

240th Anniversary of the Northwest Ordinance July 13, 1778

The Northwest Ordinance was one of the most significant pieces of legislation passed by the pre-Constitution Congress. It established a framework for the governance of the Northwest Territory and laid the groundwork for westward expansion, territorial organization, and the eventual admission of new states to the country. Its provisions reflected enlightenment ideals, addressing issues such as civil liberties, education, and the prohibition of slavery. The ordinance profoundly influenced the development of the United States, both legally and culturally.

The Northwest Territory encompassed the land northwest of the Ohio River, east of the Mississippi River, and south of the Great Lakes. This area included what are now the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota. Most of this land was part of Virginia's colonial claims. Following the American Revolution, the Treaty of Paris (1783) transferred control of this region from Great Britain to the United States. However, conflicting land claims by Virginia and other states, Native Americans' presence and the lack of a cohesive federal policy for settlement created uncertainty and tension.

The genesis of the idea came from Thomas Jefferson. He suggested that states east of the Appalachian Mountains should relinquish all land claims to any territory to the west of the mountain range.

Source: American Battlefield Trust website;
<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/northwest-ordinance-1787>



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