

# NEWS RELEASE

Arizona Supreme Court  
Administrative Office of the Courts



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Sept. 17, 2025

## Statement on Constitution Day from Chief Justice Ann Timmer

**PHOENIX** – Today, we celebrate Constitution Day, which commemorates the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787.

Recently, my colleagues and I made [a short video](#) celebrating the Constitution. We were each given a very short two minutes to describe what the Constitution means to us. That’s a daunting task; how to describe the most meaningful document to our democracy in two minutes?

I discussed the issue with my law clerks, who recently graduated from law school. One of them told me her constitutional law professor used a snippet from Homer’s epic poem “The Odyssey” to describe Americans’ commitment to the Constitution. It stuck in her head, and now it’s in mine, too. Because I think it perfectly, and colorfully, describes our relationship to the Constitution, I pass it on to you.

In “The Odyssey,” Odysseus is trying to get home from the Trojan War and encounters one obstacle after the other. His route took him by an island inhabited by creatures known as Sirens—part-woman and part-bird—who sang songs to sailors, enticing them to crash their ships on the island’s rocky shore and die. (Neither women nor birds come off well in this part of the poem.) Odysseus was forewarned and ordered his sailors to stuff their ears with beeswax and keep rowing. But Odysseus was curious and wanted to hear the song. So, he asked his sailors to tie him tightly to the mast and leave him there no matter how he begged to be untied until they were well beyond the island. As the ship passed the island, Odysseus struggled against the ropes, desperate to follow the Sirens’ song, which promised a host of rewards. But the crew rowed on, and Odysseus remained stuck to the mast, saving everyone from certain death.

The law professor likened Odysseus’s mast to the Constitution and Americans as Odysseus. I think this is an apt description. People are often tempted by the Sirens’ song—for example, shutting down unpopular speech; rushing to enter judgment against a person we think is guilty of a horrendous crime; or bypassing due process of law or separation of powers to quickly achieve a popular result. But to preserve our democracy and our freedoms, we must remain lashed to the Constitution. The ropes that bind us are our deep-seated beliefs in liberty, equality, democracy, and justice for all. And the sailors who keep rowing out of harm’s way are elected officials from all three branches, who must block out cries to cut ties with the Constitution and veer from the clear course set by the rule of law.

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As we go about our day, please spare a thought about the Constitution and its importance to our lives in this Country. As the oldest constitutional democracy in the world, our nation has been guided by this remarkable document—the shortest constitution in the world—since it began operating on March 4, 1789. As long as we stay tethered to the Constitution, our democracy will remain strong, ensuring that the first three words of that document—“We The People”—continues to mean that government exists to serve all of us and not the other way around.

With appreciation,

*Ann A. Scott Timmer*  
*Chief Justice, Arizona Supreme Court*

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