

# Our Documents:

A National Initiative on American History, Civics, and Service

**Teacher Sourcebook**

SPONSORED BY EDUCATION PROGRAM **Newsweek**

*America has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens. Every child must be taught these principles. Every citizen must uphold them. And every immigrant, by embracing these ideals, makes our country more, not less, American.*

—PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH  
JANUARY 20, 2001

# Our Documents:

we the people  
in order to form a more perfect union  
discover...investigate . . .

> [www.ourdocuments.gov](http://www.ourdocuments.gov)

# A National Initiative on American History, Civics, and Service

## participate

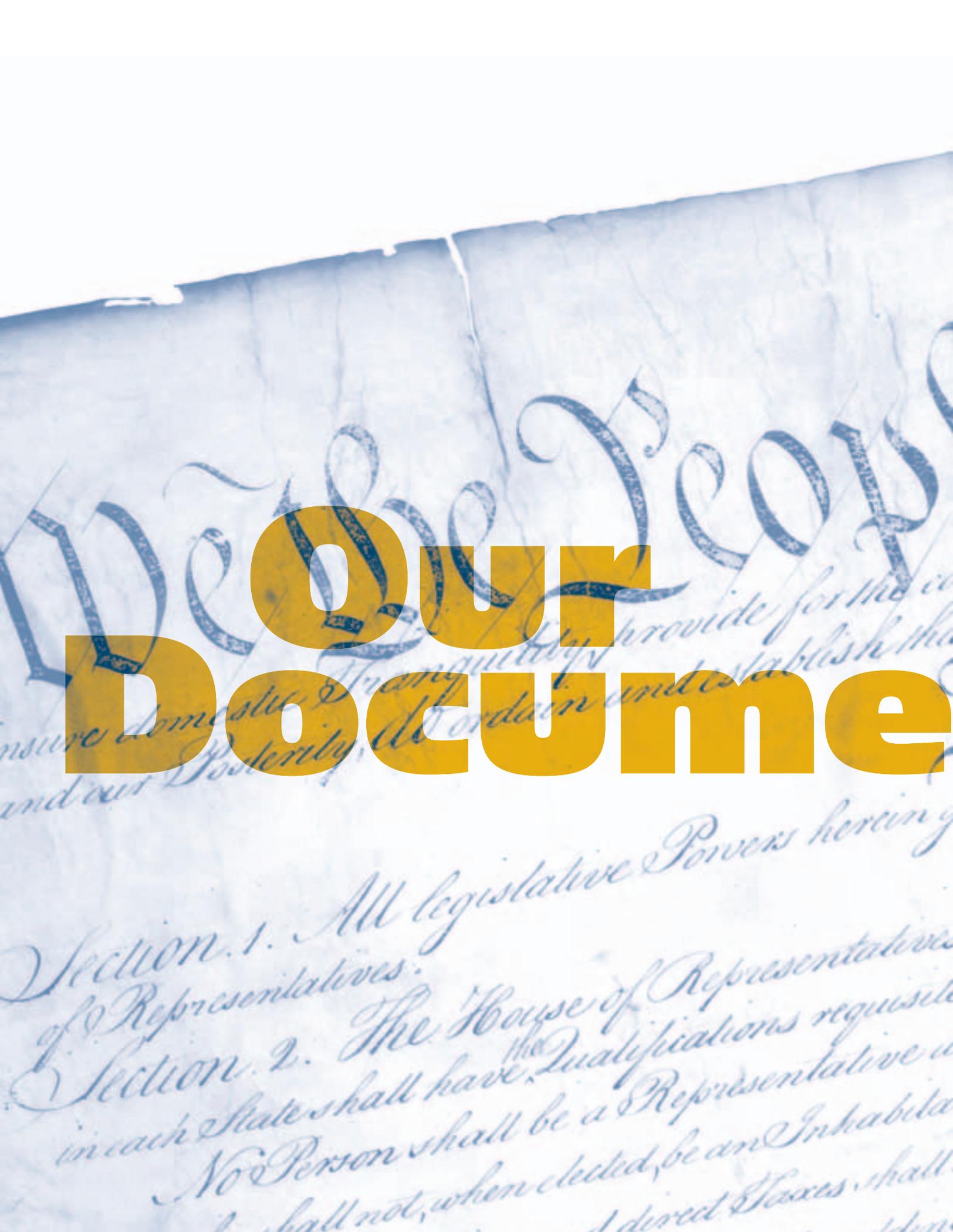
It is the purpose of ***Our Documents: A National Initiative on American History, Civics, and Service***, to promote public understanding of how rights and responsibilities have taken shape over time. *Our Documents* is an initiative of National History Day and The National Archives and Records Administration in cooperation with the Corporation for National and Community Service and the USA Freedom Corps.

**National History Day** is a nationally acclaimed history education program that is promoting the study of civics and citizenship among the nation's students and teachers. National History Day is encouraging students in grades 6-12 to participate in its annual student competition on ***Rights and Responsibilities in History*** and is challenging teachers to develop lessons to restore the study of our nation's heritage to a prominent place in the classroom. To find out more, go to [www.NationalHistoryDay.org](http://www.NationalHistoryDay.org).

**The National Archives and Records Administration** is a federal agency that provides ready access to essential government records that document the rights of American citizens, the actions of Federal officials, and the national experience. Through the *National Archives Experience*, the National Archives is developing new, interactive educational programs to give people a deeper understanding of the contemporary importance and value of our country's recorded history. To find out more, go to [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov).

**The Corporation for National and Community Service** is a federal agency that engages Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to help strengthen communities through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and Learn and Serve America. To find out more, go to [www.cns.gov](http://www.cns.gov).

**USA Freedom Corps** is a White House Coordinating Council created by President George W. Bush to help foster a culture of service, citizenship and responsibility in America's communities. To find out more, go to [www.usafreedomcorps.gov](http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov).



# Our Document

Section. 1. All legislative Powers heretofore  
vested in Representatives of the United States  
shall be vested in a House of Representatives.

Section. 2. The House of Representatives  
in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite  
for Representatives in that State.

No Person shall be a Representative who  
shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant  
of that State in which he shall be elected.

direct Taxes shall

# Contents

## 4 Introduction

*Our Documents: A National Initiative on American History, Civics, and Service*

## 7 PART ONE

Understanding *Our Documents*:  
A Competition for Students

## 8 Teaching *Our Documents*: A Lesson Plan Competition for Educators

## 10 PART TWO

Educator's Notebook: Using the 100  
Milestone Documents in the Classroom

## 11 List of the 100 Milestone Documents

## 13 Rights, Responsibilities, and the 100 Milestone Documents: Some Key Themes

## 16 Introducing Students to Primary Documents

## 16 Timeline: The 100 Documents in Chronological Perspective

## 21 *A More Perfect Union*: the Articles of Confederation, the Virginia Plan, the Constitution, and The Bill of Rights in Historical Perspective

## 42 The Documents in the Classroom: Three Lesson Plans

## 66 Bibliography



# A National Initiative on American History, Civics, and Service

## Teacher Sourcebook

The **Our Documents: A National Initiative on American History, Civics, and Service** ■ **Teacher Sourcebook** is sponsored by NEWSWEEK Education Programs, with additional support from the John M. Olin Foundation.

The Our Documents Initiative is also sponsored by The History Channel.

© Copyright 2002 National History Day

May be duplicated without permission for educational purposes. Not for resale.

Compiled and Edited by: Maria Mazzenga, Program and Outreach Manager, National History Day

Contributions and Editorial Assistance by: Lee Ann Potter, Director of Education and Volunteer Programs, National Archives and Records Administration

Development and Editorial Assistance by: Cathy Gorn, Executive Director, National History Day; Lori Lisowski, Director of Policy and Communications, National Archives and Records Administration; Susan Cooper, Director of Public Affairs, National Archives and Records Administration

Design by: Jane Farthing, Art Director, Rabil and Bates Communications Design

# Introduction:

## *Our Documents: A National*

*Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved. That it is expedient forthwith to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign Alliances. That a plan of confederation be prepared and transmitted to the respective Colonies for their consideration and approbation.*

**Resolution presented  
by Richard Henry Lee  
to the Second Continental  
Congress,  
June 7, 1776.**

# *Initiative on American History, Civics, and Service*

When the tall, fiery Virginian, Richard Henry Lee, proposed that the Second Continental Congress adopt the simple Resolution to the left, could he have known where it would take the people of the land we now call the United States of America? That subsequent to his Resolution a young Thomas Jefferson would articulate the long list of grievances against the King of Britain we today embrace as our Declaration of Independence? That a Constitution elaborating an ambitious system of government and the basic political rights of a wide-ranging assortment of individuals would soon come to bind the rebellious colonies together?

That this government and its people would define and redefine their political relationships as their nation expanded in population and geography? That the relatively tiny America of Lee's time would grow from a land of farmers into a postindustrial society that increasingly found itself immersed in the affairs of the world beyond national borders?

Mr. Lee probably did not foresee such a future for the nation he helped bring into being, though he continued to shape the affairs of the new country well after it had established its independence. Among other achievements, Lee helped secure passage of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787, which expanded the size of the fledgling nation, but he opposed the strong central government created by the Constitution, preferring a looser association among the newly united states. By the time of Richard Henry Lee's death in 1794, however, the nation's political complexion had changed from the days of revolution. A people with a different set of beliefs about rights, responsibilities, and republican democracy than Lee had come to prevail over the new government.

**It is the purpose of Our Documents: A National Initiative on American History, Civics, and Service, sponsored by the National Archives and Records Administration, National History Day, the Corporation for National and Community Service and the USA Freedom Corps to promote public exploration of how our understandings of rights and responsibilities have changed over time.**

Such was and would be the pattern of historical change in the nation to this very day: ideas about the nation, its people, and their rights and responsibilities change repeatedly over time, even as they remain inspired by the core set of principles outlined by the founders in the nation's earliest years.

With the Lee Resolution, then, began a new nation and a conversation about the rights and responsibilities of a people who envision themselves as united by the civic ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. These founding documents contain the earliest expression of our nation's political ideals: the right of individuals to liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the emphasis on equal opportunity and justice, and a commitment to democratic republicanism and the general welfare of the citizenry. Most Americans' notions of public rights and responsibilities still reflect these civic ideals, first expressed more than 200 years ago.

It is the purpose of *Our Documents: A National Initiative on American History, Civics, and Service*, an initiative of the National Archives and Records Administration, National History Day, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the USA Freedom Corps, to promote public exploration of how our understanding of rights and responsibilities have changed over time. Such an exploration of the nation's civic legacy will, we hope, encourage national reflection on the meanings of citizenship in a democratic republic.

The *Our Documents* initiative revolves around 100 milestone documents drawn from thousands of public laws, Supreme Court decisions, inaugural speeches, treaties, constitutional amendments, and other national artifacts that have shaped us as a people. These documents reflect the diversity, the unity, and the commitment of our nation to continue the work of forming "a more perfect union." The goal of this initiative is to engage students, teachers, parents, and members of the general public in reading these historical documents, reflecting upon them, discussing them, and considering which they deem the most significant.

**This two-part sourcebook is intended to assist teachers in using *Our Documents* in their classrooms. Part One explains the two main components of *Our Documents*, the student competition and the teacher competition. Part Two, contains the list of 100 milestone documents, an explanation of key themes in the documents, a timeline putting the documents in chronological perspective, lesson plans and classroom exercises, a longer essay putting several of the key documents into historical perspective, and a bibliography of works related to the documents. Please visit our Web site at [www.ourdocuments.gov](http://www.ourdocuments.gov) to view the 100 milestone documents in their entirety and for additional information related to *Our Documents*. By inviting teachers and students to participate in the *Our Documents* initiative, we hope to keep alive the conversation started by the nation's founders on national rights and responsibilities.**

# Part One:

---

## **Understanding** *Our Documents* **A Competition for Students**

**F**or more than 25 years National History Day, a nonprofit history education program dedicated to improving the way history is taught and learned, has promoted systemic educational reform related to the teaching and learning of history in America's schools. The year-long NHD program engages students in grades 6-12 in the process of discovery and interpretation of historical topics. Student participants produce dramatic performances, imaginative exhibits, multimedia documentaries, and research papers based on research related to an annual theme. These projects are then evaluated at local, state, and national competitions. Through participation in the competitions, students not only gain a deeper understanding of history, but also improve their research, presentation, and critical thinking skills. With programs in 49 states and the District of Columbia, NHD engages all types of students—public, private, parochial and homeschool students; urban, suburban, and rural. More than 700,000 students participate in the NHD program yearly.

In joining with the National Archives and Records Administration, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the USA Freedom Corps in the *Our Documents* Initiative this year, NHD hopes to expand appreciation of our nation's history among students, as well as promote excellent teaching in the nation's schools. The partnership is especially fitting this year, as the aim of *Our Documents* is to further appreciation for our nation's civic legacy through study of key documents related to rights and responsibilities, and this year's NHD theme is *Rights and Responsibilities in History*. The availability of the key documents made possible by this partnership thus opens opportunities to create exceptionally strong projects this year.

As in past years, any student in grades 6-12 may enter the National History Day contest in either the Junior (grades 6-8) or Senior (grades 9-12) divisions. Winners of the National History Day Contest/Our Documents Competition will be announced at the national contest held at the University of Maryland at College Park, June 15-19, 2003. For more information on National History Day, visit the NHD Web site at [www.nationalhistoryday.org](http://www.nationalhistoryday.org).

**The partnership is especially fitting this year, as the aim of *Our Documents* is to further appreciation for our nation's civic legacy through study of key documents related to rights and responsibilities, and this year's NHD theme is *Rights and Responsibilities in History*.**

# Teaching *Our Documents*

## A Lesson Competition for Educators

**F**or the first time, NHD is offering an opportunity for history, social studies, civics, and government teachers to develop document-based lesson plans for national awards and distribution. *Teaching Our Documents: A Lesson Competition for Educators* invites teachers to develop and test a classroom lesson focusing on one or several of the 100 Milestone Documents in United States history. Lessons should engage students in a meaningful examination of the documents within their historical context. Awards will be announced at the annual National History Day national competition June 15-19, 2003, at the University of Maryland at College Park. Teachers should adhere to the following guidelines in preparing for the *Our Documents* teacher competition.

### Contest Rules:

#### I. PARTICIPATION

- Participation is open to history, social studies, civics, and government teachers in public, private, parochial, and home schools.
- Participation is open to teachers in upper elementary grades (grades 4-6), and middle and high schools.
- Participating teachers must engage their students in “Understanding *Our Documents*: Rights and Responsibilities in History,” National History Day’s 2003 student program theme.

#### II. LESSON CONTENT

##### ■ *Our Documents* Connection

Your lesson should focus on a teaching activity related to your choice of one or several of the 100 Milestone Documents, and should explain its connection to one of the *Our Documents* themes below (themes are discussed further on pages 13-15):

- The Nation and the Wider World
- Individuals and Society
- State and Federal Power
- Commerce and Regulation

##### ■ Cross-curricular Connections

You should include a statement explaining your lesson’s relationship to history as well as classes in other disciplines. (e.g., How can this lesson be used in classes other than American History?)

### ■ Historical Background

Your lesson should include a brief section on the historical background (context) of the document(s).

### ■ Teaching Activities

Your lesson should include a substantive teaching activity that engages students in a critical examination of the documents within the context of United States History (and World History if appropriate).

## III. LESSON FORMAT

Your lesson must follow the following format:

- Title
- *Our Documents* and Theme Connection
- Cross-Curricular Connections
- List of Document(s)  
(List the document(s) in the order in which they are used.)
- Historical Background
- Teaching Activities (All teaching activities must be written to teachers so that other teachers might understand and use them.)

## IV. LESSON SUCCESS

- Include a two page report on the success and usefulness of your lesson. (Therefore, you must pilot your lesson in your classroom!)
- Include two letters of recommendation from your students detailing their experience and perspective on the success of your lesson.

## V. AWARDS

Awards will be presented to teachers in elementary, middle and high schools for the following:

- Outstanding Document Lesson related to The Nation and the Wider World
- Outstanding Document Lesson related to Individuals and Society
- Outstanding Document Lesson related to State and Federal Power
- Outstanding Document Lesson related to Commerce and Regulation

**Mail your lesson by March 1, 2003 to:**

**Teaching Our Documents  
National History Day  
0119 Cecil Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742**