

The preamble sets the stage for the Constitution. It clearly communicates the intentions of the framers and the purpose of the document. The preamble is an introduction to the highest law of the land but it is not the law. It does not define government powers or individual rights. The Preamble was placed in the Constitution during the last days of the Constitutional Convention by the Committee on Style and Arrangement. It was not proposed or discussed on the floor of the convention beforehand. The initial wording of the preamble did not refer to the people of the United States, rather, it referred to people of the various states, which was the norm at the time. The word "people" was not used in earlier documents (like the 1778 Treaty of Alliance with France, the Articles of Confederation, and the 1783 Treaty of Paris recognizing American independence). The phrase 'these United States' was used followed immediately by a listing of the states, from north to south. The change was made by Committee head Gouverneur Morris to advance the idea of being a citizen of a single union of states rather than how most Americans thought of themselves, as citizens of their respective states. The Preamble itself imparts three central concepts: (1) the source of power to enact the Constitution (i.e., the People of the United States); (2) the broad ends to which the Constitution is ordain[ed] and establish[ed]; and (3) the authors' intent for the Constitution to be a legal instrument of lasting Posterity.