). The youngest was Jonathan Dayton of New Jersey (26).

When the Constitution was signed, the United States’ population was 4 million. It is now more than 321 million. Philadelphia was the nation’s largest city, with 40,000 inhabitants

The first time the formal term “The United States of America” was used was in the Declaration of Independence.

There was initially a question as to how to address the President. The Senate proposed that he be addressed as “His Highness the President of the United States of America and Protector of their Liberties.” Both the House of Representatives and the Senate compromised on the use of “President of the United States.”

George Washington and James Madison were the only presidents who signed the Constitution.

The word “democracy” does not appear once in the Constitution.

John Adams referred to the Constitution as “the greatest single effort of national deliberation that the world has ever seen” and George Washington wrote to the Marquis de Lafayette that “It (the Constitution) appears to me, then, little short of a miracle.”

## **The US Constitution - The Basics**

Basically, the Constitution is the highest law in the United States. All other laws come from the Constitution in some way. The Constitution also provides the framework for the government of the United States. It creates things like the Presidency, the Congress, and the Supreme Court. Each state has its own constitution that is the highest law for the state — but even then, the United States Constitution is higher.

Over time, some things have been added to the Constitution. Called "amendments," these additions list some of the rights of the people. By listing these rights, they are made special, and it is illegal for the government to violate those rights. As of 2006, there are 27 amendments to the Constitution. Not all of them involve rights, but many do. The first ten amendments, in particular, have the special name of the Bill of Rights.

## **The US Constitution - History**

To start, the Constitution is a document written by a group of men in 1787. Yes, it is over 200 years old. We actually have old copies of the document they created. The master copies are stored at the National Archives in Washington D.C. In 2003, the Rotunda, where the Constitution is displayed, was rebuilt, and anyone can go and see the actual Constitution. We also have pictures of the Constitution on this site.

From May to September 1787, the men, known as the Framers, met in Philadelphia and discussed what should be in the Constitution. The United States was a brand new country at the time, and had a government that many felt was not as good as it could be. They were meeting to come up with a new way of running the country. Some of the people at this

meeting, called the Convention, are famous to us today, including James Madison, Ben Franklin, and George Washington.

The men came from all over the country, which at the time was made up of only 13 states. The different states had different ideas of what the new government should do, and they had many debates and discussions to come up with a plan that everyone could agree with. It is said that the Constitution was born in compromise, because only by compromising could all the disagreements be resolved. Ben Franklin said he was not sure if the plan was perfect, but that it was probably as perfect as it could be.

After the Convention ended, the Constitution had to be approved by the 13 states. The Constitution actually said that only nine states had to agree to the Constitution, but everyone wanted all of the states to agree. Two states, North Carolina and Rhode Island, took a long time to decide to agree to the Constitution, but in the end, they did. When the Constitution was accepted by these first nine states, we say that it was "ratified." New Hampshire was the ninth state to ratify.