

For Immediate Release

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Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

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## CHRISTIE'S SETS A WORLD AUCTION RECORD FOR AN AMERICAN BOOK OR HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

### GEORGE WASHINGTON'S ANNOTATED COPY OF THE CONSTITUTION & BILL OF RIGHTS ACHIEVES \$9.8 MILLION

**New York** – On June 22, at Christie's New York, George Washington's annotated copy of the Constitution and Bill of Rights (1789) sold for \$9,826,500, setting a new world auction record for an American book or historical document. After 223 years, it remains in near-pristine condition, with Washington's bold signature and his armorial bookplate. Remarkably, in the margins of the Constitution, Washington has added careful brackets and marginal notes. These notations highlight key passages concerning the President's responsibilities, testifying to Washington's careful, conscientious approach to his powers and responsibilities in his ground-breaking first term.

**Chris Coover, Senior Specialist of Books and Manuscripts,** *comments: "George Washington's annotated copy of the Constitution and Bill of Rights (1789) sold for an extraordinary \$9,826,500 -- a world auction record for any American book or historical document. A number of bidders competed pursued this exceptional item, but in the end the successful bidder was a representative of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union, the non-profit educational organization which owns and operates the historical site and museum of George Washington's Virginia home. The unique book had been in the Mount Vernon library until 1876 and will soon be returned to that library."*

In a bustling saleroom, John Hays, Deputy Chairman, opened bidding at \$1.3 million. After four minutes of bidding by multiple buyers in the room and on the phone, the winning bid was placed in the saleroom by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

Washington's copy of the *Acts of Congress* was offered for sale by the Estate of H. Richard Dietrich, Jr. Upon Washington's death, it remained in the library at Mount Vernon for many years and until it was sold at auction in 1876. Later, it was acquired by the Heritage Foundation of Deerfield, Massachusetts, and sold again at auction in 1964, when it was acquired by the noted Americana collector Richard Dietrich.

Rare books and manuscripts relating to the most revered and respected American presidents have inspired record prices at Christie's in recent years. Washington's personal copy of the Constitution and Bill of Rights has far-surpassed the previous record for an American manuscript, an autograph manuscript of Lincoln's 1864 election victory speech, which also sold at Christie's New York for \$3,442,500 in February 2009. An autograph letter written in 1787 by George Washington to his nephew Bushrod Washington, on the subject of the ratification of the Constitution, was the previous world auction record for a Washington document of \$3,218,500 in December 2009.

## About Christie's

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*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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*Images available on request*

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