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A stay-at-home mom of seventeen struggles to finish high school but eventually earns a doctorate degree; a blind person becomes a piano virtuoso; an illiterate immigrant rises to become the owner of a large company. These people do not reach their goals because of a physical attribute, their rank, or wealth. They share a common attribute, an element that not only enables them to reach their dreams but also unites them as Americans: perseverance. This value links, empowers, and distinguishes Americans, manifesting itself in the Constitution, George Washington Carver, and in my own character. For these reasons, perseverance is the most important civic value.

That the Constitution reflects perseverance underscores the importance of this value. The determination of the Founding Fathers to create an effective structure for government is evident in this document. The first attempt at a constitution failed with the Articles of Confederation. However, the second attempt of the Founders produced an establishment that is today unequalled. They persevered to create "a more perfect union," a union that could only be achieved with a new start.

In addition to surpassing the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution reflects perseverance in that it withstood opposition. Because it did not initially contain a Bill of Rights, states such as North Carolina and Rhode Island did not ratify it. Writers of the Anti-Federalist Papers attacked it because it limited states' rights and personal liberties. The Constitution indeed contained weaknesses. However, through perseverance, the Founders corrected some flaws by adding a Bill of Rights. The enduring amendments are a modern testament to the perseverance of Americans who try to make government more effective.

Just as American documents promote perseverance, historical figures also embody the value. One such persevering figure is George Washington Carver. Born into poverty and to a black family at the end of the Civil War, he possessed little chance for success. While he was not born a slave, he faced the difficult task of establishing his rights as a free man in the post-war era. Despite egalitarian efforts, animosity toward blacks existed, evident by the enactment of Jim Crow Laws. Despite these setbacks and the fact that he was orphaned, Carver persevered in school, battled segregation, and eventually worked his way to college. He climbed to success as one of America's most innovative agricultural scientists. He also demonstrated that American perseverance leads to achievement.

Like Carver, I persevere to achieve my goals. My plan is to attend college, but my foremost goal is to persist in my schoolwork. Resisting the apathy and laziness that often accompany high school seniors and working diligently to earn excellent grades are what I aim for. As a member of my church's youth board, I persist in improving programs for the congregation's young people. While churches struggle to retain teenagers, I consider it my challenge to encourage them to stay involved. Through perseverance and urging others to exhibit this value, I show my patriotism and appreciation for the gifts my citizenship provides.

It may seem that technological advancements diminish the value of perseverance today. Machine labor is gradually replacing human labor; however, new technology does not lessen the necessity to persevere. Conversely, world poverty, disease, and hunger require all people to practice this civic virtue even more than ever. Society as a whole must persevere if it is to improve the quality of human life and resolve future challenges.