

SEATAC MUNICIPAL COURT NEWSLETTER SPECIAL EDITION

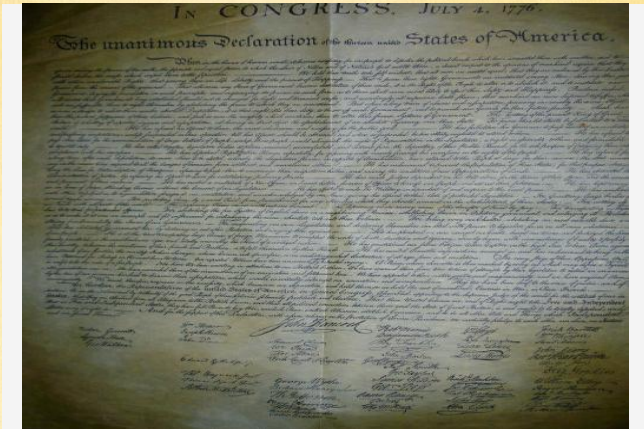
CONSTITUTION DAY

- “Let me be a free man, free to travel, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to think and talk and act for myself and I will obey every law, or submit to the penalty.” – *Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce*
- “In view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful.”- *John Marshall Harlan*

September 17 is designated Constitution Day (also known as Citizenship Day). It was on that day in 1787 that the US Constitution was signed. The US Constitution sets forth the basic rights of citizens and establishes the responsibility of the government to protect those rights. It also limits how those in government may use their powers regarding citizens' rights and responsibilities. Moreover, it details the distribution of resources and the control of conflict. The purpose of Constitution Day and Citizenship Day is to commemorate the creation and signing of the supreme law of the land and to honor and celebrate the privileges and responsibilities of US citizenship for both native-born and naturalized citizens.



To view the United States Constitution, go to http://www.senate.gov/civics/constitution_item/constitution.htm . To view the Washington State Constitution, go to <http://www.leg.wa.gov/lawsandagen/rules/pages/constitution.aspx>.



A segment from the Declaration of Independence

CONSTITUTION DAY

A constitution is a body of basic laws or legal rules for governing a state or country. The purpose of a bill of rights is to formally list the things that the government either must do for its citizens or may not do to its citizens. Our constitution guarantees each citizen liberty, security, and equality.

Liberty of its citizens is protected through declarations of civil rights and political rights such as freedom of speech, right to a fair trial, and the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Security refers to our economic rights and our social rights such as the right to be supported after retirement. Equality is practiced through the guarantee of cultural and group rights. Cultural rights concern education, information, recreation, artistic and cultural experiences. An example of a cultural right would be the right to receive an education. Group rights protect a certain group of people within the population, such as Native Americans or women.

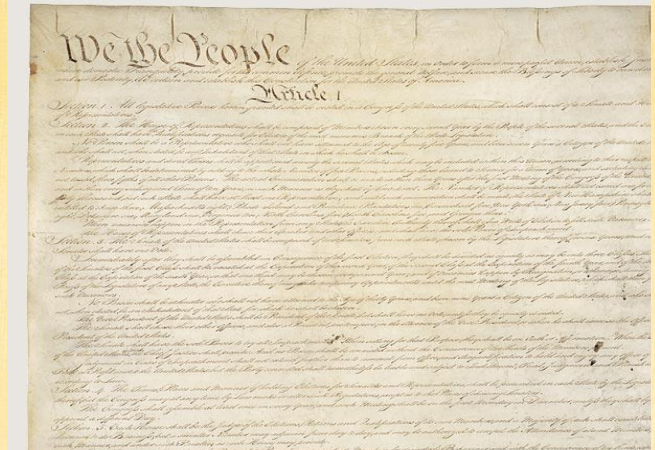
We exercise each of these rights freely every day. I encourage you to take this opportunity on September 17 to reflect on what these rights have meant to you and your family.



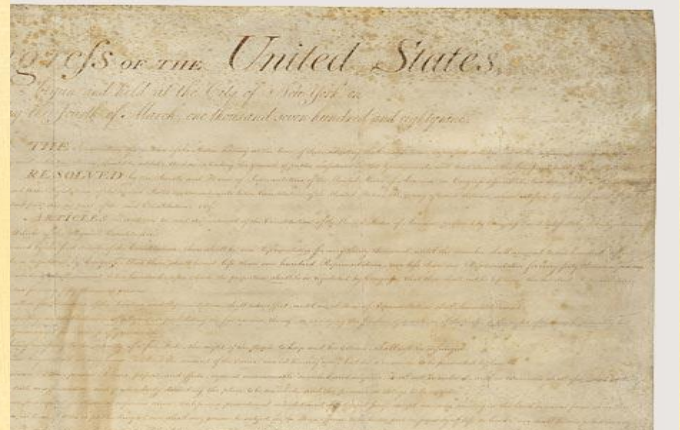
Background on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights

The Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson, expresses the convictions of the American people at the time it was drafted. It summarizes the “self-evident truths” setting forth a list of grievances against the King of England, justifying the desire of the American colonies to break all ties with England and to become an independent nation. During the summer of 1787, delegates from the states met in Philadelphia to draft, debate, and re-draft the articles of the new Constitution. Much of the debate focused on the amount of power to grant the central government. Other topics of debate concentrated on the number of Congressional representatives allowed to each state, and how those representatives should be chosen (elected directly by the people or by the state legislators).

Wanting to prevent a repeat of violations of civil rights suffered under the British rule, some opponents of the Constitution insisted on a document declaring the immunities of individual citizens. Their demands are reflected in the first ten amendments of the Constitution (known as the Bill of Rights) which grant each of us the individual rights we enjoy today. The Constitution stands as a model for countries worldwide and exemplifies cooperative statesmanship and the art of compromise.



A segment of the United States Constitution



A segment of the United States Bill of Rights



Written in 1787, ratified in 1788, and in operation since 1789, the Constitution survives because it was written in a such a way that it is steadfast in its principals, yet malleable enough to evolve to meet the needs of an ever changing society. Its applicability to our nation today is a testament to the thoughtful contemplation and debates of the framers.

The President of the United States will make a proclamation declaring September 17 as Constitution Day, and the week of September 17 through September 23 as Constitution Week.

I encourage you to participate in this celebration by reflecting on the enduring strength of our Constitution and reaffirm your commitment to the rights and obligations of citizenship in this great nation.

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