

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."

Of the spelling errors in the Constitution, "Pensylvania" above the signers' names is probably the most glaring.

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 (\$726 today).

Since 1952, the Constitution has been on display in the National Archives Building in Washington, DC. Currently, all four pages are displayed behind protective glass framed with titanium. To preserve the parchment's quality, the cases contain argon gas and are kept at 67 degrees Fahrenheit with a relative humidity of 40 percent.

Constitution Day is celebrated on September 17, the anniversary of the day the framers signed the document.

The Constitution does not set forth requirements for the right to vote. As a result, at the outset of the Union, only male property-owners could vote. African Americans were not considered citizens, and women were excluded from the electoral process. Native Americans were not given the right to vote until 1924.

James Madison, "the father of the Constitution," was the first to arrive in Philadelphia for the Constitutional Convention. He arrived in February, three months before the convention began, bearing the blueprint for the new Constitution.

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.

When it came time for the states to ratify the Constitution, the lack of any bill of rights was the primary sticking point.

The Great Compromise saved the Constitutional Convention, and, probably, the Union. Authored by Connecticut delegate Roger Sherman, it called for proportional representation in the House, and one representative per state in the Senate (this was later changed to two.) The compromise passed 5-to-4, with one state, Massachusetts, “divided.”

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

Because of his poor health, Benjamin Franklin needed help to sign the Constitution. As he did so, tears streamed down his face.

Gouverneur Morris was largely responsible for the “wording” of the Constitution, although there was a Committee of Style formed in September 1787.

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 309 million. Philadelphia was the nation’s largest city, with 40,000 inhabitants.

A proclamation by President George Washington and a congressional resolution established the first national Thanksgiving Day on November 26, 1789. The reason for the holiday was to give “thanks” for the new Constitution.

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

b

It took one hundred days to actually “frame” the Constitution.

Information taken from ConstitutionFacts.com

<http://www.constitutionfacts.com/?section=constitution&page=fascinatingFacts.cfm>