

**1.** It was crucial to assure that the 55 delegates who met for six days a week from May to September, 1787, were not disturbed. The cobblestone street outside Philadelphia's Independence Hall was covered with dirt so that the clatter of carriages would not distract the Founding Fathers.

**2.** James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, presided over the convention. A bachelor, a hypochondriac and a superachiever who rushed to Philadelphia two weeks early, he wound up taking so many notes (three volumes) that he never left the meetings for more than an hour.

**3.** One long-winded delegate, Alexander Hamilton, gave one speech lasting five hours. Another big talker, Gouverneur Morris, often resorted to stomping his wooden leg on the floor to emphasize a point.

**4.** Benjamin Franklin was, at 81, the oldest delegate. He was so sick from gout and kidney stones that he had to be hauled into the sessions by convicts from a nearby jail on a special sedan chair imported from France.

**5.** Jacob Shallus, a Philadelphia clerk and the father of eight, was hired to carefully write out the final document in longhand. He had 40 hours in which to copy the four sheets (then consisting of 4,440 words). For this, he was paid \$30.

**6.** The Constitution was written on parchment made from calf or lamb-skin. The ink was a mix of oak tree fluid and dye.

**7.** Even the Founding Fathers made mistakes: Pennsylvania is misspelled in the original document (an "n" is missing). The 25th Amendment also has a missing "s" in Section 4.

**8.** The Constitution was signed by 39 delegates, in geographical order — starting with New Hampshire in the north to Georgia in the south.

**9.** The U.S. boasts 182 towns named Liberty and 39 named Independence, but there's only one Constitution — in Georgia.

**10.** The Constitution, including all amendments made since the original drafting, totals 7,567 words.

## We the People

*insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common Defence, and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution*

*Section 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.*

*Section 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.*

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

*Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be admitted or accepted into this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to all free Persons, Whites, Males, aged 18 and upwards, three fifths of all other Persons.*

*and within every subsequent Term of Years, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, Whites, Males, aged 18 and upwards, three fifths of all other Persons.*

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**11.** The original document is displayed in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., in a bulletproof display case filled with helium and water vapor to preserve it by maintaining proper humidity. Every night, it is lowered 25 ft. into a vault sealed by five-ton doors and strong enough

to withstand a nuclear explosion.

**12.** The entire Constitution is on view only once a year — on Sept. 17. At other times, more than a million visitors a year can view the first and fourth pages. But this week, the entire Constitution will be on view.

**13.** Nearly 10,000 amendments have been proposed, but only 26 have become law. Any citizen can suggest a Constitutional amendment.

**14.** In 1893, an amendment was proposed that the U.S. should be known as the United States of the Earth.

**15.** The word democracy does not appear anywhere in the Constitution.

**16.** One amendment was written specifically to counter another — the 18th declared prohibition of alcohol, and the 21st repealed the 18th.

**17.** In October, 1986, Randall Bruce Husar, 36, of Colorado, attacked the

Constitution display case with a hammer. It was the first attack since the document was put on public display in the capital in 1952. The document was unharmed.

**18.** The U.S. Constitution is the oldest one in the world. At least 159 other countries have constitutions — including El Salvador, which has had 36 so far.

**19.** An original printing of the first draft of the Constitution was auctioned off in May, 1987, before a less-than-eager Washington, D.C., audience. Only one person bid for the document, which once belonged to Founding Father James Wilson. (He was nearly jailed for debt and died after a nervous breakdown.) The anonymous bidder shelled out \$85,000 for a piece of American history.

**20.** Since the birth of the Constitution, the U.S. has seen 10 generations and 40 Presidents, and Americans have made seven trips to the moon. □