

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. 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formats from sources such as the U.S. Government Printing Office, the National Archives and Records Administration, the Historical Documents Company, the Library of Congress National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and the Law Library of Congress.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.

Vince Briggeman 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 The Library of Congress's THOMAS website provides links to these three documents and to other American historical documents at [<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdoxmainpg.html>].

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The full texts of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence are available as “Charters of Freedom” on NARA’s website at [http://www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/charters/charters.html], and as “100 Milestone Documents,” part of the cooperative effort among National History Day, the USA Freedom Corps, and NARA, at [<http://www.ourdocuments.gov>].

National Constitution Center. The center, created by P.L. 100-433, the Constitution Heritage Act of 1988, is independent, nonpartisan, and nonprofit. It is located on the Independence Mall in Philadelphia. Visitors to the National Constitution Center receive copies of a pocket-sized edition of the Constitution with their admission. More information on the center, which opened on July 4, 2003, is available at the center’s website at [<http://www.constitutioncenter.org>] or by writing to the center at 525 Arch Street, Independence Mall, Philadelphia, PA 19106. The full text of the Constitution is also available on the National Constitution Center’s website at the Internet address below. [<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/explore/TheU.S.Constitution/index.shtml>].

U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO). The following titles are available from the GPO. 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. 108-96. Pocket edition.

Stock no.: 052-071-01393-8; \$2.75 domestic, \$3.85 foreign

[<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/constitution/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; \$163.00 domestic, \$228.20 foreign

[<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/constitution/browse.html#1992>]

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. New edition forthcoming. Out of stock.

[<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/constitution/pdf/00supp.pdf>]

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

H. Doc. 108-95

Stock no.: 052-071-01394-6, \$7 domestic, \$9.80 foreign

[<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/constitution/index.html>]

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

NARA 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 (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. All of the items below can be found on NARA's website at [http://www.archives.gov/publications/posters/books_and_booklets.html].

The Constitution of the United States of America

4¼ x 7 inches, 31 pp., 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

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

8½ x 11 inches, 36 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 three-sheet set of the **Three Documents of Freedom** (#901, \$2.15, minimum 12 sets), consisting of the Constitution, 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. (888) 700-7265 toll-free or (215) 533-4500, fax (215) 533-9319. A website with pictures of some of the documents is available at [<http://histdocs.com>], but online ordering is not yet offered.

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 its large-print website.

Reference Section	Tel. (800) 424-8567
National Library Service for the	or (202) 707-9275
Blind and Physically Handicapped	Fax: (202) 707-0712
Library of Congress	[http://www.loc.gov/nls/find.html]
Washington, DC 20542-4969	

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

Sources for Braille

American Printing House for the Blind	Tel. (800) 223-1839
1839 Frankfort Avenue	or (502) 895-2405
P.O. Box 6085	Fax: (502) 899-2274
Louisville, KY 40206-0085	[http://www.aph.org]

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

National Braille Press
88 Saint Stephen Street
Boston, MA 02115-4302

Tel. (888) 965-8965
Fax: (617) 437-0456
[<http://www.nbp.org>]
E-mail: orders@nbp.org

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

Source for Cassettes (standard speed)

Knowledge Products Inc.
3212 West End Avenue, 5th Floor
Nashville, TN 37203

Tel. (800) 876-4332
Fax: (615) 742-3270
E-mail: info@audioclassics.net
[<http://www.audioclassics.net/>]

The United States Constitution is a series of eight audio cassettes, narrated by Walter Cronkite, and contains the following four titles: The Constitutional Convention, The Ratification Debates, The Text of the United States Constitution, and The Bill of Rights and Additional Amendments. The series is \$59.50, or the components may be purchased for \$17.95 each.

Sources for Large Print

Library Reproduction Service
Attn: Large Print Department
14214 South Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, CA 90061

Tel. (800) 255-5002
Fax: (310) 354-2601
[<http://www.lrs-largeprint.com>]
E-mail: lrsprint@aol.com

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, SE, Washington, DC 20540-3210, calling (202) 707-5080, or e-mailing law@loc.gov.

The National Constitution Center provides access to a Spanish translation of the Constitution, at [<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/explore/TheU.S.Constitution/index.shtml>], from its "Explore the Constitution" page.