
STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-2016

National Constitution Center: Our Strategic Mission

The National Constitution Center is the first and only institution in America established by Congress to “disseminate information about the United States Constitution on a non-partisan basis in order to increase the awareness and understanding of the Constitution among the American people.”

In 2013, as the National Constitution Center commemorates our 10th anniversary, we have an invigorated and clear-eyed focus on that non-partisan mission, which is best expressed in our three goals: to serve the nation and the world as the **Museum of We the People**, a national **Headquarters for Civic Education**, and **America’s Town Hall**. We illuminate the constitutional debates that affect the lives of all Americans by hosting constitutional conversations on Independence Mall in Philadelphia and across a range of media platforms, and we inspire active citizenship by celebrating the American constitutional tradition. Our three goals can be summarized in three words: Visit. Learn. Debate.

We keep the three goals for fulfilling our mission front and center since they are spelled out in our congressional charter itself. On September 16, 1988, a year after the bicentennial of the Constitution, Congress passed the Constitution Heritage Act, which requires the National Constitutional Center to serve the following functions:

- 1) serving as a center of exhibits and related materials on the history and contemporary significance of the Constitution.

*In other words, we are the **Museum of We the People**.*

- 2) directing a national program of public education on the Constitution; issuing traveling exhibits, commissioning radio and television programs, furnishing materials for the schools and providing other education services.

*In other words, we are the national **Headquarters for Civic Education**.*

- 3) functioning as an intellectual center, drawing both academics and practitioners to debate and refine constitutional issues and, at the same time, providing intellectual support for the Center’s exhibits and public education programs

*In other words, we are **America’s Town Hall**.*

Today, our mission is more important than ever. The Constitution continues to be at the heart of our nation’s most contentious issues. But in a politically polarized age, there are too few

opportunities for people on opposite sides of a constitutional question to gather together for civil debate. At the National Constitution Center, we are a platform not for political debate but for constitutional debate. Our congressional mission positions us to be the leading non-partisan forum for civic education and dialogue in America. If there is a constitutional question in the news, historic or contemporary, we want to illuminate the issue and bring together the best arguments on all sides of the debate. By recording and distributing the best constitutional arguments across a range of media platforms, we will encourage citizens to make up their own minds.

Our Strategy: Delivering Our Promise

Over the next three years, which coincide with the 225th anniversary of the Bill of Rights, we aspire to be the national and international center for learning and debate about the meaning of the Constitution and Bill of Rights—in Philadelphia, across America, and around the globe. From 2014-16, our museum experience will be transformed by our display of one of the 12 surviving copies of the Bill of Rights. We will construct a magnificent new gallery to display this priceless document, along with copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. This new gallery will be the physical anchor for three years of civic education and debate about the meaning of the fundamental rights that affect all Americans.

To achieve our strategic mission in an era of constantly changing technology, the National Constitution Center must enhance not only our physical but also our virtual presence. Over the next three years, we aspire dramatically to increase our role as America’s Town Hall and a Civic Education Headquarters across a range of media platforms; “commissioning radio and television programs,” as Congress required, as well as hosting debates, programs, and constitutional conversations that will be broadcast, digitally recorded, and distributed online. We will establish a broad range of media partnerships that will allow us to record events at the Constitution Center and in remote studios with broadcast quality video and audio and to distribute that content to a national and international audience.

We will transform our website into the preeminent place in the nation that commissions constitutional conversations on the issues of the day, featuring scholars and commentators from everywhere on the constitutional spectrum. We will launch dynamic new constitutional seminars and debates that engage a range of groups: K-12 schoolchildren, educators, journalists, judges, legislators, foreign parliamentarians, and police officers. And we will transform our online Interactive Constitution into the best on the Web. Through these programs and partnerships, we hope that people across America and around the globe will come to think of the National Constitution Center as the place they can find the best arguments on all sides of any constitutional question so they participate in an informed debate about what the U.S. Constitution means and how it affects their lives.

Visit. Learn. Debate. The next three pages will identify the potential programs and partnerships that will help us achieve our mission over the next three years.

The Museum of We The People

Our Strategic Goal: Visit

To bring the United States Constitution to life through interactive exhibitions and programs centered on our display of one of the 12 surviving copies of the Bill of Rights. To become a must-see museum destination for visitors from around the world, as essential to the historic Philadelphia experience as Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell.

Key Programs

1. Construct a Gallery of Freedom

We will create a new magnificent exhibition space that will include one of the 12 surviving copies of the Bill of Rights. The new gallery will tell the story of American freedom from the Declaration of Independence to the Constitution to the Bill of Rights, while exploring the similarities and differences between these founding documents. Broadly conceived as a Gallery of Freedom, the new exhibition space will include priceless copies of the founding documents, as well as interactive digital content. This is a transformative opportunity for the National Constitution Center, and over the next three years, we will evaluate the benefits of an increasing focus on acquiring and displaying historically significant documents of freedom.

2. Refresh and Update the Visitor Experience

During the next three years, we will begin significant improvements to the visitor experience including refreshed educational museum programs, interactive experiences, field trip packages, celebrations of civic holidays, and live performances such as *Living News*. We will also consider an update of *Freedom Rising* and explore ways to ensure that the Main Exhibition dynamically complements the new Gallery of Freedom through interactive technology and cutting-edge experiences for all ages, such as digital content that allows visitors to create their own Bill of Rights or write their own 28th Amendment.

3. Present Must-See Feature Exhibitions

The National Constitution Center will present compelling traveling exhibits from outside institutions—such as *Capture the Moment: The Pulitzer Prize Photographs* and *Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello*—while continuing to evaluate whether we should create original traveling exhibits—such as the critically successful *American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*—or acquire traveling exhibits developed elsewhere.

Headquarters for Civic Education

Our Strategic Goal: Learn

To become the premier source of civic education and information about the United States Constitution by developing the best Interactive Constitution on the Web; developing programs, seminars and videos that promote constitutional literacy for K-12 students as well as citizens of all ages; and distributing our digital educational content nationally and internationally.

Key Programs

1. Enhance, Expand, and Promote the Online Interactive Constitution

We will develop the Interactive Constitution into an unparalleled online tool, allowing people around the world to click on any clause of the Constitution and Bill of Rights and understand its meaning through multi-layered content: scholarly analysis, historical material, judicial decisions, standards-aligned lesson plans and classroom activities, real-time engagement opportunities, and multimedia resources such as videos, news reports, and blog posts.

2. Serve as the Leading Producer of Constitutional Seminars and Courses for All Ages

The National Constitution Center aims to be the leading convener of constitutional seminars and civic education workshops for students and educators of all ages. We will expand our offerings to provide professional development and learning opportunities for those actively engaged in politics, law, and public service, including judges, legislators, journalists, foreign parliamentarians, and police officers. We will explore platforms for broad distribution of seminars and lectures, including MOOCS.

3. Develop and Digitally Distribute K-12 Civic Education Resources

Within the rubric of the Common Core, we will continue to pioneer digital content about the Constitution for teachers and students nationwide. We will expand the *Constitution Hall Pass* series of civic education videos across a range of media platforms. We will also encourage student-created constitutional documentaries for broad distribution. And we will build a resource library for our partners and teachers to use the National Constitution Center's digital content as a classroom resource.

America's Town Hall

Our Strategic Goal: Debate

To serve as America's Town Hall and a national and international center for constitutional debate across a range of media platforms—including video, audio, radio, television, and the Web.

Key Programs

1. Increase the Quantity and Scale of Town Hall Programming

We will dramatically increase the quantity and scale of town hall programming at the National Constitution Center, from evening events in the 600-seat Grand Hall Overlook and 200-seat F.M. Kirby Auditorium to intimate 50-person discussions in the John C. Bogle Chairman's Room to programs recorded in remote studios. These events will include constitutional debates, conversations, panels, and lectures on a weekly and monthly basis that bring together all sides of the constitutional questions at the center of American life. The Liberty Medal will continue to serve as a non-partisan recognition of constitutional achievement.

2. Document and Distribute Town Hall Content on Multiple Media Platforms

We will acquire broadcast-ready video and audio equipment to record and distribute National Constitution Center-produced content. We will install or contract broadcast studios for National Constitution Center commentators to contribute to constitutional discussions. In addition, we will form media partnerships to record and distribute our Town Hall content on every media platform, including web, radio, TV, and podcasts.

Transform our Website into a Daily Forum for Constitutional Debate and Engagement

The National Constitution Center website will be reconfigured to feature breaking constitutional events and debates and to reflect our three central goals: Visit. Learn. Debate. We will also redesign the *Constitution Daily* blog as permanent homepage feature called America's Town Hall, offering a thoughtful, comprehensive, and balanced presentation of daily constitutional issues, with the potential to grow into a magazine-like forum with audio and video as well as print content. We will create a roster of distinguished commentators on all sides of the political spectrum who will contribute real-time content to web debates, radio and TV programs, and evening programs.