

Our Constitution's Exquisitely Harmonized Presidential Testimony

George Washington (1789 - 1797):

"Government is not reason; it is not eloquent; it is force. Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master. Experience has taught us that it is much easier to prevent an enemy from posting themselves than it is to dislodge them after they have got possession, and when the freedom of speech is taken away then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter."

"Occupants of public offices love power and are prone to abuse it."

"Be Americans. Let there be no sectionalism, no North, South, East or West. You are all dependent on one another and should be one in union. In one word, be a nation. Be Americans, and be true to yourselves."

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John Adams (1797 - 1801):

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

*"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 infeasible right to institute government; and to reform, alter, or totally change the same**, when their protection, safety, prosperity, and happiness require it."*

Thomas Jefferson (1801 - 1809):

*"I think myself that we have more machinery of government than is necessary, too many parasites living on the labor of the industrious. Government big enough to supply everything you need is big enough to take everything you have ... The course of history shows that as a government grows, liberty decreases. **The two enemies of the people are criminals and government, so let us tie the second down with the chains of the constitution** so the second will not become the legalized version of the first."*

*"When the people are afraid of the government, that's tyranny. But **when the government is afraid of the people, that's liberty.**"*

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"When once a Republic is corrupted, there is no possibility of remedying any of the growing evils but by removing the corruption and restoring its lost principles; every other correction is either useless or a new evil."

"Who will govern the governors? There is only one force in the nation that can be depended upon to keep the government pure and the governors honest, and that is the people themselves. They alone, if well informed, are capable of preventing the corruption of power, and of restoring the nation to its rightful course if it should go astray. They alone are the safest depository of the ultimate powers of government."

"Does the government fear us? Or do we fear the government? When the people fear the government, tyranny has found victory. The federal government is our servant, not our master!"

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"I prefer dangerous freedom over peaceful slavery."

"The man who reads nothing at all is better educated than the man who reads nothing but newspapers."

"To consider judges as the ultimate arbiters of all constitutional questions is a very dangerous doctrine indeed, and one which would place us under the despotism of an oligarchy."

James Madison (1809 1817):

"If our nation is ever taken over, it will be taken over from within."

"Crisis is the rallying cry of the tyrant."

"Oppressors can tyrannize only when they achieve a standing army, an enslaved press, and a disarmed populace."

"The purpose of the Constitution is to restrict the majority's ability to harm a minority."

"Disarm the people- that is the best and most effective way to enslave them."

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"We are free today substantially, but the day will come when our Republic will be an impossibility. It will be an impossibility because wealth will be concentrated in the hands of a few. A Republic cannot stand upon bayonets, and when the day comes when the wealth of the nation will be in the hands of a few, then we must rely upon the wisdom of the best elements in the country to readjust the laws of the nations to the changed conditions."

"The future and success of America is not in this Constitution, but in the laws of God upon which this Constitution is founded."

"If Tyranny and Oppression come to this land, it will be in the guise of fighting a foreign enemy."

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"I believe there are more instances of the abridgement of freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments by those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations."

"Each State, in ratifying the Constitution, is considered as a sovereign body, independent of all others, and only to be bound by its own voluntary act. In this relation, then, the new Constitution will, if established, be a FEDERAL, and not a NATIONAL constitution."

"The ultimate authority resides in the people, and that if the federal government got too powerful and overstepped its authority, then the people would develop plans of resistance and resort to arms."

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"It will be of little avail to the people that the laws are made by men of their own choice if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read, or so incoherent that they cannot be understood."

"The people are the only legitimate fountain of power, and it is from them that the constitutional charter, under which the several branches of government hold their power, is derived."

"That is not a just government, nor is property secure under it, where the property which a man has in his personal safety and personal liberty, is violated by arbitrary seizures of one class of citizens for the service of the rest."

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James Monroe (1817 - 1825):

"In a representative republic, the education of our children must be of the utmost importance!"

"It is only when the people become ignorant and corrupt, when they degenerate into a populace, that they are incapable of exercising the sovereignty. Usurpation is then an easy attainment, and a usurper soon found. The people themselves become the willing instruments of their own debasement and ruin. Let us, then, look to the great cause, and endeavor to preserve it in full force. Let us by all wise and constitutional measures promote intelligence among the people as the best means of preserving our liberties."

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*"Of the liberty of conscience in matters of religious faith, of speech and of the press; of the trial by jury of the vicinage in civil and criminal cases; of the benefit of the writ of habeas corpus; of the right to keep and bear arms.... **If these rights are well defined, and secured against encroachment**, it is impossible that government should ever degenerate into tyranny."*

"Republics demanded virtue. Monarchies could rely on coercion and "dazzling splendor" to suppress self-interest or factions; republics relied on the goodness of the people to put aside private interest for public good. The imperatives of virtue attached all sorts of desiderata to the republican citizen: simplicity, frugality, sobriety, simple manners, Christian benevolence, duty to the polity. Republics called on other virtues--spiritedness, courage--to protect the polity from external threats. Tyrants kept standing armies; republics relied on free yeomen, defending their own land."

John Quincy Adams (1825 - 1829):

"All the public business in Congress now connects itself with intrigues, and there is great danger that the whole government will degenerate into a struggle of cabals."

"Let us not be unmindful that liberty is power, that the nation blessed with the largest portion of liberty must in proportion to its numbers be the most powerful nation upon earth. Our Constitution professedly rests upon the good sense and attachment of the people. This basis, weak as it may appear, has not yet been found to fail. Always vote for a principle, though you vote alone, and you may cherish the sweet reflection that your vote is never lost. America, in the assembly of nations, has uniformly spoken among them the language of equal liberty, equal justice, and equal rights."

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"America does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She well knows that by 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 standards of freedom."

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(John) Andrew Jackson (1829 - 1837):

"You are a den of vipers. I intend to rout you out and by the Eternal God I will rout you out. If the people only understood the rank injustice of our money and banking system, there would be a revolution before morning."

"It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their own selfish purposes."

"When you get in debt you become a slave."

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"From the earliest ages of history to the present day there never have been thirteen millions of people associated in one political body who enjoyed so much freedom and happiness as the people of these United States. You have no longer any cause to fear danger from abroad... It is from within, among yourselves - from cupidity, from corruption, from disappointed ambition and inordinate thirst for power."

"There are no necessary evils in government. Its evils exist only in its abuses."

"But you must remember, my fellow-citizens, that eternal vigilance by the people is the price of liberty, and that you must pay the price if you wish to secure the blessing."

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"Every man is equally entitled to protection by law. But when the laws undertake to add... artificial distinctions, to grant titles, gratuities, and exclusive privileges—to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful—the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers, who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their government."

"If in madness of delusion, anyone shall lift his parricidal hand against this blessed union, the arms of thousands will be raised to save it, and the curse of millions will fall upon the head which may have plotted its destruction."

Martin Van Buren (1837- 1841):

"The less government interferes with private pursuits, the better for general prosperity."

"I am more than ever convinced of the dangers to which the free and unbiased exercise of political opinion - the only sure foundation and safeguard of republican government - would be exposed by any further increase of the already overgrown influence of corporate authorities."

William Henry Harrison (1841, 31 days):

"There is nothing more corrupting, nothing more destructive of the noblest and finest feelings of our nature, than the exercise of unlimited power."

"The only legitimate right to govern is an express grant of power from the governed."

"The people are the best guardians of their own rights and it is the duty of their executive to abstain from interfering in or thwarting the sacred exercise of the lawmaking functions of their government."

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"We admit of no government by divine right, believing that so far as power is concerned the Beneficent Creator has made no distinction amongst men; that all are upon an equality, and that the only legitimate right to govern is an express grant of power from the governed."

"The plea of necessity, that eternal argument of all conspirators."

"The chains of military despotism, once fastened upon a nation, ages might pass away before they could be shaken off."

John Tyler (1841 - 1845):

"There will be found to exist at all times an imperious necessity for restraining all the functionaries of the Government within the range of their respective powers thereby preserving a just balance between the powers granted to this Government and those reserved to the States and to the people."

"The United States has adventured upon a great and noble experiment . . . of total separation of Church and State. . . . The offices of the Government are open alike to all. No tithes are levied to support an established Hierarchy, nor is the fallible judgment of man set up as the sure and infallible creed of faith. . . . Such is the great experiment which we have tried, and . . . our system of free government would be imperfect without it."

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James K. Polk (1845 - 1849):

"One great object of the Constitution was to restrain majorities from oppressing minorities or encroaching upon their just rights."

"All distinctions of birth or of rank have been abolished. All citizens, whether native or adopted, are placed upon terms of precise equality. All are entitled to equal rights and equal protection."

"There is more selfishness and less principle among members of Congress than I had any conception of, before I became President of the U.S."

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Zackary Taylor (1849 - 1850):

"I am not a party candidate, and if elected cannot be President of a party, but the President of the whole people."

"My life has been devoted to arms, yet I look upon war at all times, and under all circumstances, as a national calamity to be avoided if compatible with national honor."

Franklin Pierce (1853 - 1857):

"In a body [like Congress] where there are more than one hundred talking lawyers, you can make no calculation upon the termination of any debate."

*"The constitutionality and propriety of the Federal Government assuming to enter into a novel and vast field of legislation, namely, that of providing for the care and support of all those ... who by any form of calamity become fit objects of public philanthropy. ... **I cannot find any authority in the Constitution for making the Federal Government the great almoner of public charity** throughout the United States. 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."*

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"The revenue of the country, levied almost insensibly to the taxpayer, goes on from year to year, increasing beyond either the interests or the prospective wants of the Government."

"READILY and, I trust, feelingly acknowledge the duty incumbent on us all . . . to provide for those who, in the mysterious order of Providence, are subject to want and to disease of body or mind; but I cannot find any authority in the Constitution for making the Federal Government the great almoner of public charity throughout the United States ..."

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James Buchanan (1857 - 1861):

"Our union rests upon public opinion, and can never be cemented by the blood of its citizens shed in civil war."

"The storm of frenzy and faction must inevitably dash itself in vain against the unshaken rock of the Constitution."

"Liberty must be allowed to work out its natural results; and these will, ere long, astonish the world."

Abraham Lincoln (1861 - 1865):

"I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country... corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed."

"We seek not to overthrow the constitution, but to overthrow those who would pervert it."

"Don't interfere with anything in the Constitution. That must be maintained, for it is the only safeguard of our liberties."

Andrew Johnson (1865 - 1869):

"Washington, DC is 12 square miles bordered by reality."

*"Outside of the Constitution we have no legal authority more than private citizens, and within it **we have only so much as that instrument gives us.** This broad principle limits all our functions and applies to all subjects."*

"Legislation can neither be wise nor just which seeks the welfare of a single interest at the expense and to the injury of many and varied interests."