

Time Line of Constitutional Events

Here is a sampling of the events that led to America's independence and adoption of a new constitution. You will find the years and the significant events that happened during that time. The goal was to establish a framework for a more robust and stable federal government while preserving individual rights and freedoms.

Protests against British rule

1763-1765

England decided on a program of taxation and control of the colonies. The American colonists began organized protests against British rule. Patriotic groups such as the **Sons of Liberty** are formed. Laws such as the **Quartering Act**, **Stamp Act**, and **Sugar Act** angered the colonists, who were forced to pay unjust taxes and provide supplies to British troops.

Uprisings in Boston

1770-1773

Colonists reduced their boycott of British goods when they withdrew all of the **Townshend Acts**, except the tax on tea. The **Boston Massacre** occurs when an angry crowd of citizens surrounds a group of soldiers, causing them to open fire. With the American colonists still angry over British tax policies, the **Boston Tea Party** uprising occurred.

The Declaration of Independence

1776

On July 4th, the **Second Continental Congress** adopted the **Declaration of Independence** (written by **Thomas Jefferson** and committee). The Declaration was debated by 56 courageous men and signed at **Independence Hall**. A few days later, the **Liberty Bell** was rung in Philadelphia to call the people to the first public reading of the Declaration.

Beginning of the Revolution

1775

When the Americans learn the British plan to seize their guns and ammunition, **Paul Revere** is sent to alert the countryside and gather the **Minutemen**. An unidentified shot triggers the **Battle of Lexington**. This started the American Revolution and led to another famous battle, **Bunker Hill**. In May, the **Second Continental Congress** meets in Philadelphia.

First Continental Congress

1774

In response to the Boston Tea Party, the Parliament passed several acts to punish Massachusetts. Twelve of the thirteen colonies were named delegates to the **First Continental Congress**. On September 5th, they met mainly to deal with Britain's actions.

The Articles of Confederation

1777-1781

After considerable debate and alteration, the **Articles of Confederation** were adopted by the Second Continental Congress on November 15, 1777. However, the states did not fully ratify the document until March 1, 1781. This document served as the first constitution of the United States. In October of 1781, British forces surrendered at **Yorktown**.

Ratification of the Constitution

1787-1788

On May 14, 1787, the **Constitutional Convention** met in Philadelphia. Here, the delegates reviewed and approved the Constitution. In 1788, nine states ratified the Constitution, which was put into effect (the remaining four states will ratify by 1790). America is preparing to operate under this new document.

Our New Government

1789

On March 4th, the new federal government was inaugurated in New York. In April, the first House of Representatives is organized. **George Washington** was elected the first president on April 6th. He is inaugurated on April 30th. On September 25th, the first ten amendments (**Bill of Rights**) were adopted by Congress.

QUESTIONS

PUT THE EVENTS IN ORDER. For each question group, write the numbers 1, 2, or 3, to indicate which event happened first, second, and third.

- Group 1. Boston Massacre 1, Adopted Declaration of Independence 2, Washington becomes president 3
- Group 2. Articles of Confederation 2, Boston Tea Party 1, Constitution ratified by nine states 3
- Group 3. England sets taxation policy for colonies 1, Constitutional Convention 3, Battle of Bunker Hill 2
- Group 4. Paul Revere alerts colonists 2, Stamp Act is law 1, First House of Representatives organized 3
- Group 5. Bill of Rights adopted 3, First Continental Congress 2, Declaration is read to the public 1
- Group 6. Second Continental Congress meets 2, Sons of Liberty forms 1, American Revolution ends 3

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