



# Freedom's Feast PRESIDENTS' DAY

On-line Ceremonies to get the most out of your AMERICAN holiday Celebrations.

## CELEBRATING OUR PRESIDENTS AND OUR FREEDOM

**Leader:** Presidents' Day celebrates the birthday of two of our greatest presidents, **George Washington** and **Abraham Lincoln**. Electing a president as our country's leader is natural for us. But in the late 1700s when The United States of America was created, having a president was a new idea. In fact, the whole way we governed was a new idea.



**Reader:** America had just won the American Revolutionary War against Britain. Our complaints against the British were listed in

**The Declaration of Independence.** We claimed a natural right to rule ourselves. No government should be allowed to tell its people what to think or say. We would no longer accept a king as our leader.

**Reader:** We soon found it was hard to run a country with these new ideas. A **Constitutional Convention** was called to figure out the best way to create a government that would work. Our founders agreed on a new structure. It was defined by a set of articles called the **Constitution** of the United State of America.

**Reader:** The Constitution distributed power across three branches of government: the legislative, executive, and judicial. Through checks and balances, it was designed to ensure open national debate and to keep any one branch from having too much power. It guaranteed that we, the people, would live in a society ruled by laws created by our elected representatives.

**Reader:** After 9 months of debate that involved the whole country, nine colonies ratified the Constitution and it became "the law of the land" on June 21, 1788. The delegates who voted for the Constitution knew that it did not protect individual rights so they used Article 5 to create ten amendments called the "Bill of Rights."

**Reader:** George Washington, the retired commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary Army was the unanimous choice for president under the new Constitution.

**Reader:** Abraham Lincoln was president during the civil war. He worried that the war might tear our country apart and destroy our Constitution. When he signed the **Emancipation Proclamation** to free all slaves in the states that left the union he said, "I never, in my life, felt more certain that I was doing right, than I do signing this paper."

**Reader:** We have had **43 presidents** since George Washington was first sworn in on April 30, 1789.

**Reader:** We have survived a civil war, two world wars and several others. We have come through the Great Depression and many periods of civic unrest and financial difficulty. Every presidential transition has been smooth despite **4 assassinations**.

**Reader:** Thousands of laws have been created since 1789. The Supreme Court has made hundreds of decisions. We have added seventeen more constitutional amendments since 1791. America stays vibrant as long as everyone obeys the law—or chooses to properly challenge it. This is our strength.

**Reader:** The true power in our government rests with three simple words: "we the people...." When "we the people" take responsibility for our freedom, the United States has the best chance of being the country our founders imagined.

**Leader:** We were given a great gift over 200 years ago. On this Presidents' Day we remember that our government belongs to us.

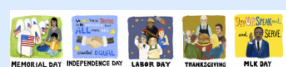
Please visit "Celebrate Your Way" for fun resources to help raise politically engaged citizens.

See "Celebrate Your Way" for a summary of the articles and questions to relate the Constitution and Bill of Rights to your life and experience.

See "Create a Keepsake" to make a cause button.

Learn more about our presidents and the Constitution at "Explore More."

Enjoy your holiday and please visit us again at [www.freedomfeast.us/memorial-day](http://www.freedomfeast.us/memorial-day)



What does this illustration say about our government and our role in it?