

Saluting the Constitution



Library of Congress



It's not just the President who is sworn to defend the Constitution. Our soldiers, sailors and marines, both officers and enlisted personnel, are sworn to defend the document that defines our nation, and our selves. "I, , do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God."

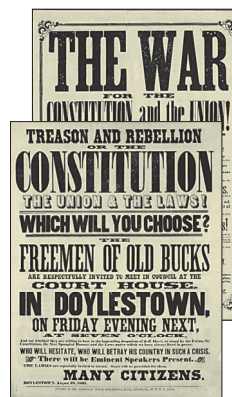
The posters on the right are from the Civil War, when over 400,000 Americans died in a struggle to define what the Constitution meant and how we were to be defined by it.

But supporting and defending the Constitution is not just for government officials or the military. We all have the duty to support and defend the living document that defines us. We do it by voting, by speaking up at public meetings, by marching in the streets, by writing letters to the editor and by studying, and making use of, our Constitution.

We the People are the United States – the Constitution is what defines us

When the President of the United States is sworn into office, whether it's on Inauguration Day, as when Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes gave Franklin Roosevelt the oath of office in 1941, or by tragedy, as when Lyndon Johnson took the oath of office aboard Air Force One in 1963, the President does not swear to protect the American flag, or the Statue of Liberty or even the American people.

The oath is "I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will try to the best of my ability, to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.."



NYS Historical Association

activity

In newspapers, identify citizens who are making use of the Constitution by speaking out about issues that concern them or working on their own or with others to address problems in their community. Do you find people attending and speaking out at meetings, signing and submitting petitions, marching or holding vigils, voting and/or writing letters to the letter or interacting through blogs? Do you find young people showing concern for their community?



Women of Protest: Photographs from the Records of the National Woman's Party, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Our Constitution: Making it work

The Constitution works best when you vote, but it protects everyone's rights, not just the rights of voters, and not just the rights of citizens. The photograph at the left was taken in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 1916. Which of the five freedoms of the First Amendment are these suffragists making use of?

- Freedom of Religion
- Freedom of Speech
- Freedom of the Press
- Freedom to Peaceably Assemble
- Freedom to Petition the Government for a Redress of Grievances

What Article of the Constitution are they also making use of?

Read the fine print -- and put it to use!

In 1916, women were not permitted to vote in national elections. But individual states could allow them to vote in state elections, and individual communities could allow women to vote in school board and other local elections. In Montana, where women had the right to vote in state elections, Jeannette Rankin was elected to the U.S. Congress, the first woman in the House of Representatives. How? Careful reading! The Constitution said only men could vote in national elections, but it didn't say that only men could serve in Congress. It's important to know your rights, and how the law works! (Including Article V -- The right to change the Constitution to make our nation more fair and just!)



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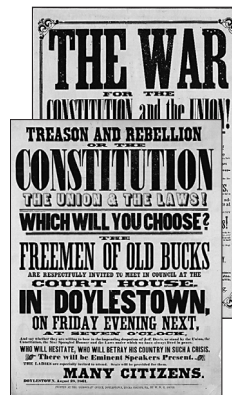
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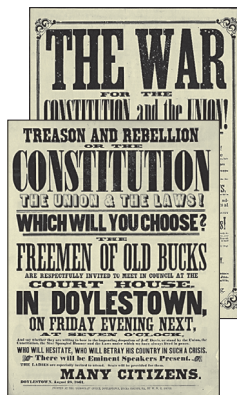
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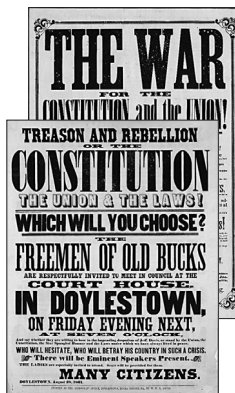
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Who was who at the Constitutional Convention?

The Constitutional Convention met from May 25 to September 17, 1787 to revise the Articles of Confederation, a plan for governing the new nation that did not work well enough. Many delegates to the convention came with the intention of creating a new constitution, and that is what happened. The result was the U.S. Constitution.

Match the portrait with the description

1.
Benjamin
Franklin



2.
Alexander
Hamilton



3.
Andrew
Jackson



4.
Thomas
Jefferson



5.
James
Madison



6.
Gouverneur
Morris



7.
George
Washington



A. I was appointed chairman of the convention.

B. I'm a New Yorker who helped write the Constitution and was also one of the writers of The Federalist Papers, before I became Secretary of the Treasury.

C. I was known as "The Father of the Constitution" and was President during the War of 1812.

D. I not only helped "write" the Constitution, but I was the one who wrote it -- by hand, of course!

E. I wrote much of the Declaration of Independence, but I was Ambassador to France during the Convention and missed it.

F. I also spent time representing America in France, but I was back in my hometown of Philadelphia to help write the Constitution!

G. Don't look at me -- I served in the Revolutionary War, saw combat and was a POW, but, hey, I was still only 20 years old in 1787!

activity

Create a game of "Who is who in the current U.S. Congress?" using photos and important facts from your newspapers. What did you know about the make-up of the U.S. Congress before searching in newspapers? What did you learn? Why should citizens follow news about the actions of U.S. Congress and, in particular, their state's representatives?

Answers 1. (F); 2. (B); 3. (G); 4. (E); 5. (C); 6. (D); 7. (A)

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Who represented N.C. at the Constitutional Convention?

The five delegates who represented North Carolina in the Constitutional Convention in 1787 all had served in the War for Independence and had distinguished political careers in the state or elsewhere. They were well educated, well traveled and wealthy, though each was voted in and out of different public offices and some faced physical threats.

The debates at the convention centered on the questions: How much power should be vested in the federal government and how much should remain with the states? How can individual rights be protected? Of the five, Blount and Martin spoke the least at the Constitutional Convention. Davie and Spaight spoke more while Williamson was the most vocal. Only three of the five delegates actually signed the Constitution.



William Blount (1749-1800)

Because he thought the Constitution should provide more protection for individual liberties, William Blount signed the Constitution reluctantly and only then, to make it "the unanimous act of the States in Convention." Blount later supported state ratification of the Constitution.

Born in Bertie County, Blount was paymaster for the North Carolina forces in the war and served in the N.C. legislature. Always interested in westward expansion, he then was made governor of the newly formed Southwest Territory. He led the formation of the state of Tennessee and then became one of its first U.S. senators, fulfilling a lifelong ambition. He was later expelled by the Senate for devising a plan to protect access to the Mississippi River by helping the British conquer the Spanish territory of West Florida and Louisiana. His expulsion from the U.S. Senate did not end his political career. Tennesseans later elected him to the State Senate where he rose to the speakership.



Richard Dobbs Spaight Sr. (1758-1802)

Richard Spaight was only 29 when he signed the Constitution. He was born in New Bern, and Tryon's Palace sits on part of his family's land. In colonial days, he served in the House of Commons and, during the Revolutionary War, he was an aide to the state militia commander in the war.

Spaight became the first native son to serve as governor and his son also served as governor. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives where he supported the protection of state and individual rights and the party of Thomas Jefferson. When he returned to North Carolina, he was elected to the State Senate.

Spaight was well on his way to a productive and influential career, but he died at the age of 44 in a duel with a political rival. Until his death, he was a trustee of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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To learn more about today's leaders, in your newspaper, locate photos and stories about North Carolina's governor and the members of the U.S. Congress who represent the state.



Hugh Williamson (1735-1819)

The most influential North Carolina delegate was Hugh Williamson, a minister, physician, scientist and philosopher from Pennsylvania. Williamson traveled and was born and educated abroad and settled in Edenton where he practiced medicine and traded with the French West Indies.

Williamson spent much time in London where he became fast friends with Benjamin Franklin and offered early warnings that the colonies would rebel if British policies did not change. He had witnessed the Boston Tea Party while on a ship in Boston Harbor. On his return home, after hearing about the Declaration of Independence, his ship was seized, but Williamson escaped to shore in a small boat.

In the Constitutional Convention, Williamson displayed acute debating skills, served on five committees and played a key role in the proceedings that established how states would be represented in the U.S. Congress.

Earlier, Williamson served as surgeon-general for the N.C. troops, crossed enemy lines to tend to the wounded, and staved off sickness in the troops by monitoring food, shelter and sanitary conditions.

Williamson served in the state legislature and the first U.S. House of Representatives, and was an original trustee of the University of North Carolina. He spent the end of his life in New York City where he died.

The other two delegates to the Constitution Convention whose signatures are not on the document are Alexander Martin and William Richardson Davie.



Alexander Martin (1740-1807)

Alexander Martin was born in New Jersey but moved to Guilford County as a young man. Not a strong Federalist, he did not actively participate in the Convention and resigned before the Constitution was signed.

As a judge, in 1770, he was at the session of superior court at Hillsboro (now Hillsborough) when 150 Regulators presented a petition demanding unprejudiced juries and a public accounting of sheriff's taxes. In the violence that erupted, Martin was beaten. He later negotiated an agreement with the Regulators.

Martin joined Washington's army in 1777 and rose to the rank of colonel but was later arrested for cowardice, court-martialed and acquitted.

He served in the N.C. House, and three times he was elected



William Richardson Davie (1756-1820)

Davie supported a strong central government and swung the N.C. delegation's vote for the compromise that established how states would be represented in the U.S. Congress. He left the convention before it adjourned but fought hard for ratification of the Constitution at the North Carolina conventions.

Davie was born in England but later settled in North Carolina. During the Revolutionary War, he helped raise a troop of cavalry near Salisbury, was wounded leading a charge near Charleston but recovered to raise another troop that operated mainly in western North Carolina, and in 1781, rose to the rank of commissary general under Nathanael Greene.

After the war, he practiced law and was elected to represent Halifax in the state legislature where he sponsored the bill that chartered the state's first university. Known as the Father of the University of North Carolina, Davie helped to choose instructors, design the curriculum and laid the cornerstone of the first building. He became governor of North Carolina in 1798 but resigned when President John Adams chose him to help negotiate an end to an undeclared naval war with France. He withdrew from politics after returning from Europe and moved to South Carolina where he died in 1820.

quiz

1. Which one was killed in a duel?
2. Which one helped keep troops healthy during the War for Independence?
3. Which ones served as governor of North Carolina?
4. Which one was expelled by the U.S. Senate?
5. Which one was beaten by Regulators?
6. How many were Tar Heel natives?
7. Which one is known as the "Father" of the University of N.C.?

ANSWERS:
1. Spaight
2. Williamson
3. Davie, Spaight, Martin
4. Blount
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William Blount (1749-1800)

- Born in Bertie County
- Signed the Constitution reluctantly, concerned about a strong central government, but later supported state ratification
- Led the formation of the state of Tennessee from western parts of North Carolina after serving as the first governor and superintendent of Indian affairs for the territory
- Elected to the U.S. Senate from Tennessee but expelled for his involvement in a plan to help Britain gain control of Spanish territory in West Florida and Louisiana; feared that Spain would cede territory to France and France would close off access to Mississippi River.
- Later elected to State Senate in Tennessee and rose to the speakership
- Died March 21, 1800 in Tennessee



Richard Dobbs Spaight (1758-1802)

- Born in New Bern
- Signed the Constitution when he was only 29
- Became the first native son to serve as governor
- Served in the U.S. House of Representatives
- Later elected to the State Senate
- Killed in a duel by a political rival, John Stanly, in September 1802



Hugh Williamson (1735-1819)

- Born and educated abroad but settled in Edenton
- Signed the Constitution and played an active role at the Constitutional Convention, serving on five committees, offering 23 motions and giving 70 speeches
- Educated as a minister and doctor; worked as a teacher, scholar, doctor, scientist, businessman and historian
- Advocated inoculation and sanitation as preventive medicine
- Became a close friend and collaborator with Benjamin Franklin
- Witnessed the Boston Tea Party while on board the first ship to leave the harbor afterwards; provided the British with eyewitness reports and warned them of the coming Revolution
- Represented North Carolina in the first and second sessions of U.S. Congress
- Died in New York City



Alexander Martin (1740-1807)

- Born in New Jersey but moved early in life to Salisbury and then Guilford County
- Resigned as delegate before the Constitution was signed because he did not support the push for a stronger central government
- Served as a judge and, in 1770, was assaulted by Regulators protesting corruption in local government; later agreed to their demands
- Served in the N.C. House and as governor for several terms
- Elected to one term in the U.S. Senate
- Died at his plantation in Rockingham County



William R. Davie (1756-1820)

- Born in England but later settled in Halifax
- Supported a stronger central government and swung the North Carolina delegation's vote in favor of the compromise that determined each state's representation in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives
- Left the convention before the signing to attend to court in North Carolina but fought hard for its ratification at both North Carolina conventions
- Represented Halifax in the state legislature
- Sponsored the bill to charter the state's first university, the University of North Carolina
- Served as governor of the state; resigned when he was chosen by President John Adams to help negotiate a treaty to end an undeclared war with France
- Withdrew from politics after returning from Europe; moved to South Carolina where he died

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Sources:

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Powell, William S. Dictionary of N.C. Biography. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

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The five delegates who represented North Carolina in the Constitutional Convention in 1787 all had served in the War for Independence and had distinguished political careers in the state or elsewhere.



William Blount (1749-1800)

- Born in Bertie County
- Signed the Constitution reluctantly, concerned about a strong central government, but later supported state ratification
- Led the formation of the state of Tennessee from western parts of North Carolina after serving as the first governor and superintendent of Indian affairs for the territory
- Elected to the U.S. Senate from Tennessee but expelled for his involvement in a plan to help Britain gain control of Spanish territory in West Florida and Louisiana; feared that Spain would cede territory to France and France would close off access to Mississippi River.
- Later elected to State Senate in Tennessee and rose to the speakership
- Died March 21, 1800 in Tennessee



Richard Dobbs Spaight (1758-1802)

- Born in New Bern
- Signed the Constitution when he was only 29
- Became the first native son to serve as governor
- Served in the U.S. House of Representatives
- Later elected to the State Senate
- Killed in a duel by a political rival, John Stanly, in September 1802



Hugh Williamson (1735-1819)

- Born and educated abroad but settled in Edenton
- Signed the Constitution and played an active role at the Constitutional Convention, serving on five committees, offering 23 motions and giving 70 speeches
- Educated as a minister and doctor; worked as a teacher, scholar, doctor, scientist, businessman and historian
- Advocated inoculation and sanitation as preventive medicine
- Became a close friend and collaborator with Benjamin Franklin
- Witnessed the Boston Tea Party while on board the first ship to leave the harbor afterwards; provided the British with eyewitness reports and warned them of the coming Revolution
 - Represented North Carolina in the first and second sessions of U.S. Congress
- Died in New York City



Alexander Martin (1740-1807)

- Born in New Jersey but moved early in life to Salisbury and then Guilford County
- Resigned as delegate before the Constitution was signed because he did not support the push for a stronger central government
- Served as a judge and, in 1770, was assaulted by Regulators protesting corruption in local government; later agreed to their demands
- Served in the N.C. House and as governor for several terms
- Elected to one term in the U.S. Senate
- Died at his plantation in Rockingham County



William R. Davie (1756-1820)

- Born in England but later settled in Halifax
- Supported a stronger central government and swung the North Carolina delegation's vote in favor of the compromise that determined each state's representation in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives
- Left the convention before the signing to attend to court in North Carolina but fought hard for its ratification at both North Carolina conventions
- Represented Halifax in the state legislature
- Sponsored the bill to charter the state's first university, the University of North Carolina
- Served as governor of the state; resigned when he was chosen by President John Adams to help negotiate a treaty to end an undeclared war with France
- Withdrew from politics after returning from Europe; moved to South Carolina where he died

activity

To learn more about today's leaders, in your newspaper, locate photos and stories about North Carolina's governor and the members of the U.S. Congress who represent the state.

Sources:

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Saluting the Constitution

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Provided by the N.C. Press Foundation.

N.C. ratified the Constitution but proposed amendments

wanted to replace the articles with a new constitution, and that is what happened. The U.S. Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787. Nine states needed to ratify to establish the Constitution in those states.

Q: How many delegates attended the Constitutional Convention and how many actually signed the Constitution?

A: Fifty five delegates attended the Constitutional Convention representing 12 states. Rhode Island did not send any delegates. Thirty nine actually signed the Constitution. Not all of the delegates who were appointed actually attended the convention.

Q: How many delegates represented North Carolina and how many signed the Constitution?

A: Five delegates from North Carolina attended the Constitutional Convention, and three signed the document (William Blount, Richard Spaight and Hugh Williamson). William R. Davie and Alexander Martin did not sign. Davie left the convention to attend court in North Carolina before the signing but fought hard for its ratification in North Carolina.

Q: Where did North Carolina delegates go to sign the Constitution and when was it signed?

A: To Philadelphia on September 17, 1787. The Constitution was signed in Independence Hall, the same place where the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776 and the Articles of Confederation uniting the 13 colonies was ratified in 1781. The brick building has a steeple that was intended to hold a 2,080 pound bell. The bell, later dubbed the "Liberty Bell," cracked, was recast and cracked again. A duplicate now hangs in the steeple and the Liberty Bell is in a special shelter on the ground.

Q: When and where did North Carolina ratify the Constitution?

A: When the first convention met in Hillsborough in August 1788, the vote was 184-84 against ratification. On Nov. 21, 1789, North Carolina became the twelfth of 13 states to ratify. The vote in favor of ratification was 194 to 77 and took place at the site of historic Market House in downtown Fayetteville. The original building burned.

In May of 1787, delegates from the states met to revise the Articles of Confederation, the first plan for governing the new nation. Many



Market House, Fayetteville, N.C.

Q: Did North Carolina's five delegates to the Constitutional Convention actively support ratification?

A: Spaight and Davie were delegates to the Hillsborough convention and supported ratification. Williamson, Davie and Blount attended the convention in Fayetteville and fought for ratification.

Q: Why did North Carolina delay ratification?

A: North Carolina proposed a Declaration of Rights be added to the U.S. Constitution, along with other changes. Other states had called for similar changes. On September 25, 1789, James Madison proposed twelve amendments; the last ten became known as the Bill of Rights and were ratified on Dec. 15, 1791. North Carolina's General Assembly approved the Bill of Rights on December 22, 1789. These amendments protect the right to freedom of speech, the press, religion, to assemble, to bear arms, to due process of law, to a speedy public trial with an impartial jury. They prevent unreasonable search and seizure, cruel and unusual punishment and self-incrimination, and reserve all powers not granted to the federal government to the states or their people.

activity

The U.S. Constitution grew out of discussions and debate that occurred over time. In the news, follow current discussions and debates about an issue that concerns you. Choose a position and defend it. Present your side in a letter or handbill or deliver a speech, just as the founding fathers might have in the late 1780's.

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