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POWERS OF THE PRESIDENT SPOTLIGHTS HOW VARIOUS PRESIDENTS HAVE WIELDED AND TESTED PRESIDENTIAL POWERS, DEFINING OFFICE FROM 1789 TO TODAY

Timed to coincide with the 2016 election year, Powers of the President, which features original documents from the National Archives and its Presidential Libraries, highlights key presidential powers found in the Constitution and explains how they have been exercised over time.

George Washington’s Acts of Congress (on loan from George Washington’s Mount Vernon) – including his personally annotated copy of the U.S. Constitution – will also be on display.

Exhibit opens Friday, July 22

Philadelphia (July 21, 2016) – On Friday, July 22, 2016, the National Constitution Center will open Powers of the President, a timely new exhibit designed to explore the nature of executive power under the Constitution, and how various presidents have exercised it. Powers of the President uses historic documents from the National Archives and the Presidential Libraries of Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and George H. Bush. The exhibit also includes media and interpretive graphics to showcase how presidents have been defining and redefining the office while testing the boundaries of presidential power over time.

The exhibit is timed to coincide with the 2016 presidential election and the Democratic National Convention taking place in Philadelphia this July.

“As America selects a new president, this exhibit explores what the Constitution actually says about presidential powers and how they have been interpreted over time,” said Jeffrey Rosen, president and CEO of the National Constitution Center. “We are thrilled to have assembled significant original documents about executive power from the National Archives and other lenders across America.”

Powers of the President explores several presidential powers contained primarily in Article II of the Constitution: vetoing legislation, issuing pardons, the ability to appoint and remove federal officers, and the powers that come with being chief executive, chief diplomat, and commander in chief. The exhibit also examines how presidents have tested the limits of their authority and how they have used the office’s “bully pulpit” to reach the American people. In each exhibit case, key documents present well-known presidential actions as well as the actions of lesser-known presidents, demonstrating the impact they all have had while holding the nation’s highest office.

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In *Powers of the President*, visitors will learn more about the **veto power**. The Constitution authorizes presidents to veto, or reject, any legislation passed by Congress that they do not wish to sign into law. Visitors can view presidential vetoes from Herbert Hoover, Ronald Reagan, Andrew Johnson, and the 1832 veto of the rechartering of the Second National Bank from Andrew Jackson which set a precedent future presidents would follow.

Along with leading the executive branch, the president assumes the role of overseeing the nation’s military and foreign affairs. The **“chief” powers** case highlights the president’s role as chief diplomat, empowering the president to negotiate treaties (with the Senate’s consent) and receive foreign ambassadors, and commander in chief, guaranteeing the American people civilian military control. Taking the lead in defense and diplomacy often tests the limits of presidential powers against the other branches of government.

As part of the exhibit, George Washington’s *Acts of Congress* will also be displayed. On loan from Mount Vernon, the *Acts of Congress* contains Washington’s hand-written notes on his personal copy of the Constitution, highlighting the powers and duties of his new office.

Another power of the president, the **pardon power**, is not subject to congressional or judicial review but there are limitations—they can only be granted for federal offences and cannot be applied to impeachments cases. Presidents can issue an unlimited number of pardons while in office, typically in the hundreds but several have granted a thousand or more. Most go unnoticed but some pardons have reaped considerable attention and provoked controversy. Visitors can view the ceremonial copy of Gerald Ford’s 1974 pardon of Richard Nixon along with a letter from a third grader sent to President Ford three days after the pardon saying “I think you are half right and half wrong.”

The Framers constructed the Constitution to ensure the president’s powers would remain in check, yet all presidents who serve long enough test the limits of their executive authority. In the **tests of power** case, visitors learn about the role of “We the People” when it comes to keeping the president in bounds, as well as the role of Congress and the courts. Visitors can see controversial executive orders as well as tickets from the impeachment trials of Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton.

**Appointment and removal powers**—the president’s authority to appoint or remove federal officers—is seen as one of the most potent. Appointing high-ranking officials such as cabinet heads, ambassadors, and Supreme Court justices whose views align with a president’s political philosophy allows them to continue shaping the government even after they leave office. Presidents also consider the removal of federal officers necessary to hold their employees accountable and ensure that they fulfil their constitutional duties. Visitors can view George H.W. Bush’s statement declaring his disappointment over the rejection of cabinet nominee John Tower for secretary of defense.

The exhibit also features a media element exploring how presidents have used the **“bully pulpit,”** a phrase coined by Theodore Roosevelt. Here, visitors can watch clips of speeches from every president beginning with Calvin Coolidge to see critical times presidents used the inherent power of their office to address the nation and sway public opinion.
The National Constitution Center is located at 525 Arch Street on Philadelphia’s Independence Mall. The Center is open 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays and from noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays. From July 22 – July 27 the Center will be the hub of PoliticalFest, a nonpartisan festival celebrating history and the election season, during PoliticalFest, the Center will be open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Ticket Information**

**Powers of the President** July 22, 2016 – January 20, 2017
Included in general admission to the National Constitution Center

**About the National Constitution Center**
The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia inspires active 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 non-partisan 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.

**About the U.S. National Archives**
The National Archives and Records Administration is an independent Federal agency that serves American democracy by safeguarding and preserving the records of our Government, so people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage. The National Archives ensures continuing access to the essential documentation of the rights of American citizens and the actions of their government. From the Declaration of Independence to accounts of ordinary Americans, the holdings of the National Archives directly touch the lives of millions of people. The agency supports democracy, promotes civic education, and facilitates historical understanding of our national experience. The National Archives carries out its mission through a nationwide network of archives, records centers, and Presidential Libraries, and online at www.archives.gov.

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**EDITOR’S NOTE:** A complete list of historic documents featured in Powers of the President follows.

**Veto of the Rechartering of the Second National Bank, 1832**
Andrew Jackson
The Library Company of Philadelphia
Veto of the Third Reconstruction Act, 1867
Andrew Johnson
Reproduction
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act, 1988
Ronald Reagan
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Veto of a Public-Works Program, 1932
Herbert Hoover
The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum, West Branch, Iowa

The Acts of Congress, 1789
Annotated by George Washington
Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, purchase made possible through lead donations by an Anonymous Benefactor, Mr. and Mrs. William H. Borthwick, the A. Alfred Taubman Fund, Mr. Terry J. Kohler, 2012
*Please note: two weeks after the exhibit’s opening this original document will be replaced with a reproduction for the remainder of the exhibit’s display.

Proclamation Declaring a State of War between the U.S. & Mexico, 1846
James K. Polk
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Proclamation for Law & Order in the Territory of Kansas, 1856
Franklin Pierce
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Order to Desegregate the Armed Forces, 1948
Harry S. Truman
Reproduction
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Framework for a Settlement in Sinai, 1978
Jimmy Carter
Reproduction
Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum

Pardon of the Leaders of the Whiskey Rebellion, 1797
George Washington
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC08072

Offering a Full Pardon to Mormon Rebels in the Utah Territory, 1858
James Buchanan
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
Pardon of Richard Nixon, 1974
Gerald R. Ford
Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Letter to President Ford on Richard Nixon’s Pardon, 1974
Anthony Ferreira
Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Pardon of Vietnam-Era Draft Dodgers, 1977
Jimmy Carter
Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum

Suspending the Writ of Habeas Corpus, 1862
Abraham Lincoln
Reproduction
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Relocating the Japanese to Internment Camps, 1942
Franklin D. Roosevelt
Reproduction
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Taking Control of the Nation’s Steel Mills, 1952
Harry S. Truman
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Impeachment Trial Ticket, 1868
Andrew Johnson
The North Carolina Museum of History, Raleigh, North Carolina

Impeachment Trial Ticket, 1999
William J. Clinton
Private Collector

Nomination of William Howard Taft as Chief Justice, 1921
Warren G. Harding
Reproduction
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Recess Appointment of Earl Warren as Chief Justice, 1953
Dwight D. Eisenhower
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Nomination of Sandra Day O’Connor as Supreme Court Justice, 1981
Ronald Reagan
Reproduction
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
Statement on Rejected Cabinet Nomination of John Tower for Defense Secretary, 1989
George H.W. Bush
*On loan from the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum*

Letter to Interim Secretary of State Charles Lee on Removal of State Department Official, 1800
John Adams
*National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.*

Letter Removing Edwin Stanton as Secretary of War, 1868
Andrew Johnson
Reproduction
*Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Edwin McMasters Stanton Papers, 1818-1921*

Memo to Jimmy Carter Recommending the Removal of His Cabinet, 1979
Hamilton Jordan
*Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum*