

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER MAIN EXHIBIT EXPERIENCE

About the National Constitution Center

The [National Constitution Center](https://www.constitutioncenter.org) in Philadelphia inspires citizenship as the only place where people across America and around the world can come together to learn about, debate, and celebrate the greatest vision of human freedom in history, the U.S. Constitution. A private, nonprofit organization, the Center serves as America's leading platform for constitutional education and debate, fulfilling its Congressional charter "to disseminate information about the U.S. Constitution on a nonpartisan basis." As the **Museum of We the People**, the Center brings the Constitution to life for visitors of all ages through interactive programs and exhibits. As **America's Town Hall**, the Center brings the leading conservative and liberal thought leaders together to debate the Constitution on all media platforms. As a center for **Civic Education**, the Center delivers the best educational programs and online resources that inspire, excite, and engage citizens about the U.S. Constitution. For more information, call 215-409-6700 or visit [constitutioncenter.org](https://www.constitutioncenter.org).

About the Main Exhibit Experience

The National Constitution Center's main exhibit experience is comprised of three signature attractions: **FREEDOM RISING**, a multimedia theatrical production, presented in the all-new **SIDNEY KIMMEL THEATER**; **THE STORY OF WE THE PEOPLE**, an interactive exhibit; and the iconic **SIGNERS' HALL**, featuring 42 life-size, bronze statues of the Founding Fathers.

Freedom Rising presented in the Sidney Kimmel Theater

Reimagined in 2016 with a full technical refresh, *Freedom Rising* is a state-of-the-art multimedia theater experience designed to connect visitors—in a direct, engaging, and unforgettable way—with the story of the U.S. Constitution. This 336-seat theater-in-the-round performance incorporates one actor, 360-degree projection, surprise scenic elements, theatrical lighting, and a dynamic surround soundtrack. Thus, this signature experience creates a stirring, immersive environment in which visitors come to see themselves as playing an important role in the enduring vision of the nation's founding document and the Constitution as an on-going force in their everyday lives.

The 17-minute production highlights the primary themes of the main exhibit gallery. It tells the story of "We the People" in two senses of that phrase: First, *Freedom Rising* takes the Constitution's deepest meaning to be its vision of "popular sovereignty," or rule by the people, and explores how that basic American principle has shaped our nation's history. Second, it demonstrates how the definition of citizenship has expanded over more than two hundred years of American history. Those who were left out back in the 18th century – white men without property, women, African Americans, other people of color – have gradually been included in "We the People."

The Story of We the People in the Richard and Helen DeVos Exhibit Hall

There are two concentric rings to *The Story of We the People*, the Center's main exhibit gallery:

- The outermost ring is presented chronologically with 13 sections telling the story of American history through the lens of the Constitution from 1765 until today.
- The central ring is a thematic journey, focused on civics and how our government operates.

Outermost Ring

The chronological story begins at the time of the American Revolution with the Stamp Act crisis, and it concludes with today. In this sense, the exhibit offers a panorama of American history through the lens of the Constitution, the text of which is etched on glass above the display cases. The unfolding narrative reveals that it has been millions of individual actions that have upheld and shaped our constitutional practices and freedoms. Wherever possible, personal stories have been chosen as entry points into the content.

Exhibits along the outermost ring use multiple techniques to bring the story to life: a short general video introduction to each section; text-and-graphic based story panels and reading rails; maps and images; game-like computer interactives; video and audio segments focusing on specific historical moments; selected artifacts; and walk-in immersive environments that render key ideas, moments, and stories in three dimensions. For instance, visitors can enter a recreation of the floor of the Senate during the impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson and listen to the debate, or they can step into a 1940s living room and hear one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous fireside chats playing on the radio.

The "Founders' Library," another walk-in immersive environment, presents a sampling of the books that the Library Company of Philadelphia made available to the delegates during the Constitutional Convention – giving visitors a sense of the intellectual origins of the Constitution.

Other features include the Civil War alcove, an exploration of the turning point year of 1863, which features a rare copy of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln as well as pages from an autograph book with the only-known Lincoln signature from the day that he gave the Gettysburg Address. Also, visitors can see a fascinating display of archeological artifacts from the late 1700s that were uncovered at the site of the National Constitution Center between 2000 and 2003, only two blocks from Independence Hall where the Constitution was drafted. These historic treasures illuminate daily life in Philadelphia as a new nation was being born.

Central Ring

The central pathway through the main gallery explores how our constitutional system works through a series of immersive, highly interactive exhibits designed with families and school groups in mind. Visitors have the opportunity to learn about the great rites of democracy, such as serving on a jury or voting. The American National Tree, another prominent exhibit, tells the stories of 100 Americans – a few of them well known, but most of them unheralded. By selecting their faces streaming by on touchscreens, visitors can read and hear how these noteworthy Americans have shaped constitutional history.

Roleplaying is also a key component of the central path. In one of the most popular displays, visitors can stand behind a presidential podium and take the oath of office. They can also put on a judge's robe, sit at a replica of the Supreme Court bench, and decide landmark cases selected to illustrate the broad range of constitutional issues that come before the court. *Katz v. United States* is a wiretap case involving the Fourth Amendment and issues of privacy; *Texas v. Johnson*, the flag-burning case, tested the protection of the First Amendment; *United States v. Nixon*, the Watergate tapes case, involved separation of powers and executive privilege.



Signers' Hall

Signers' Hall is a stylized evocation of the Assembly Room in the Pennsylvania State House, today known as Independence Hall, where the delegates to the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia during the summer of 1787. The room is occupied by life-sized bronze statues of 42 men: the 39 delegates who signed as well as the three present on September 17, 1787, who refused. Visitors are encouraged to walk among them and to consider them as real people, making choices that still influence the nation today. Visitors can also add their name to a digital version of the Constitution alongside the Founding Fathers' signatures.

The statues in *Signers' Hall* were created by artists at Studio EIS in Brooklyn, who used numerous historical sources, including portraits and written descriptions, to create the most accurate likenesses possible.