

CRS Report for Congress

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The Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence: A Guide to Obtaining Copies

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Summary

The texts of the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence are widely available. They can be found in the *United States Government Manual*, encyclopedias, almanacs, and many reference books — works readily available in many school, public, and research libraries, and on the Internet. In addition, this report identifies how to locate these documents in various formats from sources such as the U.S. Government Printing Office, the National Archives and Records Administration, the Historical Documents Company, the Library of Congress National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and the Law Library of Congress. It lists Internet addresses where applicable. This report will be updated yearly.

Introduction

Copies of the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence are available from many sources, including the Internet. This report provides information on selected sources, both governmental and private, and is not intended to be all-inclusive.

Except where the item is a facsimile of the original document or where otherwise specified, texts of the Constitution listed in this report include its amendments, the first 10 of which constitute the Bill of Rights.

The information presented is accurate as of the date of this report and is subject to change. Hannah Fischer provided research assistance for this report.

Texts Available on the Internet

Library of Congress. The full texts of many historical American documents such as the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence are now available on the Internet at many sites. The Library of Congress's THOMAS Web site for such documents is [<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/const/mdbquery.html>].

The Former Commission on the Bicentennial. Although the Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution was terminated as of June 30, 1992, it provides free copies of a pocket-sized edition of the Constitution, using the original language and punctuation, to school groups, and in-person visitors will always be able to attain free copies. Interested people can write to Independence Mall, 525 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106. The Constitution is also available at the Commission's Web site, at [<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/explore/TheU.S.Constitution/index.shtml>].

The U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO). The following titles may still be available from the U.S. Government Printing Office. They can be purchased by telephone, (202) 512-1800, or by fax, (202) 512-2250, using VISA, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, or debit cards. They can also be ordered by mail; written, prepaid orders should be addressed to Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954. Mail orders must include a check, money order, government purchase order, or credit card information. Stock numbers, prices, and available Web addresses are provided below.

Constitution of the United States of America and Declaration of Independence

H.Doc. 106-215. Pocket edition.

Stock no.: 052-071-01342-3; \$2.50 domestic, \$3.50 foreign

[<http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/index.html>]

Constitution of the United States of America, Analysis and Interpretation

S.Doc. 103-6. Analyzes and interprets the Constitution, with annotations of Supreme Court cases decided to June 29, 1992.

Stock no.: 052-071-01157-9; \$163 domestic, \$228.20 foreign

[<http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate/constitution/index.html>]

Constitution of the United States of America, Analysis and Interpretation, 2000 Supplement

S.Doc. 106-27. Supplements S.Doc. 103-6. Analysis of Supreme Court cases decided to June 28, 2000.

Stock no.: 052-071-01348-2; \$15 domestic, \$21 foreign

[<http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate/constitution/index.html>]

Constitution of the United States of America as Amended: Unratified Amendments, Analytical Index

H. Doc. 106-214

Stock no.: 052-071-01343-1; 6.50 domestic, \$9.10 foreign

[<http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/index.html>]

Texts Available from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

The National Archives and Records Administration sells many items related to U.S. historical documents. The following selected items are available, prepaid, from the National Archives Trust Fund by writing NWCC2 Department W, P.O. Box 100793, Atlanta, GA 30384-0793; by calling 1-866-272-6272 or (301) 837-2000; or by faxing a request to (301) 837-0483. Checks, money orders, or major credit cards are accepted. For shipping and handling expenses, add \$3 to orders of \$5-\$50; \$5 to orders of \$50.01-\$100; and 5% of the merchandise total to orders greater than \$100. "Charters of Freedom," a catalog listing the following documents, as well as others, can be ordered by e-mailing inquire@nara.gov or by calling the numbers above.

Charters of Freedom: The Declaration of Independence, The Constitution, The Bill of Rights

11 x 14 inches, 16pp., 12 illustrations
#200002 — softcover only — \$1.50

The Constitution of the United States of America

4¼ x 7 inches, 31pp., pocket-sized, 1999
#200041 — softcover only — \$1

Poster Reproductions of the Charters of Freedom

Charters of Freedom Reproductions, a three-document set (comprised of posters #6311, #6312, and #6313), 6 pp., 37½ x 24¼ inches, #6310, \$19.50
Constitution of the United States, 4 pp., #6311, \$10
Declaration of Independence, #6312, \$7.50
Bill of Rights, #6313, \$7.50
Constitution of the United States, #6315, 1 p., \$7.50
Online at [<http://www.archives.gov/publications/index.html>]

Facsimiles on Antiqued Paper Made to Look Like Parchment

Declaration of Independence, #6501, \$.95
Constitution of the United States, #6503, \$.95
Bill of Rights, #6502, \$.95

A More Perfect Union: The Creation of the U.S. Constitution. Milestone Documents in the National Archives

8½ x 11 inches, 37 pp., 11 illustrations, 1986
#200105 — softcover only — \$3.50

Declaration of Independence: The Adventures of a Document. Milestone Documents in the National Archives

8½ x 11 inches, 43 pp., 12 illustrations, 1976
#200004 — softcover only — \$3.50

The Bill of Rights. Milestone Documents in the National Archives

8½ x 11 inches, 27 pp., 21 illustrations, 1986
#200102 — softcover only — \$3.50

Texts from Historical Documents Company

The Historical Documents Company sells facsimile copies of documents on antiqued paper made to look like parchment. They offer their items only in bulk, starting with a minimum of 36 copies at \$.65 each for the following small documents.

Declaration of Independence 1776
facsimile, 14 x 16 inches, #544

Constitution of the United States 1787
condensed on one sheet, 12½ x 19 inches, #537

Bill of Rights 1789
with explanatory text, 14 x 16 inches, #512

The company also offers a four-sheet set of the *Constitution* (#200, \$2.05, minimum 12 sets), which is closer to the document's original size and is more legible. Also available is a six-sheet set of the *Three Documents of Freedom* (#901, \$2.15, minimum 12 sets), consisting of the four-sheet set of the Constitution and one sheet each of the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. Documents may be ordered from the Historical Documents Company, 2555 Orthodox Street, Philadelphia, PA 19137, tel. 1-888-700-7265 toll-free or (215) 533-4500, fax (215) 533-9319. A Web site with pictures [<http://histdocs.com>] is partially complete and will offer online ordering by fall 2003.

Texts of the Constitution of the United States in Braille, on Cassette, and in Large Print

The following information was provided by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) of the Library of Congress:

To borrow the U.S. Constitution, or books about the Constitution in braille or recorded formats, contact the library serving blind and physically handicapped readers in your state. To obtain the address and telephone number of the library in your area, write, call, or fax the NLS Reference Section, or visit their large-print Web site:

Reference Section
National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20542-4969 Tel. (202) 707-9275
[<http://www.loc.gov/nls/reference/directories/address.html>] Fax: (202) 707-0712

To purchase copies of the U.S. Constitution in special formats, contact the following organizations:

Sources for Braille

American Printing House for the Blind
1839 Frankfort Avenue
P.O. Box 6085
Louisville, KY 40206-0084
Tel. (800) 223-1839
or (502) 895-2405

[<http://www.aph.org>]

Fax: (502) 899-2274

The Constitution of the United States as Amended through July 1971, 1974.
Order #5-25790-00. \$71

National Braille Press
88 St. Stephen Street
Boston, MA 02115
[<http://www.nbp.org>]

Tel. (800) 548-7323
Fax: (617) 437-0456
E-mail: orders@nbp.org

The Constitution of the United States of America and The Declaration of Independence. Free upon request.

Sources for Cassettes (standard speed)

Audio-Forum
Jeffrey Norton Publishers
One Orchard Park Rd.
Madison, CT 06443
[<http://www.audioforum.com>]

Tel. (800) 243-1234 or (203) 245-1095
Fax: (888) 453-4329 or (203) 245-0769
E-mail: info@audioforum.com

Constitution, Liberty, and Government, unabridged, ed. by R. LeFevre. Order no. AF-1013. \$12.95

Knowledge Products
722 Rundle Avenue
Nashville, TN 37210
[<http://store.yahoo.com/know-products/index.html>]

Tel. (800) 876-4332
Fax: (301) 354-2601
E-mail: lrsprint@aol.com

Constitutional Convention, The ratification debates, The test of the United States Constitution, and The Bill of Rights. Each narrated by Walter Cronkite. Dramatization. \$17.95 each.

Sources for Large Print

Library Reproduction Service
Attn: Large Print Department.
14214 South Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, CA 90061
[<http://www.lrs-largeprint.com>]

Tel. (800) 255-5002

The Constitution of the United States, 18-point type. \$19.95

Texts of the Constitution of the United States in Various Foreign Languages

The Law Library of Congress in the Library of Congress has translated the Constitution of the United States and its amendments into Spanish, French, German, Swedish, Armenian, and Dutch. Copies may be requested by writing to the Director of

Legal Research, Law Library of Congress, 101 Independence Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20540-3210, calling (202) 707-5080, or e-mailing law@loc.gov.