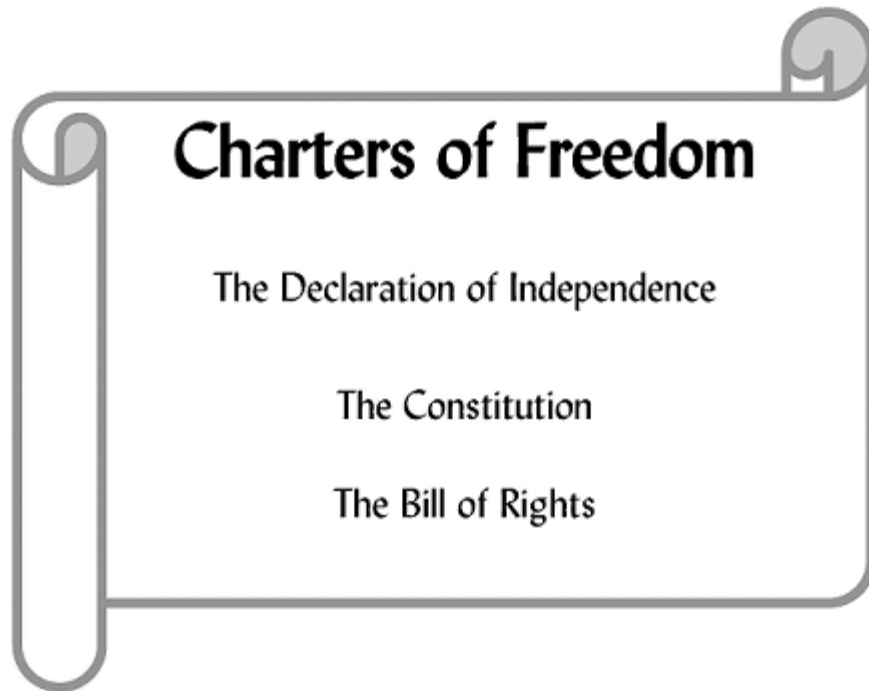




Today's partisan battles on the role of government create cynicism when politicians make promises then do something different. You can do something about it because your vote has consequences. An educated and participatory citizenry increases good governance. American civil society rests upon the ideals of its citizens who have a vested interest in how their government operates; respects diverse views; and holds people accountable for their actions. It is also based upon a belief that all citizens should contribute to society as a means of ensuring that it continues. If these words bring back memories, think back to your Eight Grade Civics course.

The first people to come to America-- voluntarily and by force-- formed the original 13 British colonies between 1607 and 1732. They built agrarian societies, founded civic groups, built places of worship, and enacted legislatures to self-govern themselves. They formed a unity of purpose using a set of ideals based on individual liberties, equality, and shared and limited government.

On July 4, 1776 the Declaration of Independence was an official Act to notify Great Britain that American colonies denounced the mother land's actions and would go its own way. When the American Revolutionary War ended in 1783, Great Britain recognized America's independence with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. The Articles of Confederation created a weak central government. It was suitable to gain independence, but proved to be problematic when raising funds from individual states to pay its war debts. The states had more power than the Continental Congress. Some were reluctant or could not afford to raise sufficient funds. Rather than revising the Articles, an entirely new document would be drafted and put to the states for ratification.