

## Emancipation Proclamation Resource Document

Almost from the beginning of his administration, Lincoln was pressured by abolitionists and radical Republicans to issue an Emancipation Proclamation. In principle, Lincoln approved, but he postponed action against slavery until he believed he had wider support from the American Public. The passage of the Second Confiscation Act by Congress on July 17, 1862, which freed the slaves of everyone in rebellion against the government, provided the desired signal. Not only had Congress relieved the Administration of considerable strain with its limited initiative on emancipation, it demonstrated an increasing public abhorrence toward slavery.

Lincoln had already drafted what he termed his "Preliminary Proclamation." He read his initial draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to Secretaries William H. Seward and Gideon Welles on July 13, 1862. For a moment, both Secretaries were speechless. Quickly collecting his thoughts, Seward said something about anarchy in the South and possible foreign intervention, but Welles was apparently too confused to respond. Lincoln let the matter drop.

Nine days later, on July 22, Lincoln raised the issue in a regularly scheduled Cabinet meeting. The reaction was mixed. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, correctly interpreting the Proclamation as a military measure designed both to deprive the Confederacy of slave labor and bring additional men into the Union Army, advocated its immediate release. Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase was equally supportive, but Montgomery Blair, the Postmaster General, foresaw defeat in the fall elections. Attorney General Edward Bates, a conservative, opposed civil and political equality for Blacks but gave his qualified support. Fortunately, President Lincoln only wanted the advice of his Cabinet on the style of the Proclamation, not its substance. The course was set.

The Cabinet meeting of September 22, 1862, resulted in the political and literary refinement of the July draft, and on January 1, 1863, Lincoln composed the final Emancipation Proclamation. It was the crowning achievement of his administration.

Source: Library of Congress: Abraham Lincoln Papers

**The Emancipation Proclamation**  
January 1, 1863

**A Transcription**

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States."

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of

Norfolk and Portsmouth[]), and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN  
WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.