

Constitution Days 1787, 1937 & 2010

*John Q. Barrett**

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Two hundred and twenty-three years ago, thirty-eight weary delegates to a convention in Philadelphia signed the Constitution of the United States. Four handwritten sheets of parchment were enough to state the terms on which thirteen independent weak little republics agreed to try to survive together as one strong nation. ...

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Those words are not original. I adapted them for 2010 from the speech that President Franklin D. Roosevelt gave on September 17, 1937, the 150th Constitution Day.

President Roosevelt spoke that evening to a large crowd in the Sylvan Theater at the base of the Washington Monument and over the national radio networks. His speech was a strong statement of what our founding document meant for him and his contemporaries—the Constitution’s inheritors—as they governed themselves. FDR, speaking in a time of global security threats and economic challenges, explained and defended the Constitution’s commitments to democracy, to effective government and to common sense.

On every Constitution Day, and perhaps more regularly, FDR’s speech bears rereading. To do so, visit www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=15459.

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