

United
States
of
America

United States of America

Capital

Washington, D.C.

National Symbols

The Flag

The flag of the United States of America consists of 13 equal horizontal stripes of red (top and bottom) alternating with white. It has a blue rectangle on the upper left with 50 small, white, five-pointed stars arranged in nine offset horizontal rows of six stars (top and bottom) alternating with rows of five stars. The 50 stars on the flag represent the 50 States and the 13 stripes represent the original Thirteen Colonies that rebelled against the British Crown and became the first states of the Union. Nicknames for the flag include "the Stars and Stripes" and "Old Glory".

Because of its symbolism, the starred blue square is called the "union". This part of the national flag can stand alone as a maritime flag for various federally-owned vessels, including those of the Coast Guard, Military Sealift Command, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The United States flag is among the nation's widely recognized and used symbols. Throughout the world it is used in public discourses to refer to the U.S., both as a nation state, government, and set of policies, but also as an ideology and set of ideals. Within the U.S., it is frequently displayed, not only on public buildings, but on private residences, as well as on stickers for car windows, clothing ornaments, badges, and lapel pins.

Many understand the flag to represent the freedoms and rights guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution and its Bill of Rights and perhaps most of all to be a symbol of individual and personal liberty as set forth in the Declaration of Independence. The flag has also come to be associated with U.S. nationalism, patriotism, and even militarism. The flag is a complex symbol around which emotions run high.



The National Anthem

"The Star Spangled Banner" is the national anthem of the United States. The lyrics come from a poem written in 1814 by Francis Scott Key. The poem was set to the tune of a popular British drinking song.

"The Star Spangled Banner" was recognized for official use by the Navy in 1889 and the President in 1916, and was made the national anthem by a Congressional resolution in March, 1931.

United States of America

The National Flower

On September 23rd, 1986, the House of Representatives passed a joint resolution naming the rose as the "national floral emblem" of the United States. President Ronald Reagan signed the resolution into law on October 7th, 1986 in a ceremony in the White House Rose Garden.

The rose comes in a variety of colors and has a fragrant scent and thorns on its stems. The rose has been favored by many everywhere. The edible petals have been added to salads and used in medicines since ancient times.

The Rose is also the official flower of New York State. The wild rose is the Iowa State flower and the prairie rose is the state flower of North Dakota. The American Beauty is the flower of the District of Columbia. The rose is also the emblem of England.



National Tree

Oak is America's official tree. The official recognition of the oak as America's National Tree reflects a vote hosted by The National Arbor Day Foundation at its website, arborday.org, in which Americans of all ages helped choose the country's newest national symbol. The oak was selected during a four-month-long open voting process. From the

first day of voting, the oak was the people's clear choice.



National Animal

The American Bold Eagle is the US National Emblem. The eagle represents freedom because it lives on top of mountains and flies strongly and powerful into the valleys below. It is said the eagle was used as a national emblem because at one of the first battles of the Revolution the noise of the struggle awoke the sleeping eagles and they flew from their nests and circled over the heads of the fighting men who suddenly said, "They are crying for Freedom".

The Eagle became the National emblem in 1782 when the "Great Seal" of the United States was adopted. The Great Seal shows a wide-spread eagle, facing front, having on its breast a shield with thirteen perpendicular red and white stripes, surmounted by a blue field with the same number of stars. In its right claw, the eagle holds an olive branch, in its left one, a group of thirteen arrows tied together. The eagle carries in its beak a long roll of paper inscribed with the words, "E Pluribus Unum" which in Latin means "one out of many," or, "from many, one" suggesting that out of many colonies or states emerged a single nation.

United States of America

It has come to suggest in contemporary times that out of many peoples, races, and ancestries has emerged a single people and nation, illustrating the concept of the "Melting Pot".

The Eagle is also used on the backs of gold coins, the silver dollar, the half dollar and the quarter.



The White House

The White House is the official home and principal workplace of the President of the United States of America. The term "White House" is used as a metonymy for a United States president's administration or the Executive Office of the President.

A City Hall is the headquarters of a city or town's administration and usually houses the city or town council, its associated departments and their employees. It is also the base of the mayor.

Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. is the capital city of the United States of America. "D.C." is an abbreviation for the District of Columbia, the federal district coextensive with the city of Washington. Columbia in this context is an early poetic name for the United States of America, a reference to Christopher Columbus who discovered the American continent.

The city is named after George Washington, military leader of the American Revolution and the first President of the United States. The city is commonly referred to as The District, Washington, or simply D.C. Historically, it was called the Federal City or Washington City. The Washington Metropolitan Area is the eighth largest in the United States with more than five million residents.



United States of America

The centers of all three branches of the U.S. federal government are in Washington. It also serves as the headquarters for the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, and other national and international institutions. That is why Washington is the frequent location of political demonstrations and protests.

Furthermore, Washington is a popular destination for tourists, the site of numerous national landmarks and monuments. It is a major American cultural center, with a number of important museums, galleries, performing arts centers and institutions.

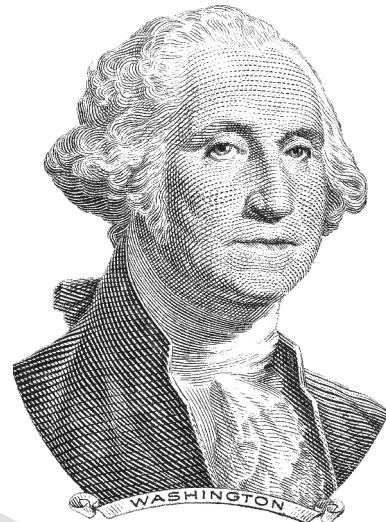
There is something curious about Washington, although there is a municipal government and a mayor in Washington, Congress has the supreme authority over the city and district, which results in citizens having less self-governance than the rest of the residents of the states. This also means that the District does not have voting representation in Congress. Many, especially in the District, consider the lack of voting representation to be unfair, particularly given that District residents are subject to federal income taxes.



History

Independence Day

In the United States, "Independence Day", commonly known as the "Fourth of July" is a federal holiday commemorating the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, 1776, declaring independence from Great Britain.



The First President

The first president of the United States, George Washington, (1732-1799), is often referred to as the Father of the Country. He was known for his love of the land and farming, and his dislike of war. He was a distinguished General and Commander in Chief of the colonial armies in the American Revolution.

United States of America

Government

The Constitution

The United States Constitution is the supreme law of the United States of America. It was adopted in its original form on September 17th, 1787, by the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia Pennsylvania, and later ratified by conventions in each state in the name of "the People". The Constitution has a central place in American law and political culture. A copy of the document is on display at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.



Branches of the Government

The federal government of the United States of America is the body that carries out the roles assigned to the federation of individual states established by the Constitution. The federal government has three branches: the executive, legislative, and judicial. Through a system of separation of powers each of these branches has some authority to act on its

own, some authority to regulate the other two branches, and has some of its own authority, in turn, regulated by the other branches. In addition, the powers of the federal government as a whole are limited by the Constitution, which leaves a great deal of authority to the individual states.

The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution form the foundations of the U.S. federal government. The Declaration of Independence establishes the United States as an independent political entity, while the Constitution creates the basic structure of the federal government.

The legislative Branch

The Legislative Branch of the federal government is The United States Congress. It is bicameral, made up by the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The House of Representatives consists of 435 members, each of whom represents a congressional district and serves for a two-year term. House seats are designated by each state according to the size of its population. In contrast, each state has two Senators, regardless of population. There is a total of 100 senators (as there are currently 50 states), who serve six-year terms (one third of the Senate stands for election every two years). The consent of both chambers (House or Senate) is required to make any law. The Constitution includes the "necessary and proper clause" which grants Congress the power to "make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers."

The Executive Branch

The Executive Branch consists of the President and his delegates.

United States of America

The President is both the head of state and government, as well as the military commander-in-chief and chief diplomat. The President, according to the Constitution, must "take care that the laws be faithfully executed." He presides over the executive branch of the federal government, a vast organization numbering about 4 million people, including 1 million active-duty military personnel. In addition, the President has important legislative and judicial powers. Within the executive branch itself, the President has extensive constitutional powers to manage national affairs and may issue executive orders to affect internal policies.

The President may be impeached (to be accused of being guilty of a serious offence in connection with his job) by a majority in the House and removed from his office by a two-thirds majority in the Senate for "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanor."

The President may not dissolve Congress or call special elections, but does have the power to pardon criminals convicted of offenses against the federal government, enact or change executive orders, and (with the consent of the Senate) appoint Supreme Court justices and federal judges.

The Judicial Branch

The Supreme Court is the highest institution of the Judicial Branch. The Supreme Court deals with matters pertaining to the interpretation of the United States Constitution and can declare legislation or executive action made at any level of the government as unconstitutional, nullifying the law and creating precedent for future

laws.

Within a federal court system, the courts of each state deal with their own state laws and own judicial rules and procedures. The supreme court of each state is the final authority on the interpretation of that state's laws and constitution. A case may be appealed from a state court to the U.S. Supreme Court only if there is a federal question (an issue pertaining to the U.S. Constitution, laws or treaties of the country). The relationship between federal and state laws is quite complex; together, they form the U.S. law.

Below the Supreme Court there are the Courts of Appeals, and below them, the District Courts, which are the general trial courts for federal law.



The Supreme Court

The Court consists of nine Judges: The Chief Justice of the United States and eight Associate Judges. The judges or Justices are nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. As federal judges, the Justices serve for life and can be removed only by resignation, or by impeachment and subsequent conviction.

United States of America

The Supreme Court is the only court established by the United States Constitution; all other federal courts are created by Congress. The Supreme Court meets in Washington, D.C., in the United States Supreme Court building.

Political Parties

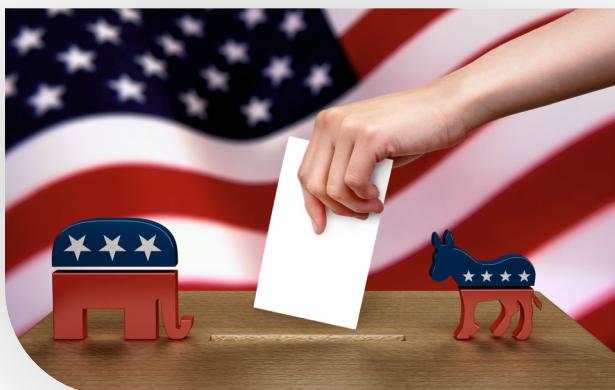
Political parties are not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution. Parties are regulated by the laws and constitutions of the individual states, which organize elections to both local and federal offices. No laws limit the number of political parties that may operate, so the U.S. has a multi-party system.

However, since the Civil War (1864), the country has had a two-party system, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, with occasional inlets made by third parties. Since the 2006 midterm elections the Democratic Party holds an extensive majority in Congress; both, in the House of Representatives and the United States Senate. Democrats also hold a majority of state governorships and control a plurality of state legislatures. It is currently the largest political party with 72 million registered members, 42.6% of the electorate.

The current U.S. President, George W. Bush, belongs to the Republican Party and after losing in the 2006 Congressional elections, his party fills a minority of seats in both the United States Senate and the House of Representatives, and holds a minority of state governorships and controls a minority of state legislatures.

The Republican Party is currently the second largest party with 55 million registered members, roughly one third of the

electorate. Founded in 1854 by anti-slavery expansion activists and modernizers, and its most prominent figure was Abraham Lincoln, the first Republican president.



The Fifty States

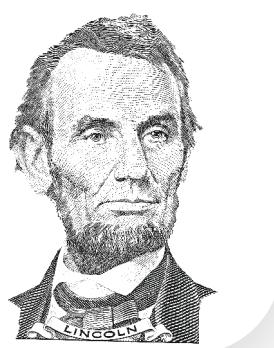
The USA has 50 states and one federal district, The District of Columbia that contains the nation's capital Washington. There were originally 13 states which over a period of 200 hundred years grew to 50 in number. The first state to join was Delaware and the last to join were Alaska and Hawaii in 1959. The political units and divisions of the United States include:

The 50 states: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

United States of America

Social Recognition

Historic Figures



Abraham Lincoln
(February 1809 – April 1865)

Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth President of the United States, serving from March 4th, 1861 until his assassination. He introduced measures that resulted in the abolition of slavery. During his term, he helped preserve the United States by leading the defeat of the secessionist Confederate States of America in the American Civil War. His assassination in 1865 was the first presidential assassination in U.S. history and made him a martyr for the ideal of national unity.

Scholars now rank Lincoln among the top three U.S. Presidents, with the majority of those surveyed placing him first.



John F. Kennedy
(May 1917–November 1963)

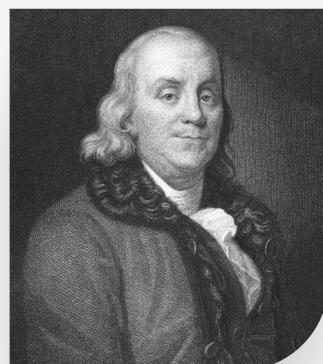
John F. Kennedy was the thirty-fifth President of the United States, serving from

1961 until his assassination in 1963. Many regard President Kennedy as an icon of American hopes and aspirations.

Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Lee Harvey Oswald was charged with the crime, but was murdered two days later by Jack Ruby before he could be put on trial. The entire subject remains controversial, with multiple theories about the assassination still being debated.

After Kennedy's military service as commander of the USS PT-109 during World War II in the South Pacific, his aspirations turned political. To date, he is the only practicing Roman Catholic to be elected President and the only President to have won a Pulitzer Prize. Events during his administration include the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Space Race, the American Civil Rights Movement and early events of the Vietnam War.

Social Figures



Benjamin Franklin
(January 1706 – April 1790)

Benjamin Franklin was one of the most important and influential Founding Fathers of the United States of America. Franklin was a leading author and printer, satirist, political theorist, politician, scientist, inventor, civic activist, statesman and diplomat. As a

United States of America

scientist, he was a major figure in the enlightenment and the history of physics for his discoveries and theories regarding electricity. He invented the lightning rod, bifocals, a carriage odometer, and a musical instrument. He formed both the first public lending library and fire department in America. He was an early proponent of colonial unity and activist. He, more than anyone, invented the idea of an American nation and as a diplomat during the American Revolution, he secured the French alliance that helped make independence possible.

Franklin's colorful life and legacy of scientific and political achievement has been honored in coins and money; warships; the names of many towns, and educational institutions.



Martin Luther King
(January 1929 – April 1968)

Martin Luther King was one of the main leaders of the American civil rights movement. A Baptist minister by training, Martin Luther King led the 1963 March on Washington, where King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, raising public consciousness of the civil rights movement and establishing him as one of the greatest orators in American history. In 1964, King became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end segregation and racial discrimination through civil disobedience and other non-

violent means

Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4th, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. He was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Jimmy Carter in 1977. Martin Luther King Day was established as a national holiday in the United States in 1986.

Holidays

Fourth of July

"Independence Day" is the biggest and most celebrated holiday in the USA. It is commonly associated with fireworks, parades, barbecues, picnics, baseball games, and various other public and private events celebrating the history, government, and traditions of the United States.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving Day is a traditional North American holiday celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November during which most Americans gather to give thanks for their blessings. This is a tradition that started when the first European settlers arrived in America, in search of freedom. The early settlers (who were also called "Pilgrims") facing a new environment almost died of hunger and cold after a hard winter. They could survive thanks to the generosity of local Native Americans. The pilgrims were particularly grateful to the Native Americans who taught them how to fish and grow corn. Immediately after their first harvest in 1621, they held an autumn celebration of food, feasting, and praising God.

United States of America

Nowadays, Thanksgiving is part of a long weekend which usually marks a break in school and college calendars. (Many workers are given both, Thanksgiving and the day after as paid holidays, and others with leave benefits are allowed to take a vacation day.) Family members, who usually travel large distances, make significant effort to gather for the Thanksgiving celebration.

Thanksgiving meals are traditionally family events where certain kinds of food are served. Turkey is the most important item during Thanksgiving dinner. It is accompanied with stuffing, mashed potatoes with gravy, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, green bean casserole, corn, turnips, rolls, pecan pie, and pumpkin pie.

Tourist Sites

The Golden Gate

The Golden Gate connects the San Francisco Bay to the Pacific Ocean since 1937.

The Statue of Liberty



The Liberty Enlightening the World, more commonly known as the Statue of Liberty, is a large statue that was presented to the United States by France in 1886. It stands at Liberty Island, in New York Harbor as a welcome to all visitors, immigrants, and returning Americans.

The copper statue commemorates the centennial of the United States and is a gesture of friendship from France to America. The sculptor was Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi. Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, the designer of the Eiffel Tower, engineered the internal structure.

The statue is of a woman standing upright, dressed in a robe and a seven point spiked crown representing the seven seas and continents, holding a stone tablet close to her body in her left hand commemorating the date of the United States Declaration of Independence and a flaming torch high in her right hand.

The Grand Canyon

The Grand Canyon is a very colorful, deep narrow valley with steep sides, formed or carved by cutting through hard rock through thousands of years by the Colorado River in the State of Arizona.

It is located in the Grand Canyon National Park, one of the first national parks in the United States. The canyon, created by the Colorado River over about 6 million years, is 277 miles (446 km) long, ranges in width from 4 to 18 miles (6.4 to 24 kilometers), and has a depth of more than a mile (1.6 km). Nearly two billion years of the Earth's history have been exposed as the Colorado River and its tributaries cut their channels through layer after layer of rock.

