



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

Sandra Gioia Treadway
Librarian of Virginia

Bill of Rights on Rare Public Display on September 16 and 17 At Library of Virginia

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For Immediate Release

In honor of Constitution Week, the Library of Virginia will display Virginia's 1789 manuscript copy of the proposed United States Bill of Rights, with its original 12 amendments on September 16 and 17, 2011. The Bill of Rights will be on view in the lobby of the Library of Virginia from 10:00 AM until 4:30 PM on September 16 and from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM on September 17 to offer visitors a chance to remember the enduring importance of the Bill of Rights. At noon on September 16, there will be a public reading of the Bill of Rights, as adopted, on the staircase landing of the Library, announced outside the building by an 18th-century town crier.

This priceless document, one of only 12 surviving original signed copies of the Bill of Rights, is a testament to the important individual rights of American citizens. It is the copy that Congress sent to the Virginia General Assembly for ratification or rejection. Fifteen and a half years after Virginia adopted its own Declaration of Rights, on December 15, 1791, the Commonwealth became the 11th state to approve the third through twelfth amendments, which became the first ten amendments to the Constitution, known ever after as the Bill of Rights. The second of the amendments proposed in 1789 was ratified in May 1992 and became the Twenty-Seventh Amendment to the Constitution.

This 1789 manuscript on parchment is one of the many treasures held in trust by the Library of Virginia for the citizens of the commonwealth. It was last on public display on September 11, 2002.

"The U.S. Bill of Rights owes much to Virginians," said Librarian of Virginia Sandra G. Treadway. "George Mason, author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, first proposed that these amendments be added to the Constitution. James Madison, a member of the United States House of Representatives in 1789, drew on the amendments that the Virginia's ratification convention had proposed to introduce the original draft of what became the Bill of Rights. The powerful ideas embraced in this document reflect the heart and soul of our liberty. The Library of Virginia invites citizens, school groups, and government officials to stop by and view this fundamental statement of our rights as citizens."

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The Library of Virginia, located at 800 East Broad Street in historic downtown Richmond, was created by the General Assembly in 1823 to organize, care for, and manage the state's growing collection of books and official documents. Today, its collections include nearly 119 million archival items and more than 1.8 million books, serials, newspapers, and state and federal documents that tell the story of the history of Virginia. It is a rich treasure house of materials available to all.