

## President General Proclamation Constitution Day & Citizenship Day

On September 17 “We the People” will observe Constitution Day and Citizenship Day to commemorate the signing of the United States Constitution in Philadelphia. This 232-year-old document is the world’s longest surviving written charter of government and confirms that our nation exists to serve its citizens. Written in 1787 by James Madison, who is considered the Father of the Constitution, it was also influenced by Thomas Jefferson and John Adams who in 1787 were both serving diplomatic missions in Europe and did not sign the document.

Presided over by George Washington, convention delegates were originally convened to revise the Articles of Confederation. Instead Congress ordered state legislatures to call for ratification conventions in each state on the proposed new form of government. Congress believed that this process engaged representatives of the people elected to approve or disapprove the charter and created a more accurate picture of the will of the electorate. It would take 10 months for the required nine states to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

Since 1940 when Congress designated the third Sunday in May “I Am an American Day” under President Harry Truman, our nation has sought to honor the American people and its representative form of government. In 1952 a joint resolution was passed by Congress that designated September 17 as Citizenship Day. Then in 1956 another joint resolution was passed that established September 17 through 23 as Constitution Week. Fifty-three years later in 2005 Constitution Day became an official national holiday alongside Citizenship Day with the passage of the “Constitution Amendment” in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of Fiscal Year 2005.

Today all governmental agencies and public schools receiving federal funds must provide its employees and students with educational programs that foster an understanding of the United States Constitution. As we celebrate the signing of the United States Constitution let us remember that just as it was in 1787 its endurance rests on succeeding generations to “secure the blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”