

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026

Message on the Birthday of Benjamin Franklin

January 17, 2026

Today we celebrate the towering life and legacy of Benjamin Franklin—printer and philosopher, inventor and diplomat, public servant and patriot, and one of the most consequential Americans to ever live. On what would have been his 320th birthday, we honor his restless genius, his steadfast devotion to liberty, and his legendary contributions to our national story.

Born on January 17, 1706, in Boston, Massachusetts, Franklin grew up the 15th of 17 children. Raised with little formal education, he taught himself how to read and write, emerging at age 23 as one of the most successful and influential publishers in the Colonies. He was also a passionate innovator, always striving to improve the lives of his fellow citizens through public service and the marvels of science. Throughout his life, he invented the lightning rod and the first bifocal glasses, harnessed the power of electricity with his famous "key and kite" experiment, established the first public library and volunteer fire department, and served as the first Postmaster General, binding the Colonies together with an organized mail system long before they were bound together as one Nation.

Of his countless triumphs and successes, his most epic contributions to our Republic were those that fortified the cause of freedom. While living in England as an ambassador for the Pennsylvania Assembly, Franklin witnessed firsthand the growing British hostility toward the Colonies. In 1775, Franklin was selected as a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, where, together with fellow patriots John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, he helped draft the Declaration of Independence, suggesting to Jefferson that he include the immortal phrase: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

Franklin's unshakable commitment to the causes of the Revolution ultimately led him across the Atlantic once more, where he played a pivotal role in securing French support for the patriot cause against the British Empire and acted as a principal negotiator of the 1783 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Revolutionary War. After American independence was finally won, he played a vital role in rallying support for the ratification of the Constitution in 1788. Franklin is one of only six men to have signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Benjamin Franklin is often remembered as the "First American," a title that reflects a life devoted to curiosity, industry, and the cause of human freedom. His intellect and character helped shape an American identity grounded in courage, self-reliance, and civic duty. Franklin gave the young country confidence and direction, demonstrating how knowledge and public service could advance the cause of liberty. His legacy endures in our institutions, our Constitution, and the very character of our Republic, a testament to how one man's ideas and actions can echo through the history of a nation for 250 glorious years.

Happy birthday, Benjamin Franklin.

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