

YOUR Charters of FREEDOM

The Charters of Freedom are our country's founding documents. These three original documents; The Declaration of Independence, The United States Constitution, and The Bill of Rights are on display in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. They are open to the public and free to view.

The Declaration of Independence was primarily penned by Thomas Jefferson between June 11 and June 28, 1776. The document was finalized and approved on July 9, 1776. All 13 colonies signed the parchment document by August 2, 1776.

The first draft of The United States Constitution was approved on August 6th, 1787. Only after the ratification of the first ten amendments, known as our Bill of Rights, was the final draft of The Constitution ratified on September 17, 1787.

During the process of ratification of The Constitution, there was a demand for a bill of rights to defend individual liberties from a possible oppressive government. James Madison worked to get 17 amendments through the House. These were later reduced to 12 amendments by the Senate. Of these 12 amendments, 10 were approved on December 15, 1791 and added to The Constitution. These first 10 amendments are our Bill of Rights.