



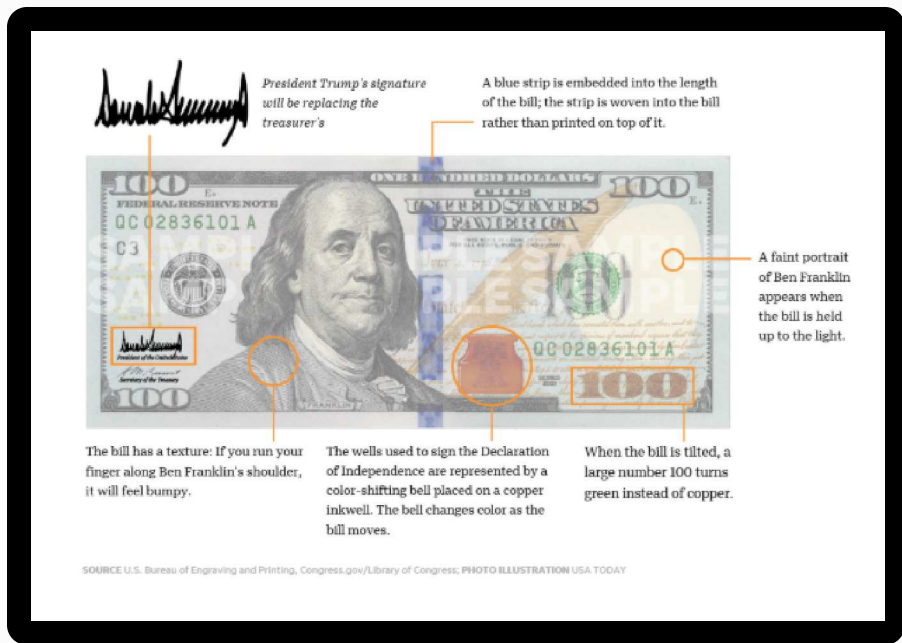
Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how "We the People" interact with the government and each other. Let's help each other expand our civic literacy.

Recently, the [Secretary of the Treasury announced](#) that President Donald Trump's signature would replace the signature of the United States Treasurer on new paper money. This is the first time in history that a president's signature will appear on federal paper currency. So how is currency designed, and who makes decisions about that design?

Federal currency was first introduced in 1861 and established as [legal tender](#) through the [Legal Tender Act of 1862](#). Since that time, federal currency has had one constant signature: that of the [Treasurer of the United States](#). In 1914, the signature of the [Secretary of the Treasury](#) was added, and those two signatures were the only constants on federal currency.

Federal currency design is primarily governed by [Title 31 of the U.S. Code](#), which authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to determine the design, portrait, and security features of notes and coins. However, this ability is restricted by certain federal laws. For example, federal currency cannot feature living individuals. This is why a portrait of a sitting president cannot be featured on currency. In addition, banknotes must feature the words 'In God We Trust'.

Interestingly, restrictions are actually tighter for the dollar bill than other currency used in the United States. In [2009/2010](#), Congress prohibited any extensive redesign of the dollar bill. As such, it continues to have the most consistent appearance and design. It has looked basically the same since 1963, while larger denominations have undergone significant changes over that time to [strengthen security and make larger denominations harder to counterfeit](#).



The [Bureau of Engraving and Printing](#) handles the design of federal currency, including the portraits, symbols, and security features on each denomination. The BEP has designed and manufactured federal currency since 1862, and in 2025, it printed about 5 billion notes. This is equivalent to trillions of dollars., [the most common denominations to be printed](#) are the one-dollar and twenty-dollar bills.

The change to signatures on currency will begin in June of 2026, beginning with new hundred-dollar bills and then expanding to other currency, including one-dollar bills, over time. [The US Treasury has suggested](#) this is in celebration of the [250th anniversary](#) of the Declaration of Independence. Whether this approach to updating currency design will continue for future iterations remains an open question, particularly given the 165-year history of the original signatures.

To Think and To Do:

The design of US currency often incorporates [symbols, terms, and figures](#) from American history that have had a significant impact or a deep meaning to our history and society. If you could redesign US currency, what symbols, terms, or figures would you include and why?

LEARN MORE:

- [The History of Greenbacks](#), Museum of American Finance
- [America's First Paper Currency](#), The Herbstman Collection
- [Journey to Circulation](#), US Currency Education Program



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