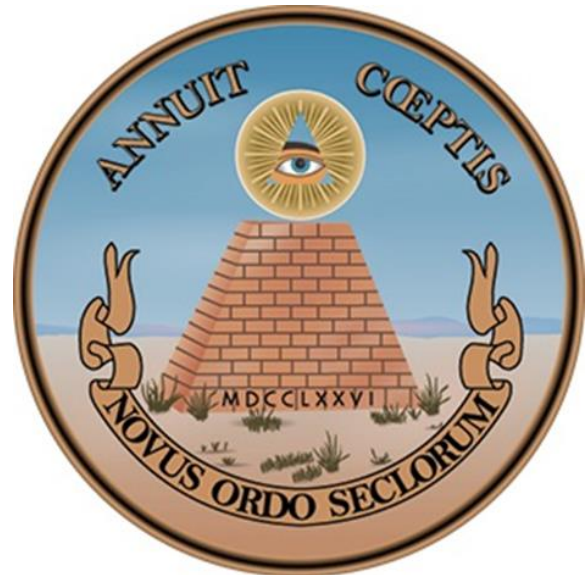


The GREAT SEAL of the UNITED STATES

Symbolically, the seal reflects the beliefs and values that the Founding Fathers attached to the new nation and wished to pass on to their descendants. Charles Thomson, Secretary of the Continental Congress, designed the 1782 seal to symbolize our country's strength, unity, and independence.



OBVERSE



REVERSE

The **olive branch** and the **arrows** held in the eagle's talons denote the power of peace and war.

The **eagle** always casts its gaze toward the olive branch, signifying that our nation desires to pursue peace but stands ready to defend itself.

The **shield**, or escutcheon, is "born on the breast of an American Eagle without any other supporters to denote that the United States of America ought to rely on their own Virtue," Thomson explained in his original report.

The seal shares symbolism with the **colors of the American flag**.

- The red and white stripes of the shield "represent the several states... supporting a [blue] Chief which unites the whole and represents Congress."
- White signifies purity and innocence,
- Red, hardiness & valor, and
- Blue signifies vigilance, perseverance & justice.

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The **number 13** — denoting the 13 original states — is represented in the bundle of arrows, the stripes of the shield, and the stars of the constellation.

The **constellation of stars** symbolizes a new nation taking its place among other sovereign states.

The motto “E Pluribus Unum” emblazoned across the scroll and clenched in the eagle’s beak expresses the union of the 13 States.

The REVERSE, sometimes referred to as the spiritual side of the seal, contains the 13-step pyramid with the year 1776 in Roman numerals on the base. At the summit of the pyramid is the Eye of Providence in a triangle surrounded by a Glory (rays of light) and above it appears the motto Annuit Coeptis¹. Along the lower circumference of the design appear the words Novus Ordo Seclorum², heralding the beginning of the new American era in 1776.

Today the [Secretary of State](#) is the custodian of our national symbol, the Great Seal of the United States. The seal is impressed upon documents such as treaties and commissions, and it is also found on documents such as U.S. passports and the reverse of the \$1 bill.

Source: <https://diplomacy.state.gov/the-great-seal/>

¹ Translation: [He] favors (or has favored) [our] undertakings

² Derived from a poem by the Roman poet Virgil...signifying the beginning of the New American Era as of the date of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.