

Wisdom from Good Leaders: Constitutional Government by Consent, Separation of Powers, Sovereignty, Military Leadership, Foreign Affairs

*Compiled by Thomas W. Jacobson
September 2012*

Quotes are in the order of each leader's service as Head of State,
with their statements before, during, or after their years in the Presidency.

These wisdom quotes are from Presidents of the United States during the nation's first century under the U.S. Constitution, whose character was eminently noble—a rare quality in leaders today. The first four Presidents—George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison—are quoted more than others because of their enormous and extraordinary influence in carefully laying, building, and preserving the good foundations of the nation and national government. They were full of wisdom and are worthy of emulation. *Wisdom quotes from other Heads of State and leaders are desired and can be added (see note at end).*

The topics included are:

- Anarchy or Insurrection
- Elections
- Foreign Affairs, Influence & Treaties
- Government by Consent, Limited Constitutional Government, Lawful Law, Rule of Law
- Government, Public Policy & Political Parties
- Laws of Nature and of Nature's God, Eternal Rules of Order
- Military Character, Leadership, and the Fight for Liberty & Self-Government
- National Sovereignty
- Separation of Government Powers
- Taxes & Public Debts

Anarchy or Insurrection

“(T)here is a natural and necessary progression; from the extreme of anarchy to the extreme of Tyranny; and that arbitrary power is most easily established on the ruins of liberty abused to licentiousness.”¹ – General George Washington, *Circular to the States*, 14 June 1783

“That the laws must be obeyed in a government of laws, is an all important lesson. For what can be more destructive of liberty and property than government without law, whether in one, few, or many? Insurrection itself is government assumed, and without law, though partial and temporary, and without right.”²

– President John Adams, To The Grand Jury of Morris County, in New Jersey, 8 April 1799

© Copyright 2012 by Thomas W. Jacobson

Elections

“Every man has in politics as well as religion, a right to think and speak and act for himself. No man, either king or subject, clergyman or layman, has any right to dictate to me the person I shall choose for my legislator and ruler. I must judge for myself. But how can I judge, how can any man judge, unless his mind has been opened and enlarged by reading? A man who can read will find in his Bible ... rules and observations that will enlarge his range of thought, and enable him the better to judge who has, and who has not that integrity of heart and that compass of knowledge and understanding which forms the statesman.”³

– John Adams, Diary, 1 August 1761

“(W)e should be unfaithful to ourselves if we should ever lose sight of the danger to our liberties if anything partial or extraneous should infect the purity of our free, fair, virtuous, and independent elections. If an election is to be determined by a majority of a single vote, and that can be procured by a party through artifice or corruption, the Government may be the choice of a party for its own ends, not of the nation for the national good.”⁴

– President John Adams, *Inaugural Address*, 4 March 1797

Foreign Affairs, Influence & Treaties

“14. As the contempt of the religion of a country by ridiculing any of its ceremonies, or affronting its ministers or votaries, has ever been deeply resented, you are to be particularly careful to restrain every officer and soldier from such imprudence and folly, and to punish every instance of it. On the other hand, as far as lies in your power, you are to protect and support the free exercise of the religion of the country, and the undisturbed enjoyment of the rights of conscience in religious matters, with your utmost influence and authority.”⁵

– General George Washington, Instructions to Col. Benedict Arnold, 14 September 1775

“It doubtless is important that all treaties and compacts formed by the United States with other nations, whether civilized or not, should be made with caution and executed with fidelity. It is said to be the general understanding and practice of nations, as a check on the mistakes and indiscretions of ministers and commissioners, not to consider any treaty negotiated and signed by such officers as final and conclusive until ratified by the sovereign or government from whom they derive their powers. ... National proceedings in this respect may become uniform by fixed and stable principles.”⁶

– President George Washington, *Gentlemen of the Senate*, 17 September 1789.

“There is a rank due to the United States among nations, which will be withheld, if not absolutely lost, by the reputation of weakness. If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace, one of the most powerful instruments of our rising prosperity, it must be known, that we are at all times ready for war.”⁷

– President George Washington, *Speech to Both Houses of Congress*, 3 December 1793

“Observe good faith and justice towards all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct. And can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and ... a great Nation, to give to mankind the

magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that in the course of time and things the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary [losses] ... by a steady adherence to it? Can it be that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a Nation with its virtue? ... Alas! Is it rendered impossible by its vices?

“In the execution of such a plan nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others should be excluded, and that in place of them just and amicable feelings toward all should be cultivated. The nation which indulges towards another an habitual hatred or an habitual fondness is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. ...

“Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be *constantly* awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government. But that jealousy, to be useful, must be impartial, else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defence against it. ...

“The Great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little *political* connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. ...

“Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world, so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs that honesty is always the best policy. ...

“Taking care always to keep ourselves by suitable establishments on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies. ...

“Harmony, liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand, neither seeking nor granting exclusive favours or preferences....”⁸

– President George Washington, *Farewell Address*, 17 September 1796

[IDPPC note: President Washington’s statements may appear unrealistic in these modern times of rapid and easy international communications and travel, and the regional and global governmental organizations that have emerged since World War II. But it appears that all of his cautions and concerns have come true, and thus are worthy of serious contemplation, especially in view of the countless, multifaceted entanglements in current international affairs, policy negotiations, and ongoing strategies to expand and strengthen regional and global governance.]

“The truth is, however, that America can never unite in any war but a defensive one.”⁹

– Ambassador John Adams, Amsterdam, letter to John Luzac, 15 September 1780

[IDPPC note: This was true for almost the entire nation’s history until the 1990s.]

“The ocean and its treasures are the common property of all men, and we have a natural right to navigate the ocean and to fish in it, whenever and wherever we please. Upon this broad and deep and strong foundation do I build, and with this cogent and irresistible argument do I fortify our rights and liberties in the fisheries on the coasts as well as on the banks, namely, the gift and grant of God Almighty in His creation of man, and His land and water; and, with resignation

only to the eternal counsels of His Providence, they never will and never shall be surrendered to any human authority or any thing but divine power.”¹⁰

– Former President John Adams, letter to Richard Rush, 5 April 1815

“Among the circumstances which reconcile me to my new position the most powerful is the opportunities it will give me of cementing the friendship between our two nations. Be assured that to do this is the first wish of my heart. I have but one system of ethics for men and for nations—to be grateful, to be faithful to all engagements and under all circumstances, to be open and generous, promotes in the long run even the interests of both; and I am sure it promotes their happiness.”¹¹

– Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, letter to Madame La Duchesse D’Auville, 2 April 1790

“Should Great Britain possess herself of the Floridas and Louisiana, her governing principles are conquest, colonization, commerce, monopoly. She will establish powerful colonies in them. ... Conquest [is] not in our [American] principles: [it is] inconsistent with our government.”¹²

– Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, *Heads of Consideration on the Navigation of the Mississippi*, for Mr. Carmichael, 22 August 1790

[IDPPC note: The Sovereign Ruler of Nations gave to Great Britain the capacity of nation building. Some of their principles and methods were consistent with the Christian faith they professed and brought, and some were entirely contrary. They were given this gift to build up the people spiritually and governmentally. But pillaging their natural resources, exploiting their human resources, exercising absolute control, and warring against them were inconsistent with Christianity.]

“I deem the essential principles of our Government [to include] ... peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.”¹³

– President Thomas Jefferson, *First Inaugural Address*, 4 March 1801

“Indulging no passions which trespass on the rights or repose of other nations, it has been the true glory of the United States to cultivate peace by observing justice, and to entitle themselves to the respect of the nations at war by fulfilling their neutral obligations with the most scrupulous impartiality. ... [The intention of my administration and our national duty is] To cherish peace and friendly intercourse with all nations having correspondent dispositions; to maintain sincere neutrality toward belligerent nations; to prefer in all cases amicable discussion and reasonable accommodation of differences to a decision of them by an appeal to arms; to exclude foreign intrigues and foreign partialities, so degrading to all countries and so baneful to the free ones; [and] to foster a spirit of independence too just to invade the rights of others, too proud to surrender our own, too liberal to indulge in unworthy prejudices”¹⁴

– President James Madison, *First Inaugural Address*, 4 March 1809

[My hope is that] “my country will exhibit ... a Government which avoids intrusions on the internal repose of other nations, and repels them from its own; which does justice to all nations with a readiness equal to the firmness with which it requires from them; ... a Government, in a word, whose conduct within and without may bespeak the most noble of all ambitions—that of promoting peace on earth and good will to man.”¹⁵

– President James Madison, *Eighth Annual Message* (last), 3 December 1816

[Monroe Doctrine]: “The citizens of the United States cherish sentiments the most friendly in favor of the liberty and happiness of their fellow-men ... It is only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparations for our defense. With the movements in this hemisphere we are of necessity more immediately connected ... The political system of the [European] powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America. ... We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.”¹⁶

– President James Monroe, *Eighth Annual Message to Congress*, 7 December 1824

“Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her [America’s] heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will recommend the general cause, by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example. She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself, beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force. ... She might become the dictatress of the world: she would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit.”¹⁷ – Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, *An Address ... Celebrating the Anniversary of Independence, at the City of Washington*, 4 July 1821

“(I)n regard to our rights and duties as a member of the great family of nations ... there are some plain principles, approved by our own experience, from which we should never depart. We ought to cultivate peace, commerce, and friendship with all nations, and this not merely as the best means of promoting our own material interests, but in a spirit of Christian benevolence toward our fellow-men, wherever their lot may be cast. Our diplomacy should be direct and frank, neither seeking to obtain more nor accepting less than is our due. We ought to cherish a sacred regard for the independence of all nations, and never attempt to interfere in the domestic concerns of any unless this shall be imperatively required by the great law of self-preservation. To avoid entangling alliances has been a maxim of our policy ever since the days of Washington, and its wisdom no one will attempt to dispute. In short, we ought to do justice in a kindly spirit to all nations and require justice from them in return.”¹⁸

– President James Buchanan, *Inaugural Address*, 4 March 1857

[Regarding unlawful expeditions or invasions into foreign nations]: “It violates the principles of Christianity, morality, and humanity, held sacred by all civilized nations ... The avowed principle which lies at the foundation of the law of nations is contained in the divine command

that ‘all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them.’ Tried by this unerring rule, we should be severely condemned if we shall not use our best exertions to arrest such expeditions against our [neighboring nation]. ... By tolerating such expeditions we shall soon lose the high character which we have enjoyed ever since the days of Washington for the faithful performance of our international obligations and duties, and inspire distrust against us among the members of the great family of civilized nations.”¹⁹

– President James Buchanan, *To the Senate of the United States*, 7 January 1858

Government by Consent, Limited Constitutional Government, Lawful Law, Rule of Law

“These are my sentiments. Precedents are dangerous things. Let the reins of government then be braced and held with a steady hand, and every violation of the constitution be reprehended. If defective, let it be amended, but not suffered to be trampled upon whilst it has an existence.”²⁰

– George Washington, letter to Henry Lee, in Congress, 31 October 1786

“(T)he great constitutional charter ... in defining your powers, designates the objects to which your attention is to be given.”²¹

– President George Washington, *First Inaugural Address*, 30 April 1789

“(T)he enterprises of individuals show at once what are the happy effects of personal exertions in a country, where equal laws and equal rights prevail.”²²

– President George Washington, letter to David Humphreys, 23 March 1793

[Speaking of the government response, supported by the people, to a lawless insurrection]: “It has demonstrated, that our prosperity rests on solid foundations; by furnishing an additional proof, that my fellow-citizens understand the true principles of government and liberty; that they feel their inseparable union; that, notwithstanding all the devices, which have been used to sway them from their interest and duty, they are now as ready to maintain the authority of the laws against licentious invasions, as they were to defend their rights against usurpation.”²³

– President George Washington, *Sixth Annual Address*, 19 November 1794

“To the efficacy and permanency of your Union, a Government for the whole is indispensable. ... This government, the offspring of our own choice, uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers, uniting security with energy [internal power], and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its Laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true Liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their Constitutions of Government. But the constitution which at any time exists till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole People, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the People to establish Government, presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established Government.”²⁴

– President George Washington, *Farewell Address*, 17 September 1796

“(T)he only moral foundation of government is the consent of the people.”²⁵

– John Adams, letter to James Sullivan, 26 May 1776

“Government is instituted for the common good; for the protection, safety, prosperity and happiness of the people; and not for profit, honor, or private interest of any one man, family or class of men; therefore, the people alone have an incontestable, unalienable, and indefeasible right to institute government; and to reform, alter, or totally change the same, when their protection, safety, prosperity, and happiness require it.”²⁶ – John Adams (one of drafters), *A Declaration of the Rights of the Inhabitants of the ... Massachusetts*, 1 September 1779

“(A) republic (is rationally defined) to signify only a government, in which all men, rich and poor, magistrates and subjects, officers and people, masters and servants, the first citizen and the last, are equally subject to the laws. This, indeed, appears to be the true and only true definition of a republic.”²⁷ – John Adams, *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*, Volume III, 1787

“(T)he supreme, sovereign, absolute, and uncontrollable power, is placed by God and nature in the people, and they never can divest themselves of it. ... An inevitable consequence of this great truth is another, namely – that all government ... is REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.”²⁸
– John Adams, *Letters on Government: XI*

[Principles for preserving compatible constitutional governments at the federal and state levels]:

“(I)f [the President and federal Government retain] an attachment to the Constitution ... and a conscientious determination to support it until it shall be altered by the judgments and wishes of the people, expressed in the mode prescribed in it [constitutional amendment process]; if a respectful attention to the constitutions of the individual States and a constant caution and delicacy toward the State governments; if an equal and impartial regard to the rights, interest, honor, and happiness of all the States in the Union, without preference or regard to a northern or southern, an eastern or western, position”²⁹

– President John Adams, *Inaugural Address*, 4 March 1797

“The execution of the laws is more important than the making of them.”³⁰

– Thomas Jefferson, Ambassador to France, Paris, letter to L’Abbé Arnond, 19 July 1789

“I consider the foundation of the Constitution as laid on this ground: That ‘all powers not delegated to the United States, by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States or to the people.’ [XIIth amendment.] To take a single step beyond the boundaries thus specially drawn around the powers of Congress, is to take possession of a boundless field of power, no longer susceptible of any definition. ...

“(T)he power given to Congress by the Constitution does not extend to the internal regulation of the commerce of a State, (that is to say of the commerce between citizen and citizen,) which remain exclusively with its own legislature; but to its external commerce only, that is to say, its commerce with another State, or with foreign nations, or with the Indian tribes.

... “(T)he Constitution allows only the means which are ‘*necessary*,’ not those which are merely ‘*convenient*’ for effecting the enumerated powers. If such a latitude of construction be allowed to this phrase as to give any non-enumerated power, it will go to every one, for there is not one which ingenuity may not torture into a *convenience* in some instance *or other*, to *some one* of so long a list of enumerated powers. It would swallow up all the delegated powers, and

reduce the whole to one power ... Therefore it was that the Constitution restrained them to the *necessary* means, that is to say, to those means without which the grant of power would be nugatory.”³¹ – Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, to President George Washington, *Opinion on Constitutionality of a National Bank*, 15 February 1791

[IDPPC note: The amendment quoted was not yet ratified but became the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on 15 December 1791.]

“In questions of power, then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution.”³²

– Vice President Thomas Jefferson, *Kentucky Resolutions*, 1798

“I deem the essential principles of our Government [to be] ... Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none; the support of the State governments in all their rights, as the most competent administrations for our domestic concerns and the surest bulwarks against anti-republican tendencies; the preservation of the General Government in its whole constitutional vigor, as the sheet anchor of our peace at home and safety abroad; a jealous care of the right of election by the people; ... a well-disciplined militia; ... the supremacy of the civil over the military authority; economy in the public expense, that labor may be lightly burthened; the honest payment of our debts and sacred preservation of the public faith; ... freedom of religion; freedom of the press, and freedom of person under the protection of the habeas corpus, and trial by juries impartially selected.”³³

– President Thomas Jefferson, *First Inaugural Address*, 4 March 1801

“(A) wise and frugal Government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government.”³⁴

– President Thomas Jefferson, *First Inaugural Address*, 4 March 1801

[The Federal Government will] “keep in all things within the pale of our constitutional powers, and cherish the federal union as the only rock of safety—these, fellow-citizens are the landmarks by which we are to guide ourselves in all our proceedings.”³⁵

– President Thomas Jefferson, *Second Annual Message*, 15 December 1802

“Laws are made for men of ordinary understanding, and should, therefore, be construed by the ordinary rules of common sense.”³⁶

– Former President Thomas Jefferson, letter to Justice William Johnson, 12 June 1823

“That Government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security, of the people, nation or community: of all the various modes and forms of Government, that is best which is capable of producing the greatest degree of happiness and safety, and is most effectually secured against the danger of mal-administration; and that whenever any government shall be found inadequate or contrary to these purposes, a majority of the community hath an indubitable, unalienable, and indefeasible right, to reform, alter, or abolish it, in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public weal.”³⁷ – James Madison (wrote 1st draft), Member of Virginia House of Delegates, *Virginia Declaration of Rights*, 29 June 1776

“The preservation of a free Government requires not merely, that the metes and bounds which separate each department of power be invariably maintained; but more especially that neither of them be suffered to overleap the great Barrier which defends the rights of the people. The Rulers who are guilty of such an encroachment, exceed the commission from which they derive their authority, and are Tyrants. The People who submit to it are governed by laws made neither by themselves nor by an authority derived from them, and are slaves.”³⁸

– James Madison, Esq., Member of Continental Congress, *Memorial & Remonstrance*, 1785

[My administration will] “support the Constitution, which is the cement of the Union, as well in its limitations as in its authorities; [and] respect the rights and authorities reserved to the States and to the people as equally incorporated with and essential to the success of the general system.”³⁹ – President James Madison, Chief Architect of the U.S. Constitution, *First Inaugural Address*, 4 March 1809

“Having considered the bill ... ‘for constructing roads and canals’ ... I am constrained by the insuperable difficulty I feel in reconciling the bill with the Constitution of the United States ... The legislative powers vested in Congress are specified and enumerated ... and it does not appear that the power proposed to be exercised by the bill is among the enumerated powers, or that it falls by any just interpretation within the power to make laws necessary and proper for carrying into execution those powers vested by the Constitution in the Government ... ‘The power to regulate commerce among the States’ can not include a power to construct roads and canals ... To refer the power in question to the clause ‘to provide for the common defense and general welfare’ would be contrary to the established and consistent rules of interpretation, as rendering the special and careful enumeration of powers which follow the clause nugatory and improper. Such a view of the Constitution would have the effect of giving to Congress a general power of legislation instead of the defined and limited one hitherto understood to belong to them ... But seeing that such a power is not expressly given by the Constitution, and believing that it can not be deducted from any part of it without an inadmissible latitude of construction ... believing also that the permanent success of the Constitution depends on a definite partition of the powers between the General and State Governments, and that no adequate landmarks would be left ... I have no option but to withhold my signature from it.”⁴⁰

– President James Madison, *Veto Message*, 3 March 1817 [last full day in office]

“Having duly considered the bill ... it is with deep regret, approving as I do the policy, that I am compelled to object to its passage and to return the bill ... under a conviction that Congress do not possess the power under the Constitution to pass such a law. ... If the power exist, it must be either because it has been specifically granted to [the Government] or that it is incidental to some power which has been specifically granted. If we examine the specific grants of power we do not find it among them, nor is it incidental to any power which has been specifically granted. ... Having at the commencement of my service in this high trust considered it a duty to express the opinion that the United States do not possess the power in question, [I] suggest for the consideration of Congress the propriety of recommending to the States an amendment to the Constitution to vest the power in the United States ...”⁴¹

– President James Monroe, *Veto Message*, 4 May 1822

“Upon this government more than any other has, in the providence of God, been cast the special guardianship of the great principle of adherence to written constitutions. If it fail here, all hope in regard to it will be extinguished.”⁴²

– President Andrew Jackson, *First Annual Message*, 8 December 1829

“That this was intended to be a government of limited and specific, and not general, powers must be admitted by all, and it is our duty to preserve for it the character intended by its framers. ... We are responsible to our country and to the glorious cause of self-government for the preservation of so great a good. The great mass of legislation relating to our internal affairs was intended to be left where the Federal Convention found it—in the State governments. Nothing is clearer, in my view, than that we are chiefly indebted for the success of the Constitution under which we are now acting to the watchful and auxiliary operation of the State authorities. ... I can not, therefore, too strongly or too earnestly ... warn you against all encroachments upon the legislative sphere of State sovereignty.”⁴³

– President Andrew Jackson, *First Annual Message*, 8 December 1829

“I have maturely considered the bill ... and now return the same ... with my objections to its passage. ... Sincerely friendly to the improvement of our country by means of roads and canals ... Although frequently and strenuously attempted [legislatively], the power to this extent has never been exercised by the Government in a single instance. It does not, in my opinion, possess it; and no bill, therefore, which admits it can receive my official sanction.

“When an honest observance of constitutional compacts can not be obtained from communities like ours, it need not be anticipated elsewhere, and the cause in which there has been so much martyrdom, and from which so much was expected by the friends of liberty, may be abandoned, and the degrading truth that man is unfit for self-government admitted. And this will be the case if *expediency* be made a rule of construction in interpreting the Constitution. ...

“If it be the wish of the people that the construction of roads and canals should be conducted by the Federal Government, it is not only highly expedient, but indispensably necessary, that a previous amendment of the Constitution, delegating the necessary power and defining and restricting its exercise with reference to the sovereignty of the States, should be made.”⁴⁴

– President Andrew Jackson, *Veto Message*, 27 May 1830

“On examination [the bill’s] provisions and the variety of objects of improvement ... many of them of a local character, it is difficult to conceive, if it shall be sanctioned and become a law, what practical constitutional restraint can hereafter be imposed upon the most extended system of internal improvements by the Federal Government in all parts of the Union. The Constitution has not, in my judgment, conferred upon the Federal Government the power to construct works of internal improvement within the States, or to appropriate money from the Treasury for that purpose. ... Its powers are such, and such only, as are expressly granted in the Constitution or are properly incident to the expressly granted powers and necessary for their execution.”⁴⁵

– President James K. Polk, *Veto Messages*, 3 August 1846

“In the performance of this duty, prescribed by the Constitution, I have been compelled to resist the deep sympathies of my own heart ... (A) strict adherence to the terms and purpose of the federal compact offers the best, if not the only, security for the preservation of our blessed inheritance of representative liberty. ... It cannot be questioned that if Congress has the power to make provision for the indigent insane ... it has the same power to provide for the indigent who are not insane, and thus to transfer to the Federal Government the charge of all the poor in all the

States ... the dependent, the orphan, the sick, or the needy ... The decision upon the principle in any one case determines it for the whole class. ... I readily, and I trust, feelingly acknowledge the duty incumbent on us all as men and citizens, and as among the highest and holiest of our duties, to provide for those who, in the mysterious order of Providence, are subject to want and to disease of body or mind; but I can not find any authority in the Constitution for making the Federal Government the great almoner of public charity throughout the [nation]. To do so would, in my judgment, be contrary to the letter and spirit of the Constitution and subversive of the whole theory upon which the Union of these States is founded.”⁴⁶

– President Franklin Pierce, *Veto Messages*, 3 May 1854

“The provision of the Constitution giving the war-making power to Congress, was dictated, as I understand it, by the following reasons. Kings had always been involving and impoverishing their people in wars, pretending generally, if not always, that the good of the people was the object. This, our Convention understood to be the most oppressive of all Kingly oppressions; and they resolved to so frame the Constitution that *no one man* should hold the power of bringing this oppression upon us.”⁴⁷ – Abraham Lincoln, Esq., Member, U.S. House of Representatives, letter to William H. Herndon, 15 February 1848

“The crime well deserves the punishment inflicted upon it by our laws. It violates the principles of Christianity, morality, and humanity, held sacred by all civilized nations ... The avowed principle which lies at the foundation of the law of nations is contained in the divine command that ‘all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them.’”⁴⁸

– President James Buchanan, *To the Senate of the United States*, 7 January 1858

“(T)he far more important question is, Does Congress possess the power under the Constitution ...? The question of the constitutional power of Congress to construct internal improvements within the States has been so frequently and so elaborately discussed ...

“The power ‘to regulate’: Does this ever embrace the power to create or to construct? To say that it does is to confound the meaning of words of well-known signification. The word ‘regulate’ has several shades of meaning, according to its application to different subjects, but never does it approach the signification of creative power. The regulating power necessarily presupposes the existence of something to be regulated. ... The Constitution itself is its own best expounder of the meaning of words employed by the framers. Thus, Congress have the power ‘to coin money.’ This is the creative power. Then immediately follow the power ‘to regulate the value thereof’—that is, of the coined money thus brought into existence. The words ‘regulate,’ ‘regulation,’ and ‘regulations’ occur several times in the Constitution, but always with this subordinate meaning. ... So the Constitution, acting upon the self-evident fact that ‘commerce with foreign nations and among the several States and with the Indian tribes’ already existed, conferred upon Congress the power to ‘regulate’ this commerce. ... And Mr. Madison, in his veto message of the 3d March 1817, declares that—‘The power to regulate commerce among the several States can not include a power to construct ... in order to facilitate, promote, and secure such commerce ...’⁴⁹ – President James Buchanan, *Veto Message*, 1 February 1860

Government, Public Policy & Political Parties

“(U)nder the appearance of justice to one, do not materially injure the rights of others.”⁵⁰

– General George Washington, letter to Thomas Chittenden, 1 January 1782

“The business of [civil government] is to see those laws enforced, which are necessary for the preservation of peace, virtue, and good order.”⁵¹ – John Adams, Esq., *A Proclamation* (written by Adams), by the Great and General Court of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, 1775

“(A) dominant party, when there are but two, and no third power to balance them, is never long restrained by law, morals, or decency.”⁵² – John Adams, *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*, Volume II, 1787

“I know but one principle or element of government, and that is ... a constant and perpetual disposition and determination to render to every one his right; or, in other words, a constant and perpetual disposition and determination to do to others as we would have others do to us. This is a perfect principle, applicable at all times, in all places, among all persons, in all circumstances. Justice, therefore, is the only moral principle or element of government. But how shall justice be done in human society? It can be done only by general laws. These can never comprehend or foresee all the circumstances attending every particular case; and, therefore, it has been found necessary to introduce another principle or element, mercy. In strictness, perfect justice includes mercy, and perfect mercy includes justice.”⁵³ – John Adams, *Letters on Government: XIV*

“(D)emocracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.”⁵⁴ – John Adams, *Letter XVIII on Government*

“(T)he *Federalist [Papers]* ... (are) the best commentary on the principles of government which ever was written.”⁵⁵

– Thomas Jefferson, Ambassador to France, Paris, letter to James Madison, 18 November 1788

“(I)t is a fundamental principle in all lawful Governments ... that all the rights of sovereignty are intended for the benefit of those from whom they are derived and over whom they are exercised.”⁵⁶ – James Madison, Member of Continental Congress, *Instructions to John Jay: Boundaries and Free Navigation of the Mississippi*, 17 October 1780

Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God, Eternal Rules of Order

“The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained.”⁵⁷

– President George Washington, *First Inaugural Address*, 30 April 1789

“(The) principles which be derived from the unalterable laws of God and nature cannot be superseded by any human authority or engagement.”⁵⁸ – Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, *Resolution to Encourage Desertions of Hessian Officers*, Congress, 27 Aug. 1776

“When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them ...”⁵⁹ – Thomas Jefferson, his original draft of the *Declaration of Independence*, June 1776

“Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and has been implanted in the heart of man by his Creator for the wisest purpose.”⁶⁰

– President James Buchanan, *Fourth Annual Message*, 3 December 1860

Military Character, Leadership, and the Fight for Liberty & Self-Government

“Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak and esteem to all.”⁶¹ – Lt. Col. George Washington (age 25), *General Instructions to All the Captains of Companies*, 29 July 1757

“It is a matter of exceeding great concern to the General to find, that at a time when the united efforts of America are exerting in defence of the common rights and liberties of mankind, that there should be in an army constituted for so noble a purpose, such repeated instances of officers, who lost to every sense of honor and virtue, are seeking by dirty and base means, the promotion of their own dishonest gain, to the eternal disgrace of themselves and dishonor of their country. Practices of this sort will never be overlooked, whenever an accusation is lodged; but the authors brought to the most exemplary punishment.”⁶²

– General George Washington, *Orderly Book*, 10 August 1775

“But I hope and trust, that the brave men, who have voluntarily engaged in this expedition, will be governed by [honorable] views; and that order, discipline, and regularity of behavior, will be as conspicuous as their valor. I also give it in charge to you to avoid all disrespect of the religion of the country, and its ceremonies. Prudence, policy, and a true Christian spirit will lead us to look with compassion upon their errors without insulting them. While we are contending for our own liberty, we should be very cautious not to violate the rights of conscience in others, ever considering that God alone is the judge of the hearts of men, and to Him only in this case they are answerable.”⁶³

– General George Washington, Orders to Col. Benedict Arnold, 14 September 1775

“(I)t is Subordination and Discipline (the Life and Soul of an Army) which next under Providence, is to make us formidable to our enemies, honorable in ourselves, and respected in the world; and herein is to be the Goodness of the Officer.”⁶⁴

– General George Washington, *General Orders*, 1 January 1776

“All officers, non-commissioned Officers and Soldiers are positively forbid ... At this time of public distress men may find enough to do in the service of their God, and their Country, without abandoning themselves to vice and immorality.”⁶⁵

– General George Washington, *Orderly Book*, 26 February, 1776

“As the season is now fast approaching when every man must expect to be drawn into the field of action, it is highly necessary that he should prepare his mind, as well as every thing necessary for it. It is a noble Cause we are engaged in, it is the cause of virtue and mankind, every temporal advantage and comfort to us, and our posterity depends upon the Vigor of our exertions; in short, Freedom or Slavery must be the result of our conduct, there can therefore be no greater Inducement to men to behave well. But it may not be amiss for the Troops to know, that if any man in action shall presume to skulk, hide himself, or retreat from the enemy, without the orders of his commanding officer, he will be *instantly shot down*, as an example of Cowardice: Cowards having too frequently disconcerted the best formed Troops, by their dastardly behavior.”⁶⁶ – General George Washington, *Orderly Book*, 27 February 1776

“For human nature is such, that it will adhere to the side from whence the best treatment is received. I therefore conjure you, Sir, to recommend to the officers and soldiers in the strongest terms to treat all the inhabitants ... with tenderness and respect.”⁶⁷

– General George Washington, Instructions to Major-General Schuyler, 19 April 1776

“The time is now near at hand which must probably determine, whether Americans are to be, Freedmen, or Slaves; whether they are to have any property they can call their own; whether their Houses, and Farms, are to be pillaged and destroyed, and they consigned to a State of Wretchedness from which no human efforts will probably deliver them. The fate of unborn Millions will now depend, under God, on the Courage and Conduct of this army—Our cruel and unrelenting Enemy leaves us no choice but a brave resistance, or the most abject submission; this is all we can expect—We have therefore to resolve to conquer or die: Our own Country’s Honor, all call upon us for a vigorous and manly exertion, and if we now shamefully fall, we shall become infamous to the whole world. Let us therefore rely upon the goodness of the Cause, and the aid of the supreme Being, in whose hands Victory is, to animate and encourage us to great and noble Actions—The Eyes of all our Countrymen are now upon us, and we shall have their blessings, and praises, if happily we are the instruments of saving them from the Tyranny meditated against them. Let us therefore animate and encourage each other, and shew the whole world, that a Freeman contending for Liberty on his own ground is superior to any slavish mercenary on earth.”⁶⁸

– General George Washington, *General Orders*, 2 July 1776

[Immediately after the Declaration of Independence, chaplains were appointed to the American Continental Army]: “The Hon. Continental Congress having been pleased to allow a Chaplain to each Regiment, with the pay of ... The Colonels or commanding officers of each regiment are directed to procure Chaplains accordingly; persons of good Characters and exemplary lives—To see that all inferior officers and soldiers pay them a suitable respect and attend carefully upon religious exercises. The blessing and protection of Heaven are at all times necessary but especially so in times of public distress and danger—The General hopes and trusts, that every officer and man, will endeavor so to live, and act, as becomes a Christian Soldier defending the dearest Rights and Liberties of his country.”⁶⁹

– General George Washington, *General Orders*, 9 July 1776

“(T)he hour is fast approaching, on which the Honor and Success of this Army, and the Safety of our Bleeding Country depend. Remember, officers and Soldiers, that you are Freemen, fighting for the blessings of Liberty, that Slavery will be your portion, and that of your posterity, if you do not acquit yourselves like men.”⁷⁰

– General George Washington, *Orderly Book*, 23 August 1776

“The officers also are to exert themselves to the utmost to prevent every kind of abuse to private property, and to bring every offender to the punishment he deserves. Shameful it is to find, that those men, who have come hither in defence of the rights of mankind, should turn invaders of it by destroying the substance of their friends. The burning of houses where the apparent good of the service is not promoted by it, and the pillaging of them, at all times and upon all occasions, are to be discountenanced and punished with the utmost severity. In short, it is to be hoped, that men who have property of their own, and a regard for the rights of others, will shudder at the

thought of rendering any man's situation, in whose protection he has come, more insufferable than his open and avowed enemy would make it; when by duty and every rule of humanity they ought to aid, and not oppress, the distressed in their habitations. The distinction between a well regulated army and a mob, is the good order and discipline of the first, and the licentious and disorderly behavior of the latter. Men, therefore, who are not employed as mere hirelings, but have stepped forth in defence of every thing that is dear and valuable not only to themselves but to posterity, should take uncommon pains to conduct themselves with the greatest propriety and good order, as their honor and reputation call loudly upon them to do it."⁷¹

– General George Washington, *Instructions to Major-General Putnam*, 25 August 1776

“(I)t is my desire, that the utmost humanity should be shown them. I am convinced [this] has been the prevailing line of conduct to prisoners.”⁷²

– General George Washington, To British Lieutenant-General Howe, 9 November 1776

“The Commander in Chief again takes occasion to return his warmest thanks to the virtuous officers and soldiery of this army, for that persevering fidelity and zeal which they have uniformly manifested in all their conduct. Their fortitude, not only under the common hardships incident to a military life, but also under the additional sufferings to which the peculiar situation of these States has exposed them, clearly proves them worthy of the enviable privilege of contending for the rights of human nature, the freedom and independence of their country. The recent instance of uncomplaining patience during the scarcity of provisions in Camp, is a fresh proof that they possess in an eminent degree the spirit of soldiers and the magnanimity of patriots.”⁷³ – General George Washington, *Orderly Book*, 1 March 1778

“To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.”⁷⁴

– President & Commander-in-Chief George Washington, *First Annual Address*, 8 January 1790

“(H)ave him and his [fellow officer] friends admonished in a friendly way of the consequences, that must follow disobedience; for neither the military nor civil government shall be trampled upon with impunity whilst I have the honor to be at the head of them. I have no objection to his being tried ... [and] I would advise it.”⁷⁵ – President & Commander-in-Chief George Washington, to Secretary of War Henry Knox, 24 September 1792

“(I)n all free States the civil must provide for and control the military power.”⁷⁶

– John Adams, Esq., *A Proclamation* (written by Adams), by the Great and General Court of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, 1775

“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

“Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

“But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say

here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”⁷⁷

– President Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*, 19 November 1863

National Sovereignty

“My politics are plain and simple. I think every nation has a Right to establish that form of Government under which It conceives It shall live most happy; provided it infracts no Right or is not dangerous to others. And that no Governments ought to interfere with the internal concerns of Another, except for the security of what is due to themselves.”⁷⁸ – Former President George Washington, Mount Vernon, letter to Marquis de Lafayette, 25 December 1798

“Let me ask you ... is the sovereignty of this nation a gift? a grant? a concession? a conveyance? or a release and acquittance from Great Britain? Pause here and think. No! The people, in 1774, by the right which nature and nature’s God had given them, confiding in original right, and original power, in 1774 assumed powers of sovereignty. In 1775, they assumed greater power. In July 4th 1776, they assumed absolute unlimited sovereignty in relation to other nations, in all cases whatsoever; no longer acknowledging any authority over them but that of God Almighty, and the laws of nature and of nations. The war from 4th of July, 1776, to 30th of November, 1782, six years and some months, was only an appeal to Heaven in defence of our sovereignty. Heaven decided in our favor; and Britain was forced not to give, grant, concede, or release our independence, but to acknowledge it, in terms as dear as our language afforded, and under seal and under oath.”⁷⁹ – Former President John Adams, letter to Richard Rush, 5 April 1815

“Nations, like individuals in a state of nature, are equal and independent, possessing certain rights and owing certain duties to each other, arising from their necessary and unavoidable relations.”⁸⁰ – President Millard Fillmore, *First Annual Message* to Congress, 2 December 1850

Separation of Government Powers

“(T)hese Powers ... are so distributed among the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Branches, into which the general Government is arranged, that it can never be in danger of degenerating into a monarchy, an Oligarchy, an Aristocracy, or any other despotic or oppressive form, so long as there shall remain any virtue in the body of the People.”⁸¹

– George Washington, letter to Marquis de LaFayette, 7 February 1788.

“It is important that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those intrusted with its administration to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding the exercise of powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments into one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power and proneness to abuse it which predominates in the human heart is sufficient to satisfy us of the

truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositories, and constituting each the guardian of the public weal against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern, some of them in our country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If in the opinion of the people ... the constitutional powers (need to be modified) ... let it be corrected by amendment ... But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this in one instance may be the instrument for good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed.”⁸²

– President George Washington, *Farewell Address*, 17 September 1796.

“(A)rbtrary power ... cannot be prevented, nor the government of laws supported, but by mixing the powers of the one, the few, and the many, in equal proportions, in the legislature; by separating the executive from the legislative power, and the judicial department from both.”⁸³ – John Adams, *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States*, Vol. III, 1787

“If anyone will show me a single example where the laws were respected, and liberty, property, life or character secure, without a balance [of powers] in the Constitution, I might venture to give up the controversy. And if anyone will show that there ever was a balance, or ever can be a balance for three days together, without three branches, and no more, I might also give up the point.”⁸⁴ – John Adams, Braintree, letter to Benjamin Rush, 2 December 1788

“The dignity and stability of government in all its branches, the morals of the people, and every blessing of society, depend so much upon an upright and skillful administration of justice, that the judicial power ought to be distinct from both the legislature and executive, and independent upon both, that so it may be check upon both, as both should be checks upon that. The judges, therefore, should always be men of learning and experience in the laws, of exemplary morals, great patience, calmness and attention; their minds should not be distracted with jarring interests; they should not be dependent upon any man or body of men. To these ends they should hold estates for life in their offices, or, in other words, their commissions should be during good behavior, and their salaries ascertained and established by law. For misbehavior, the grand inquest ... the house of representatives, should impeach them ... when they should ... make their defence; but if convicted, should be removed from their offices, and subjected to such other punishment as shall be thought proper.”⁸⁵ – Thomas Jefferson, Member, Virginia House of Burgesses, letter to George Wythe (his law professor), July 1776

“A Judiciary dependent on the will of the King had proved itself the most oppressive of all tools in the hands of that Magistrate. Nothing then could be more salutary than a change ... [but] our judges are effectually independent of the nation. But this ought not to be. ... I deem it indispensable to the continuance of this government that they should be submitted to some practical and impartial control.”⁸⁶ – Thomas Jefferson, *Autobiography*, 1787

“(I)t is important to strengthen the state governments: and as this cannot be done by any change in the federal constitution, (for the preservation of that is all we need contend for,) it must be done by the states themselves, erecting such barriers at the constitutional line as cannot be surmounted either by themselves or by the general government. The only barrier in their power is a wise government.”⁸⁷

– Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, letter to Archibald Stuart, 23 December 1791

“*Resolved*, That the several States composing the United States of America, are not united on the principle of unlimited submission to their General Government; but that, by a compact ... a Constitution for the United States, and of amendments thereto, they constituted a General Government for special purposes—delegated to that government certain definite powers, reserving, each State to itself, the residuary mass of right to their own self-government; that whenever the General Government assumes undelegated powers, its acts are unauthoritative, void, and of no force; ... that the government created by this compact was not made the exclusive or final judge of the extent of the powers delegated to itself; since that would have made its discretion, and not the Constitution, the measure of its powers; but that, as in all other cases of compact among powers having no common judge, each party has an equal right to judge for itself ... infractions [and] the mode and measure of redress.”⁸⁸

– Vice President Thomas Jefferson, *Draft of the Kentucky Resolutions*, October 1798

“But nothing in the Constitution has given [federal judges] a right to decide for the Executive, more than to the Executive to decide for them. Both magistrates are equally independent in the sphere of action assigned to them. The judges, believing the law constitutional, had a right to pass a sentence ... because the power was placed in their hands by the Constitution. But the executive, believing the law to be unconstitutional, were bound to remit the execution of it; because that power has been confided to them by the Constitution. That instrument meant that its co-ordinate branches should be checks on each other. But the opinion which gives to the judges the right to decide what laws are constitutional, and what not, not only for themselves in their own sphere of action, but for the legislature and executive also, in their spheres, would make the judiciary a despotic branch.”⁸⁹

– President Thomas Jefferson, letter to Former First Lady Mrs. John Adams, 11 September 1804

“(T)he government we fought for [was] one which should not only be founded on free principles, but in which the powers of government should be so divided and balanced among several bodies of magistracy, as that no one could transcend their legal limits, without being effectually checked and restrained by the others. For this reason that convention, which passed the ordinance of government laid its foundation on this basis, that the legislative, executive and judiciary departments should be separate and distinct, so that no person should exercise the powers of more than one of them at the same time”⁹⁰

– Thomas Jefferson, *Query XIII: Constitution of the State*, 1786

“I believe the States can best govern our home concerns, and the General Government our foreign ones. I wish, therefore, to see maintained that wholesome distribution of powers established by the constitution for the limitation of both; and never to see all offices transferred to Washington, where, further withdrawn from the eyes of the people, they may more secretly be bought and sold as at market.”⁹¹

– Former President Thomas Jefferson, letter to Justice William Johnson, 12 June 1823

“If it be essential to the preservation of liberty that the Legislative, Executive, and Judiciary powers be separate, it is essential to a maintenance of the separation, that they should be independent of each other.”⁹² – James Madison, *Constitutional Convention*, 17 July 1787

“I do not forget the position assumed by some that constitutional questions are to be decided by the Supreme Court, nor do I deny that such decisions must be binding in any case upon the parties to a suit as to the object of that suit, while they are also entitled to very high respect and consideration in all parallel cases by all other departments of the Government. And while it is obviously possible that such decision may be erroneous in any given case, still the evil effect following it, being limited to that particular case, with the chance that it may be overruled and never become a precedent for other cases, can better be born than could the evils of a different practice. At the same time, the candid citizen must confess that if the policy of the Government upon vital questions affecting the whole people is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court, the instant they are made in ordinary litigation between parties in personal actions the people will have ceased to be their own rulers, having to that extent practically resigned their Government into the hands of that eminent tribunal.”⁹³
– President Abraham Lincoln, *First Inaugural Address*, 4 March 1861

Taxes & Public Debts

“Every man’s liberty and life are equally dear to him; every man, therefore, ought to be taxed equally for the defence of his life and liberty. That is, the poll tax should be equal. Every man’s property is equally dear both to himself and to the public: every man’s property ought to be taxed for the defence of the public in proportion to the quantity of it. These are fundamental maxims of sound policy.”⁹⁴ – John Adams, Esq., Boston, letter to Elbridge Gerry, 6 December 1777

“We are ruined, Sir, if we do not over rule the principles that ‘the more we owe, the more prosperous we shall be,’ ‘that a public debt furnishes the means of enterprise,’ ‘that if ours should be once paid off, we should incur another by any means however extravagant’.”⁹⁵
– Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, letter to James Monroe, 17 April 1791

“The principle of the present majority is *excessive expense* ... They cannot borrow a dollar ... Nothing then but excessive taxation can get us along; and this will carry reason and reflection to every man’s door, and particularly in the hour of election.”⁹⁶
– Vice President Thomas Jefferson, letter to John Taylor, 26 November 1798

[The Federal Government will act] “to preserve the faith of the nation by an exact discharge of its debts and contracts, expend the public money with the same care and economy we would practise with our own, and impose on our citizens no unnecessary burden; to keep in all things within the pale of our constitutional powers, and cherish the federal union as the only rock of safety—these, fellow-citizens are the landmarks by which we are to guide ourselves in all our proceedings.”⁹⁷ – President Thomas Jefferson, *Second Annual Message*, 15 December 1802

“To impose taxes when the public exigencies require them is an obligation of the most sacred character, especially with a free people. Their faithful fulfillment of it is among the highest proofs of their virtue and capacity for self-government. To dispense with taxes when it may be done with perfect safety is equally the duty of their representatives. In this instance we have the satisfaction to know that they were imposed when the demand was imperious, and have been sustained with exemplary fidelity. I [am gratified that because of] ... the prosperous and happy condition of our country to recommend the repeal of these taxes at this time.”⁹⁸
– President James Monroe, *First Annual Message* to Congress, 2 December 1817

Wisdom quotes from other Heads of State are desired and can be added.

The original source – including name, title, location, occasion, and date – and a copy of the verifiable documentation must be provided. Please include the entire statement, speech, or writing. The leader must be worthy of emulation, and the content appropriate for inclusion.

Please send documentation to:

Thomas W. Jacobson

TJacobson@IDPPCenter.com * TJacobson@GlobalLifeCampaign.com * Phone: 1-719-268-7198

United States Heads of State Quoted:

George Washington (1732-1799), 1st President (1789-1797)
John Adams (1735-1826 [July 4]), 2nd President (1797-1801)
Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826 [July 4]), 3rd President (1801-1809)
James Madison (1751-1836), 4th President (1809-1817)
James Monroe (1758-1831), 5th President (1817-1825)
John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), 6th President (1825-1829)
Andrew Jackson (1767-1845), 4 March 1833, 7th President (1829-1837)
James Polk (1795-1849), 11th President (1845-1849)
Millard Fillmore (1800-1874), 13th President (1850-1853)
Franklin Pierce (1804-1869), 14th President (1853-1857)
James Buchanan (1791-1868), 15th President (1857-1861)
Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), 16th President (1861-1865)

Presidential quotes are available on the www.IDPPCenter.com web site for the following:

- (1) Good Character & Virtue; Adversity & Difficulties; Corruption & Tyranny; Decline of Nations; Family, Mentoring & Posterity; Honesty, Integrity, Courage, Duty & Accountability; Humility; Leadership Qualities; Morality, True Religion & Self-Government Essential; and*
 - (2) Liberty and Responsibility; Freedoms of Conscience, Religion, Speech, Press; Equality; Human Rights; Religion & Government; Education; and Private Property.*
-

Endnotes

¹ General George Washington, *Circular to the States*, June 14, 1783. George Washington: A Collection, compiled by W. B. Allen (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1988), p. 243.

² The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Charles Francis Adams (grandson), editor (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1854), Vol. IX, p. 231. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/>

-
- ³ Ibid., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. II, p. 131.
- ⁴ A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, published by authority of Congress, compiled by Honorable James D. Richardson (Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1910), Vol. I, p. 220.
- ⁵ The Writings of George Washington, collected and edited by Worthington Chauncey Ford (New York & London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1889), Volume III (1775-1776), pp. 124-125. <http://oll.libertyfund.org>
- ⁶ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 53-54.
- ⁷ Op. cit., The Writings of George Washington, Volume XII (1790-1794), p. 352-353.
- ⁸ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 213-215.
- ⁹ Op. cit., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. VII, p. 256.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. X, p. 160.
- ¹¹ The Works of Thomas Jefferson, 12 Volumes, Federal Edition, collected and edited by Paul Leicester Ford (New York & London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1904), Vol. VI, p. 41-42.
- ¹² Ibid., The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. VI, p. 129-130.
- ¹³ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 311.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 452.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 564-565.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. II, p. 787.
- ¹⁷ Respectfully Quoted: A Dictionary of Quotations Requested from the Congressional Research Service (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1989; Bartleby.com, 2003; www.bartleby.com/73/613.html), p. 32.
- ¹⁸ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. IV, p. 2966.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. IV, p. 2999.
- ²⁰ Op. cit., The Writings of George Washington, Volume XI (1785-1790), p. 78.
- ²¹ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 44.
- ²² Op. cit., The Writings of George Washington, Volume XII (1790-1794), p. 277.
- ²³ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 158.
- ²⁴ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 209.
- ²⁵ Op. cit., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. IX, p. 375.
- ²⁶ Ibid., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. IV, p. 225.
- ²⁷ Ibid., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. V, p. 453.
- ²⁸ Ibid., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. VI, p. 479.
- ²⁹ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 221.
- ³⁰ Op. cit., The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. V, p. 484.
- ³¹ Ibid., The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. VI, p. 198-199, 201.
- ³² Ibid., The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. VIII, p. 458.
- ³³ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 311-312.
- ³⁴ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 311.
- ³⁵ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 334.
- ³⁶ Thomas Jefferson: Writings, Merrill D. Peterson, compiler (Library of America, 1984), p. 1476.
- ³⁷ The Writings of James Madison, Gaillard Hunt, editor, 9 Volumes (New York & London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1900), Vol. I, p. 35-36.
- ³⁸ Ibid., The Writings of James Madison, Vol. II, p. 185.
- ³⁹ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 452.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 569-570.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 711-712.
- ⁴² Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. II, p. 1015.
- ⁴³ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. II, p. 1015.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. II, p. 1046, 1048, 1054-1055.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. IV, p. 2310-2311.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. IV, p. 2780-2782.
- ⁴⁷ Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, 1832-1858, compiled by Don E. Fehrenbacher (The Library of America, 1989), p. 176.
- ⁴⁸ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. IV, p. 2999.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. V, p. 3132-3133.
- ⁵⁰ Op. cit., The Writings of George Washington, Volume IX (1780-1782), p. 426.
- ⁵¹ Op. cit., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. I, p. 195.

-
- ⁵² Ibid., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. V, p. 115.
- ⁵³ Ibid., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. VI, p. 475-476.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. VI, p. 484.
- ⁵⁵ Op. cit., The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. V, p. 433-434.
- ⁵⁶ Op. cit., The Writings of James Madison, Vol. I, p. 83.
- ⁵⁷ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 45.
- ⁵⁸ Op. cit., The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. II, p. 248.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. I, p. 35.
- ⁶⁰ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. V, p. 3158.
- ⁶¹ Op. cit., The Writings of George Washington, Volume I (1748-1757), p. 470.
- ⁶² Ibid., The Writings of George Washington, Volume III (1775-1776), p. 75.
- ⁶³ Ibid., The Writings of George Washington, Volume III (1775-1776), p. 125.
- ⁶⁴ Op. cit., George Washington: A Collection, p. 56.
- ⁶⁵ Op. cit., The Writings of George Washington, Volume III (1775-1776), p. 439.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., The Writings of George Washington, Volume III (1775-1776), p. 440.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., The Writings of George Washington, Volume IV (1776), p. 32.
- ⁶⁸ Op. cit., George Washington: A Collection, p. 71.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., George Washington: A Collection, p. 73.
- ⁷⁰ Op. cit., The Writings of George Washington, Volume IV (1776), p. 362-363.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., The Writings of George Washington, Volume IV (1776), p. 368.
- ⁷² Ibid., The Writings of George Washington, Volume V (1776-1777), p. 13.
- ⁷³ Ibid., The Writings of George Washington, Volume VI (1777-1778), p. 393.
- ⁷⁴ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 57.
- ⁷⁵ Op. cit., The Writings of George Washington, Volume XII (1790-1794), p. 191-192.
- ⁷⁶ Op. cit., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. I, p. 195.
- ⁷⁷ Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, 1859-1865, compiled by Don E. Fehrenbacher (The Library of America, 1989), p. 536.
- ⁷⁸ Op. cit., George Washington: A Collection, p. 659.
- ⁷⁹ Op. cit., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. X, p. 159.
- ⁸⁰ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. IV, p. 2614.
- ⁸¹ Op. cit., George Washington: A Collection, p. 383.
- ⁸² Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 211-212.
- ⁸³ Op. cit., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. VI, p. 168.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States, Vol. IX, p. 556.
- ⁸⁵ The Best Letters of Thomas Jefferson, J. G. de Rouhac Hamilton, compiler and editor (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1926), p. 1-2.
- ⁸⁶ Op. cit., The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. I, p. 121-122.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. VI, p. 351.
- ⁸⁸ Op. cit., Thomas Jefferson: Writings, p. 449.
- ⁸⁹ Op. cit., The Best Letters of Thomas Jefferson, p. 151.
- ⁹⁰ Op. cit., Thomas Jefferson: Writings, p. 245.
- ⁹¹ Ibid., Thomas Jefferson: Writings, p. 1476.
- ⁹² Op. cit., The Writings of James Madison, Vol. III, p. 456-457.
- ⁹³ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. V, p. 3210.
- ⁹⁴ Op. cit., The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States, Vol. IX, p. 470.
- ⁹⁵ Op. cit., The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. VI, p. 243.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. VIII, p. 480-481.
- ⁹⁷ Op. cit., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 334.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Vol. I, p. 589.