Station #3

Uphold the laws of the United States

Under the Articles of Confederation, the national government had little ability to tax and with the outbreak of Shay's Rebellion there was also concern of the government's ability to uphold the law. With the ratification of the Constitution, the executive branch had the power to uphold the law. During his second term, Washington was faced with a challenge to the Constitution, when farmers in western Pennsylvania protested against the collection of excise duties (taxes) on whiskey. In answering this challenge, Washington used his power as commander in chief to uphold the Constitution of the United States. Washington issued a proclamation against the rebellion and himself led the army to western Pennsylvania. The rebellion ended with about a dozen men being arrested and they were eventually pardoned by Washington. This event showed that the new government would use the militia (army) if necessary to keep order in the states and enforce the law.

Excerpt from George Washington Proclamation expressing opposition to the Whiskey Rebellion

Proclamation against Opposition to Execution of Laws and Excise Duties in Western Pennsylvania (August 7, 1794)

Transcript

Whereas combinations to defeat the execution of the laws laying duties upon spirits distilled (whiskey) within the United States and upon stills have from the time of the commencement of those laws existed in some of the western parts of Pennsylvania; and

...Whereas by a law of the United States entitled "An act to provide calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions," it is enacted "that whenever the laws of the United States shall be opposed or the execution thereof obstructed in any State by combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings or by the powers vested in the marshals by that act, the same being notified by an associate justice or the district judge, it shall be lawful for the President of the United States to call forth the militia of such State to suppress such combinations and to cause the laws to be duly executed. And if the militia of a State where such combinations may happen shall refuse or be insufficient to suppress the same, it shall be lawful for the President, if the Legislature of the United States shall not be in session, to call forth and employ such numbers of the militia of any other State or States most convenient thereto as may be necessary; and the use of the militia so to be called forth may be continued, if necessary, until the expiration of thirty days after the commencement of the ensuing session: Provided always, That whenever it may be necessary in the judgment of the President to use the military force hereby directed to be called forth, the President shall forthwith, and previous thereto, by proclamation, command such insurgents to disperse and retire peaceably to their respective abodes within a limited time;" .......
.....Wherefore, and in pursuance of the proviso above recited, I, George Washington, President of the United States, do hereby command all persons being insurgents as aforesaid, and all others whom it may concern, on or before the 1st day of September next to disperse and retire peaceably to their respective abodes. And I do moreover warn all persons whomsoever against aiding, abetting, or comforting the perpetrators of the aforesaid treasonable acts, and do require all officers and other citizens, according to their respective duties and the laws of the land, to exert their utmost endeavors to prevent and suppress such dangerous proceedings.

GO. WASHINGTON.

Foldable instructions

1. Label the third flap on your foldable: “Uphold the laws of the United States” and draw a picture to illustrate this concept
2. On the inside flap, describe how Washington enforced this precedent.
3. On the bottom flap answer the following using the excerpt from Washington’s Proclamation
   a. Looking at the 2nd and 3rd arrows, why do you think that Washington felt that he had the right to call out the militia?
   b. After the Articles of Confederation, why do you think it was important for Washington to show that the national government would make enforce the laws of the United States?