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EXCLUSIVE REPORTS

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Protecting America's heritage

Techmetals to help seal U.S. documents

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A Dayton company this summer will have a small part in the preservation of American history.

Techmetals Inc., a metal finishing company at 345 Springfield St., has been selected by the National Institute of Standards and Technology to help create new cases to hold the original Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

The documents are deteriorating because the 47-year-old cases that hold them now are losing their airtight seal.

Techmetals will create an airtight seal for the new cases by electroplating them. To do this, it will coat the cases in a metal that's been dipped in acid and exposed to an electric current.

The new cases will cost \$4.8 million to manufacture; \$4 million will come from an appropriation from Congress and \$800,000 from a charitable trust.

Techmetals could get up to \$60,000 of that money for its work on the cases, depending on what kind of metal it uses to coat them, said Steve Deisher, director of marketing and sales for Techmetals.

The National Institute of Standards approached Techmetals about doing the work because of the company's experience in precision coatings of such products as telescope mirrors, said Keith Chadd, optics division manager for Techmetals.

Founded in 1968 and based on a business plan co-founder and president Dan Brockman wrote in college, Techmetals employs about 115 workers in the five buildings it occupies on Springfield Street. The company's revenue reached about \$10 million last year, and company officials expect 1999 revenue to be 15 to 20 percent higher than 1998.

This isn't the first time Techmetals has done work for the federal government: It manufactured plates used by the U.S. Treasury to mint \$1 bills in 1995. But Techmetals folks are pretty low key about this project, despite its historic significance.

"From my standpoint, it really hasn't sunk in yet," Chadd said. "We're talking about something that isn't going to be unveiled until July 4, 2000. When we see the parts coming in to us, they just look like chunks of steel."