

GEORGE WASHINGTON

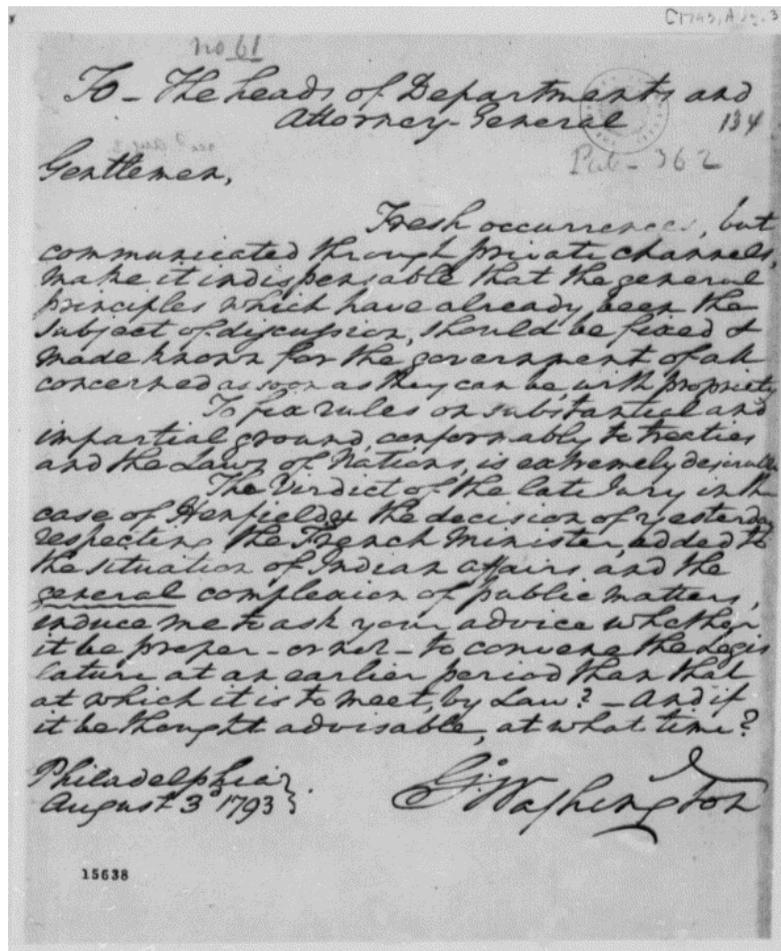
A P R E S I D E N T ' S V I S I O N

PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHEET

LETTER FROM GEORGE WASHINGTON TO THE CABINET, AUGUST 3, 1793.

The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 1, General Correspondence, 1651–1827. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

In 1793, France was at war with Great Britain, Spain, and the Netherlands. President Washington proclaimed American neutrality. However, the French government sent ambassador Citizen Edmond Charles Genêt to the U.S to promote American support for France. Washington wrote this letter to his Cabinet on August 3, 1793 to ask for advice in establishing fixed rules of neutrality.



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A P R E S I D E N T ' S V I S I O N

TRANSCRIPTION

To the Heads of Departments and Attorney-General

Gentlemen,

Fresh occurrences, but communicated through private channels, make it indispensable that the general principles, which have already been the subject of discussion, should be fixed and made known for the government of all concerned as soon as they can be with propriety.

To fix rules on substantial and impartial ground, conformably to treaties and the Laws of Nations, is extremely desirable.

The verdict of the late jury in the case of Henfield, and the decision of yesterday respecting the French minister, added to the situation of Indian affairs and the general complexion of public matters, induce me to ask your advice whether it be proper—or not—to convene the Legislature at an earlier period than that at which it is to meet by Law?—And if it be thought advisable, at what time?

Philadelphia

G. Washington

QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. To whom did President Washington write this letter?
2. From what city did Washington write this letter?
3. What event or issue prompted Washington to write this letter?
4. What does Washington mean when he writes that he wants to establish rules of neutrality “on substantial and solid ground”?
5. What actions does Washington encourage the recipients of his letter to take?
6. What does the letter tell us about Washington’s relationship with his cabinet and Attorney General?
7. In this letter, Washington asks his cabinet members for their counsel. What does this letter indicate about his understanding of checks and balances in the newly formed government?

ACTIVITIES

Using your textbook and other print and online resources, research Citizen Edmond Charles Genêt’s visit to the U.S. in 1793, then answer the following questions.

1. Why did the French government send Genêt to the U.S.?
2. Why did the Federalists initially hail Genêt as a hero?
3. What steps did Genêt take to achieve his goals?
4. What threat did he and his actions pose to the Washington administration?
5. How did Washington and his cabinet ultimately respond to the situation?

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