Beginning with the Continental Congress in 1774, America's national legislative bodies have kept records of their proceedings. The records of the Continental Congress, the Constitutional Convention, and the United States Congress make up a rich documentary history of the construction of the nation and the development of the federal government and its role in the national life. These documents record American history in the words of those who built our government.

Books on the law formed a major part of the holdings of the Library of Congress from its beginning. In 1832, Congress established the Law Library of Congress as a separate department of the Library. It houses one of the most complete collections of U.S. Congressional documents in their original format. In order to make these records more easily accessible to students, scholars, and interested citizens, A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation brings together online the records and acts of Congress from the Continental Congress and Constitutional Convention through the 43rd Congress, including the first three volumes of the Congressional Record, 1873-75.

The mission of the Library of Congress is to make its resources available and useful to Congress and the American people and to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for future generations. The goal of the Library's National Digital Library Program is to offer broad public access to a wide range of historical and cultural documents as a contribution to education and lifelong learning.
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