The Northwest Ordinance of 1787

For seven years the 13 American states have a government organized by the Articles of Confederation—but the states don't work together. The Articles of Confederation are weak and low on money. The Northwest Ordinance is one of its few successes. The Ordinance (law) promises to settlers:

- Freedom of religious worship
- Right to a jury trial for anyone accused of a crime
- No cruel or unusual punishments for a crime
- No slavery in this territory
- The Ordinance also describes how territories will become official states...

When the population of the area is just a few settlers, their government is:

- A governor appointed by Congress
- A secretary appointed by Congress
- Three judges appointed by Congress

When the population has 5,000 free men, those men may elect a two-part legislature.

- The governor has veto power over the legislature
- Secretary
- Judges

When the area has 60,000 free people, the legislature can write a state constitution for Congress to approve.

Our State Constitution

Now you are in a state!

In 1803, Ohio is the first state created using these rules. Five other states are later formed from the Northwest territory above the Ohio River: Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

Soon steamboats are carrying people and products up and down the Ohio River where only Indian canoes traveled 100 years before.