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*National Museum of American History*  
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***America's New Birth of Freedom:  
Documents from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library***

**VIDEO TRANSCRIPT**

**What was the aim of the Emancipation Proclamation?**

**Thomas F. Schwartz, Ph.D., Illinois State Historian:** In the fall of 1862 Lincoln revealed the Emancipation Proclamation to the public. It was to go into effect in January 1863. Lincoln closed his December 1862 annual message to Congress with the following words reminding them of the importance of their actions in regards to the pursuit of the war and to the freeing of the slaves. Listen:

**Lincoln:** Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We—even we here—hold the power, and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth.

“Annual Message to Congress,” December 1, 1862, from *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* 5:537.

*Video courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.*