

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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WE THE PEOPLE ...

December 15, 1991 marks the 200th anniversary of the ratification of the Bill of Rights. Celebrate it! Defend it! Use it!

But first, let's take a look at some important dates which lead up to Dec. 15, 1791. It was on the 25th of May 1787 that the Constitutional Convention convened with a quorum of seven states in Philadelphia to discuss revising the Articles of Confederation. Eventually all states but Rhode Island were represented. On Sept. 17, 1787 all twelve state delegations approved the Constitution. Then on June 21, 1788 the Constitution became effective for the ratifying states when New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify it. The first Congress under the Constitution to convene occurred in New York City on March 4, 1789. On April 30 of that same year George Washington was inaugurated as our first President. A proposed Bill of Rights was introduced by James Madison in the House of Representatives on June 8, 1789. The Congress, on Sept. 25, 1789, approved twelve amendments and sent them to the state legislatures. Two of the proposed amendments having to do with congressional representatives and pay were not adopted. The remaining ten amendments became the Bill of Rights when Virginia ratifies them on Dec. 15, 1791.

The following thoughts are from Warren E. Burger, Chief Justice of the United States 1969-1986: "Ever since people began living in tribes and villages, they have had to balance order with liberty. Individual freedom had to be weighed against the need for security of all.

"The delegates who wrote the Constitution in Philadelphia in 1787 did not invent all the ideas and ideals it embraced, but drew on the wisdom of the ages to combine the best of the past in a conception of government of rule by "We the People" with limits on government to protect freedom.

"This Constitution was not perfect, it is not perfect today even with amendments, but it has continued longer than any other written form of government. It sought to fulfill the promises of the Declaration of Independence of 1776, which expressed peoples' yearning to be free and to develop the talents given them by their Creator.

"This Constitution creates three separate, independent branches of government, with checks and balances that keep the power of government within the boundaries set by law. This system does not always provide tidy results; it depends on a clash of views in debate and on bargain and compromise.

"For 200 years this Constitution's ordered liberty has unleashed the energies and talents of people to create a good life."

In celebration of this Bicentennial event, the Orleans County Legislature has authorized that at 12 o'clock noon on Sunday, Dec. 15, 1991, the bell in the dome of the Orleans County Courthouse shall be rung. The Legislature further urges that all houses of worship in the County of Orleans ring bells for two minutes beginning at 12 o'clock noon on Sunday, Dec. 15, 1991.

Frequently we Americans go all out to cheer for our favorite team in sports yet totally ignore the truly important things really worth cheering for. Come Dec. 15 let us remember this significant Bicentennial event and cheer for it!



The Bill of Rights