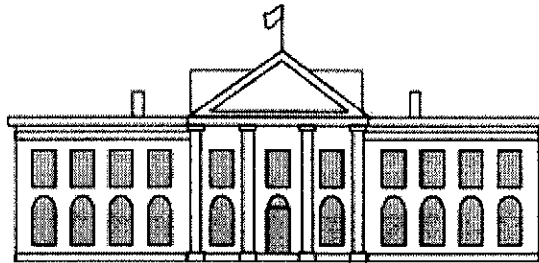




## Symbols of U.S. Government: The White House

The White House is the home of the President of the United States. It is located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. Every President except George Washington has lived there.



The President's office is called the Oval Office. Here the President does the business of the country. He signs bills and Executive Orders, and he meets with staff, visitors, and guests.

For more information on the White House, check out [The White House for Kids](#).

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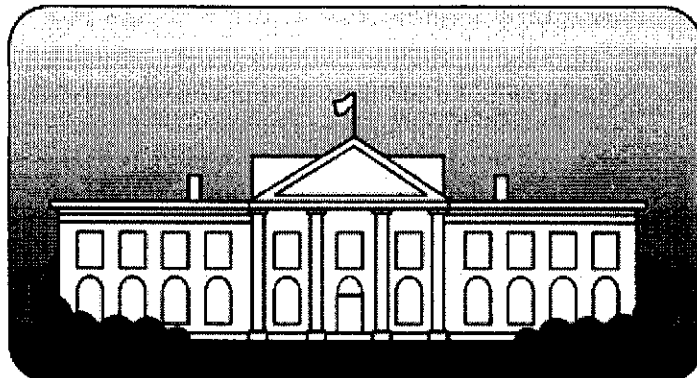
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Last updated: January 22, 2001  
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## Our Government: The Executive Branch



The executive branch makes sure people follow the laws that the legislative branch makes. The leaders of this branch are the President and Vice-President. When making important decisions, the President often asks for advice from a group of 15 helpers, known as the Cabinet. The President lives at the White House in Washington, D.C.



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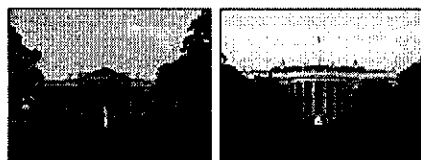
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Page Name: <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/k-2/government/gov3.html>





## Government Buildings: The White House



Click on a thumbnail for a larger image.

Located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC, the White House is one of the most popular tourist attractions in the country. The White House has been the official residence of all the presidents of the United States with the exception of George Washington. Washington served from 1789 to 1797. By the time the White House was completed in 1800, John Adams was President. The house was rebuilt and restored after it was burned by the British in August 1814.

The White House has six floors—two basements, two public floors, and two floors for the First Family. Visitors who tour the White House are able to see the most beautiful and historic rooms in the house including the East Room, the Green Room, the Blue Room, the Red Room, and the State Dining Room. These rooms are used by the President and First Lady to entertain guests and to receive leaders of other countries. The Oval Office is where the President does the business of the country—signing bills and Executive Orders and meeting with staff, visitors, and guests.

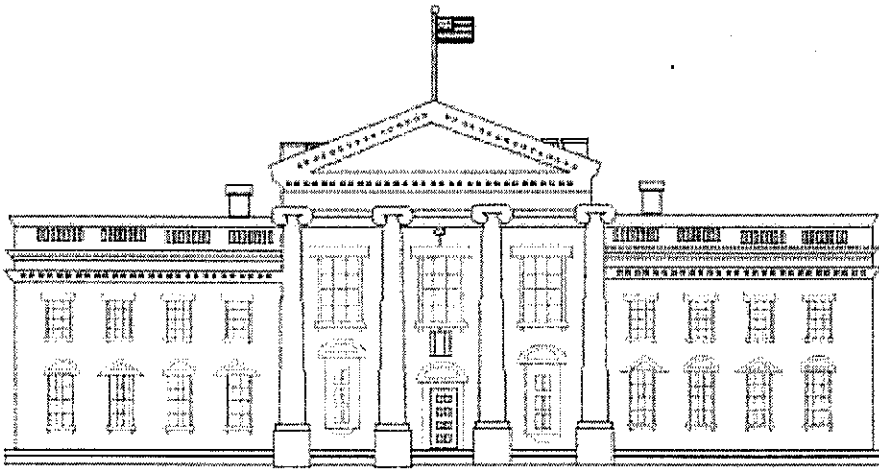
For more information on the White House, check out [The White House for Kids](#).

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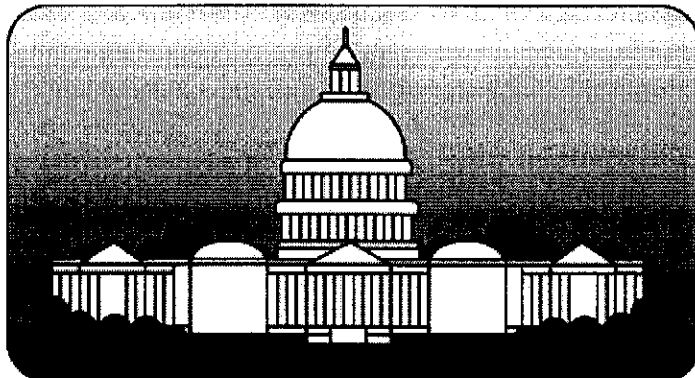
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Page Name: <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/symbols/whitehouse.html>







## Our Government: The Legislative Branch



The legislative branch makes laws for the nation. The main lawmaking body of this branch is known as Congress. Congress is made up of two parts, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Congress meets at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.



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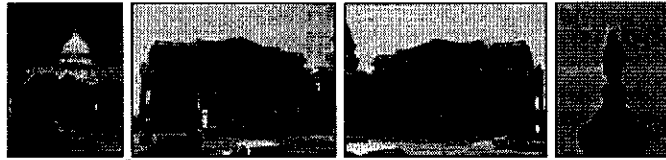
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# Government Buildings: The U.S. Capitol



Click on a thumbnail for a larger image.

Built on a hill popularly called *Capitol Hill* in Washington, DC, the U.S. Capitol has been the home of the House of Representatives and the Senate since 1800.

In March 1792, a design contest was announced to design the U.S. Capitol. All of the 16 plans submitted were rejected. A late entry by William Thornton, amateur architect from the British West Indies, was accepted in fall 1792. President Washington liked it because of its "grandeur, simplicity and convenience."

The iron dome, also white, is surmounted by a statue of a woman representing Freedom, by the American sculptor Thomas Crawford. The height of the Capitol from the baseline on the east front to the top of the statue is 287.5 ft (87.6 m).

Take a [virtual tour](#) of the U.S. Capitol from the U.S. Senate. You can learn more about the history of the Capitol from the [Architect of the Capitol](#).

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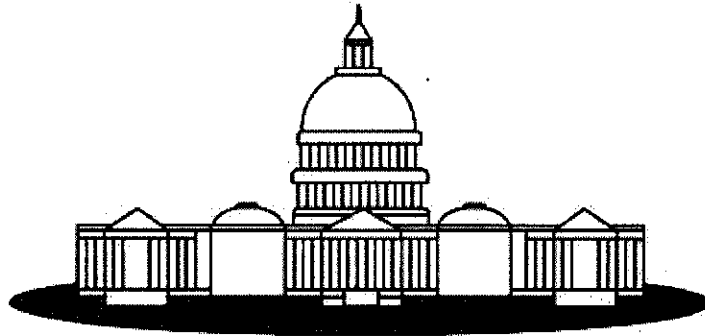
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Last updated: January 29, 2008  
 Page Name: <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/symbols/capitol.html>





# Ben's ABCs



C is for Congress. Congress is the part of the government that makes laws. The U.S. Congress is made up of two parts, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Congress meets in a building called the Capitol. C is for Congress, and C is for Capitol, too!  
 To learn more, try [Branches of Government](#).



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Last updated: February 16, 2000  
 Page Name: <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/k-2/alphabet/c.html>





## Statues and Memorials: The Statue of Liberty

Located in New York, at 151 feet (46 meters) tall (305 feet including base and pedestal), the Statue of Liberty symbolizes freedom throughout the world. Its formal name is *Liberty Enlightening the World*. The Statue was actually a gift from the people of France.

The statue, made of copper sheets with an iron framework, depicts a woman escaping the chains of tyranny, which lie at her feet. Her right hand holds aloft a burning torch that represents liberty. Her left hand holds a tablet inscribed with the date "July 4, 1776" (in Roman numerals), the day the United States declared its independence from England. She is wearing flowing robes and the seven rays of her spiked crown symbolize the seven seas and continents.

Near the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor is Ellis Island. This island served as an immigrant station and a temporary shelter for people coming to the U.S. from other countries. Between 1892 and 1954, approximately 12 million people passed through Ellis Island seeking refuge, freedom and opportunity. The main building on Ellis Island is now a museum dedicated to the history of the Ellis Island Immigration Station.



To learn more, check out the National Park Service's [Statue of Liberty National Monument](#).

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# Symbols of U.S. Government

## The Statue of Liberty

The Statue of Liberty is located in New York. The Statue of Liberty symbolizes freedom throughout the world. The Statue was actually a gift from the people of France.

The Statue represents a woman escaping the chains of tyranny. She holds a torch, which represents liberty. The Statue's full name is Liberty Enlightening the World.

For more information, check out the [National Park Service](#).



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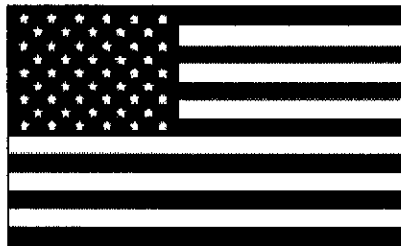
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## Symbols of U.S. Government: The Flag

The United States flag has 13 stripes. Seven are red and 6 are white. It also has 50 white stars on a blue background. The stripes represent the 13 original colonies. The 50 stars represent the 50 states in the U.S.



The first U.S. flag was designed in 1777. The flag has been changed many times since then. New stars are added each time new states join the union.

For more information, try *Our Flag* [[PDF](#), 1.78MB].

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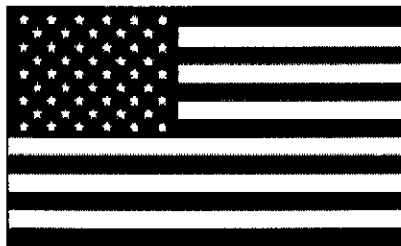
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## Symbols of U.S. Government: The Flag

The U.S. flag has undergone many changes since the first official flag of 1777. On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress passed the first Flag Act, which said that the flag would be made up of thirteen alternating red and white stripes and thirteen white stars on a blue field. Stars have been added to the flag as new states join the union. Currently, the flag contains 50 stars.



Ever wonder why the flag is red, white, and blue? While the flag's colors did not have a specific meaning at the time, the colors were significant for the Great Seal of 1782.

- White: Signifies purity and innocence
- Red: Signifies valor and bravery
- Blue: Signifies Vigilance, perseverance, and justice

Why stars and stripes? Stars are considered a symbol of the heavens and the divine goal to which man has aspired from time immemorial; the stripe is symbolic of the rays of light emanating from the sun.

To learn more, check out the following resources:

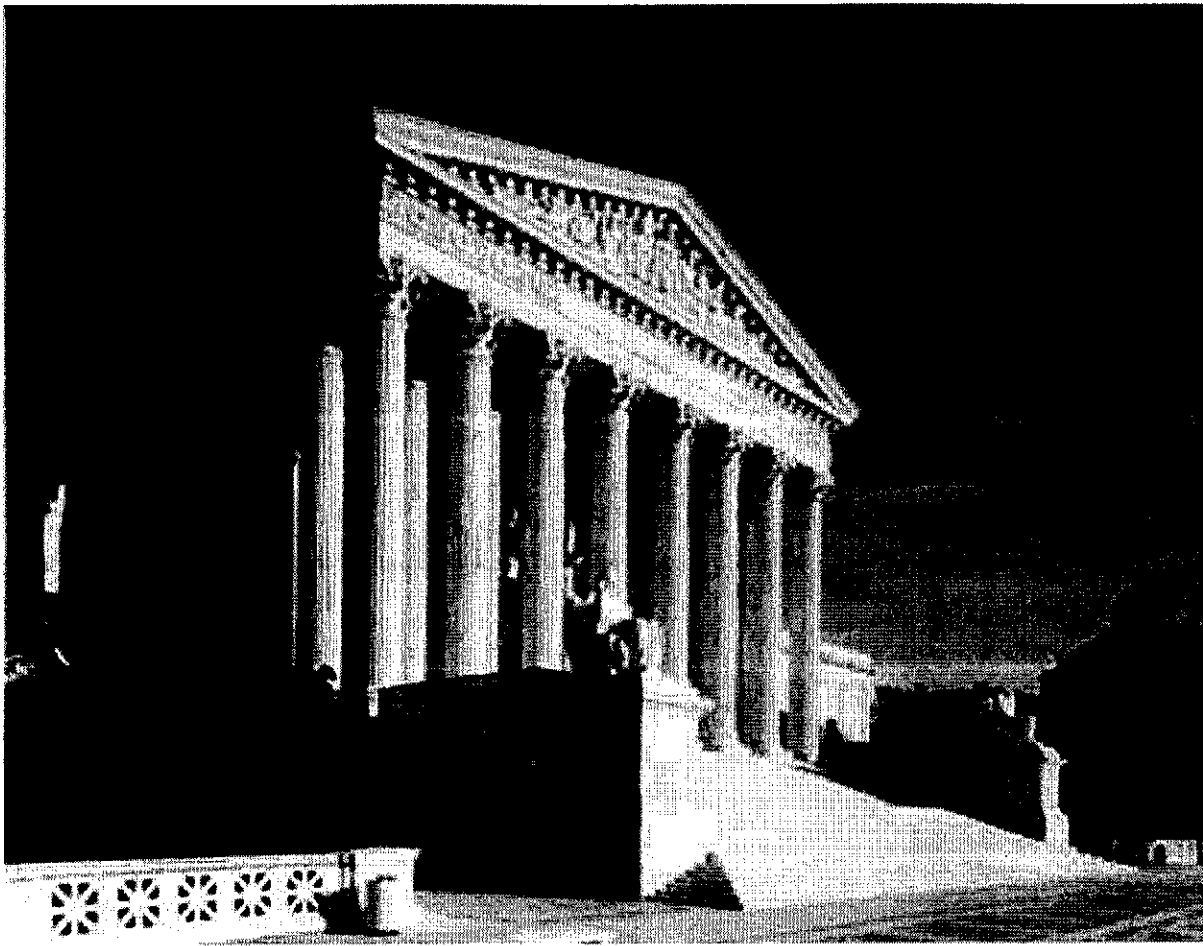
- *Our Flag* [PDF, 1.78MB], Senate Document 105-13. This document contains historical information, pictures, and other information about the U.S. flag.
- The *United States Code*, Title 4 (*Flag and Seal, Seat of Government, and the States*), Chapter 1 (*The Flag*). The *U.S. Code* is the permanent book of U.S. laws. To search, enter the word *flag* in the search terms box.

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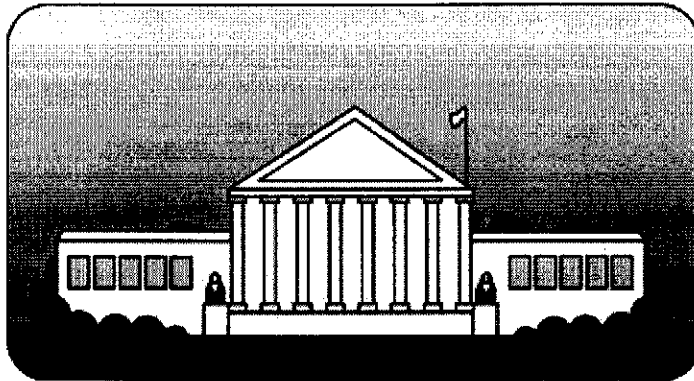
Last updated: April 29, 2009  
Page Name: <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/symbols/flag.html>







## Our Government: The Judicial Branch



When people are unsure about the meaning of a law, the judicial branch listens to many opinions and makes a decision. The judicial branch is made up of courts. The highest of these courts is the U.S. Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is made up of 9 judges. They meet at the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C.



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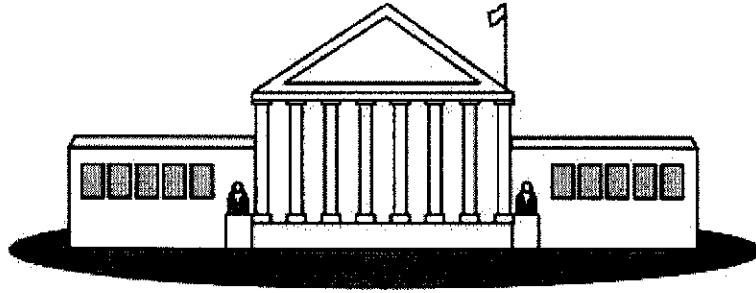
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Last updated: July 31, 2000  
Page Name: <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/k-2/government/gov4.html>





# Ben's ABCs



S is for Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States. There are nine Justices or judges on the Court. One of these is the Chief Justice. The Justices are chosen by the President and confirmed by the Senate. To learn more, try [The Supreme Court](#).



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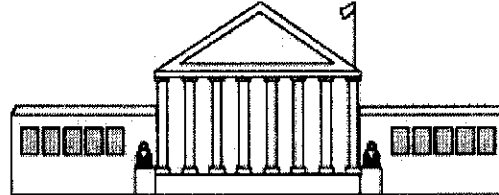
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## The Supreme Court

The Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States. The Supreme Court hears cases that have made their way through the court system, but of the more than 7,500 cases that are sent to the Supreme Court each year, only about 80 to 100 cases are actually accepted. Once the Supreme Court makes a decision, it can only be changed by another Supreme Court decision or by amending (changing) the Constitution. This is a very important power that can affect the lives of a lot of people. Also, since the main power of the Supreme Court is to decide cases that challenge the Constitution, the Court must decide if the case they receive really challenges the Constitution.

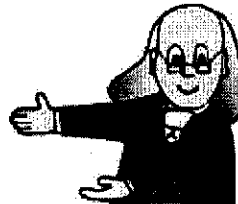


The Supreme Court is made up of nine Justices. One of these is the Chief Justice. They are appointed by the President and must be approved by the Senate. Justices have their jobs for life, unless they resign, retire, or are impeached by the House and convicted by the Senate (the removal process as described by the Constitution).

There are no requirements in order to be appointed a Justice, but all have been trained in the law. Many Justices served as members of Congress, governors, or members of the President's Cabinet. One president, William Howard Taft, was later appointed Chief Justice.

To learn more, choose from the following:

- [Branches of Government](#)
- [Judicial Branch](#)
- [The Supreme Court](#)
- [Official Supreme Court Web site](#)



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Last updated: March 11, 2002  
Page Name: <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/government/national/scourt.html>





## Government Buildings: The Supreme Court Building



Click on a thumbnail for a larger image.

Located in Washington, DC near the Capitol, this building has housed the Supreme Court since 1935. Initially, the Court met in the Merchants Exchange Building in New York City. When the capital moved to Philadelphia in 1790, the Court moved first into Independence Hall and later to City Hall. Then when the capital moved to its permanent location, Washington, DC, Congress lent the Court space in the new Capitol Building, until a permanent location was established for the Court.

Sixteen marble columns may be found at the main entrance of the Court. Above the entrance to the Supreme Court Building appears engraved motto "Equal Justice Under Law", which was designed by Cass Gilbert. Above this motto is a group of nine figures, sculpted by Robert Aitken, representing *Liberty Enthroned* guarded by *Order and Authority*. They are:

- Reclining on the far left is Chief Justice William Howard Taft, representing *Research Present*. He is portrayed as a student at Yale University, and is facing an English crown, a Pope's miter and a Bishop's crosier.
- Second from left is former Senator Elihu Root, who introduced President Taft's bill to create Washington's Fine Arts Commission.
- Third from left is the architect of the Supreme Court building, Cass Gilbert.
- The three central figures are *Authority*, *Liberty Enthroned* and *Order*.
- Third from the right is Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes, who succeeded Taft as Chief Justice as well as Chairman of the Supreme Court Building Commission.
- Second from right is Robert Aitken, sculptor of the figures.
- At the far right is John Marshall, Chief Justice of the United States from 1801 to 1835, representing *Research Past*. He is holding Roman scrolls, and is gazing at an urn, mosaic tables and an oil lamp, that rest at his feet.

On either side of the main steps are seated marble figures. These large statues are the work of sculptor James Earle Fraser. On the left is a female figure, the *Contemplation of Justice*. On the right is a male figure, the *Guardian or Authority of Law*.

For more information, check out [The Supreme Court Building](#) (PDF, 21k) from the Supreme Court.

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Last updated: January 31, 2008  
Page Name: [http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/symbols/supreme\\_court.html](http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/symbols/supreme_court.html)



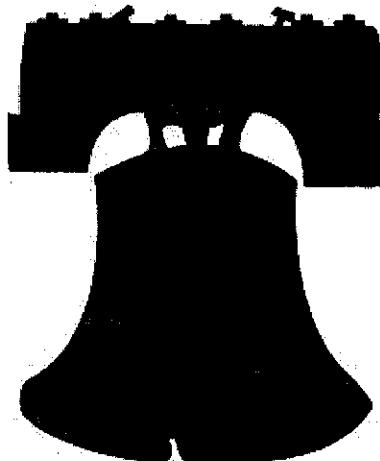




## Symbols of U.S. Government: The Liberty Bell

The Liberty Bell has become the symbol of freedom in the United States. It rang when the Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence.

The Bell was cast in London, England in 1752. It is made mostly of copper and tin. After it arrived in the U.S., the Bell cracked. A new bell was made from the metal in the old one, but this one also cracked. A third bell was built from the same metal, and now this one has a crack too!



The last time the bell rang was on February 23, 1846 for George Washington's birthday celebration. Today, the Liberty Bell hangs in Philadelphia for all to see.

For more information, check out the [National Park Service](#).

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Last updated: August 1, 2000  
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