

THE BILL OF RIGHTS MONUMENT PROJECT

DECEMBER 15, 2020

MONUMENTS THAT WILL BRING US TOGETHER

Today is **BILL OF RIGHTS DAY**, the 229th anniversary of this cornerstone of our free society. In a testament to the power of its ideas principles once considered radical, like freedom of expression and belief, the presumption of innocence, due process and equality under the law, are now considered universal human rights. Yet today the Bill of Rights is barely taught in our schools, and all but invisible in our public square.

THE BILL OF RIGHTS MONUMENT PROJECT is a 501(c)3 nonprofit created to help fill that void by putting monuments of the Bill of Rights on the grounds of all 50 State Capitols. We dedicated America's first Bill of Rights Monument at the Arizona Capitol in Phoenix, where it quickly become a must-see attraction for the tens of thousands of school children who visit the Capitol each year. That success led to the authorization of additional State Capitol projects in Oklahoma and Alabama, with the California legislature set to consider another next year.

We do not request or accept public funding for any of our projects. Our efforts across America are the result of contributions from thousands of individual Americans who share our commitment to strengthening awareness of these founding ideals, as well as the support of great organizations including Newman's Own Foundation, Anheuser-Busch, and the Arizona Cardinals and Arizona Diamondbacks.

This year's anniversary takes place against a background of the most bitter political climate many Americans have experienced in their lifetimes. Resembling nothing so much as a bad marriage, opposing sides repeatedly talk past each other, unwilling to recognize our shared history or the common values that can bring us together.

THE BILL OF RIGHTS MONUMENT PROJECT is one answer to this divisiveness. These monuments are being created to bring Americans together, in celebration of what's truly exceptional about our country: that we are the first nation in history to be founded on such a visionary set of ideas and principles.

This is not to say America has always lived up to them, let alone that our founders were visionary enough to transcend the history of their own times. But they did manage to put in place a truly revolutionary framework, one designed to blunt the worst aspects of human nature, such as the drive for absolute power and dominion over others, and to strengthen its most noble instinct; that every individual has an equal right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Nothing bears out the continuing promise of this framework better than the history of the Bill of Rights itself. When it was ratified in 1791, the freedoms and principles in the Bill of Rights only applied to roughly 5% of the people living in the United States. They didn't apply to slaves, women, free blacks or Native Americans, or to white males of less than a certain status and property.

Yet there is not a single exclusionary phrase in the Bill of Rights, so that as our expectation of freedom grew through the experience of it, along with the wrenching tragedy of a civil war and countless movements inspired by the promise of equality, the Bill of Rights became our touchstone; the embodiment of rights and liberties that Americans today see as belonging to all, equally. This is the enduring genius of the Bill of Rights..

When completed, **THE BILL OF RIGHTS MONUMENT PROJECT** will leave a legacy of unprecedented scope: a national network of landmark monuments spanning America's State Capitols, providing inspirational settings for millions of visitors every year to encounter and engage with the freedoms and principles in the Bill of Rights, and with each other. We hope you'll join us in making this vision a reality.



Chris Bliss
Executive Director
The Bill of Rights Monument Project