PRESIDENCY
AND
CONGRESS

POLSC 315

FALL 2009
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“The natural province of the executive magistrate is to execute laws, as that of the legislature is to make laws. All his acts therefore, properly executive, must presuppose the existence of the laws to be executed. … To see the laws faithfully executed constitutes the essence of the executive authority.” – James Madison, “Helvidius I,” 1793

“The President is at liberty, both in law and conscience, to be as big a man as he can. His capacity will set the limit.” – Woodrow Wilson, Constitutional Government in the United States, 1938
CHAP. XII. Of the Legislative, Executive, and Federative Power of the Common-wealth.

Sec. 143. THE legislative power is that, which has a right to direct how the force of the common-wealth shall be employed for preserving the community and the members of it. But because those laws which are constantly to be executed, and whose force is always to continue, may be made in a little time; therefore there is no need, that the legislative should be always in being, not having always business to do...

Sec. 144. But because the laws, that are at once, and in a short time made, have a constant and lasting force, and need a perpetual execution, or an attendance thereunto; therefore it is necessary there should be a power always in being, which should see to the execution of the laws that are made, and remain in force. And thus the legislative and executive power come often to be separated.

Sec. 145. There is another power in every common-wealth, which one may call natural, because it is that which answers to the power every man naturally had before he entered into society: for though in a common-wealth the members of it are distinct persons still in reference to one another, and as such as governed by the laws of the society; yet in reference to the rest of mankind, they make one body, which is, as every member of it before was, still in the state of nature with the rest of mankind. …So that under this consideration, the whole community is one body in the state of nature, in respect of all other states or persons out of its community.

Sec. 146. This therefore contains the power of war and peace, leagues and alliances, and all the transactions, with all persons and communities without the common-wealth, and may be called federative, if any one pleases. So the thing be understood, I am indifferent as to the name.

Sec. 147. These two powers, executive and federative, though they be really distinct in themselves, yet one comprehending the execution of the municipal laws of the society within its self, upon all that are parts of it; the other the management of the security and interest of the public without, with all those that it may receive benefit or damage from, yet they are always almost united. And though this federative power in the well or ill management of it be of great moment to the common-wealth, yet it is much less capable to be directed by antecedent, standing, positive laws, than the executive; and so must necessarily be left to the prudence and wisdom of those, whose hands it is in, to be managed for the public good: for the laws that concern subjects one amongst another, being to direct their actions, may well enough precede them. But what is to be done in reference to foreigners, depending much upon their actions, and the variation of designs and interests, must be left in great part to the prudence of those, who have this power committed to them, to be managed by the best of their skill, for the advantage of the common-wealth.

Sec. 148. Though, as I said, the executive and federative power of every community be really distinct in themselves, yet they are hardly to be separated, and placed at the same time, in the hands of distinct persons: for both of them requiring the force of the society for their exercise, it is almost impracticable to place the force of the common-wealth in distinct, and not subordinate hands; or that the executive and federative power should be placed in persons, that might act separately, whereby the force of the public would be under different commands: which would be apt some time or other to cause disorder and ruin.
CHAP. XIII. Of the Subordination of the Powers of the Common-wealth.

Sec. 150. In all cases, whilst the government subsists, the legislative is the supreme power: for what can give laws to another, must needs be superior to him; and since the legislative is no otherwise legislative of the society, but by the right it has to make laws for all the parts, and for every member of the society, prescribing rules to their actions, and giving power of execution, where they are transgressed, the legislative must needs be the supreme, and all other powers, in any members or parts of the society, derived from and subordinate to it.

Sec. 151. In some commonwealths, where the legislative is not always in being, and the executive is vested in a single person, who has also a share in the legislative; there that single person in a very tolerable sense may also be called supreme: not that he has in himself all the supreme power, which is that of law-making; but because he has in him the supreme execution, from whom all inferior magistrates derive all their several subordinate powers, or at least the greatest part of them: having also no legislative superior to him, there being no law to be made without his consent, which cannot be expected should ever subject him to the other part of the legislative, he is properly enough in this sense supreme…

Sec. 153. It is not necessary, no, nor so much as convenient, that the legislative should be always in being; but absolutely necessary that the executive power should, because there is not always need of new laws to be made, but always need of execution of the laws that are made. When the legislative hath put the execution of the laws, they make, into other hands, they have a power still to resume it out of those hands, when they find cause, and to punish for any maladministration against the laws. The same holds also in regard of the federative power, that and the executive being both ministerial and subordinate to the legislative, which, as has been shewed, in a constituted common-wealth is the supreme…

CHAP. XIV. Of Prerogative.

Sec. 159. WHERE the legislative and executive power are in distinct hands, (as they are in all moderated monarchies, and well-framed governments) there the good of the society requires, that several things should be left to the discretion of him that has the executive power: for the legislators not being able to foresee, and provide by laws, for all that may be useful to the community, the executor of the laws having the power in his hands, has by the common law of nature a right to make use of it for the good of the society, in many cases, where the municipal law has given no direction, till the legislative can conveniently be assembled to provide for it. Many things there are, which the law can by no means provide for; and those must necessarily be left to the discretion of him that has the executive power in his hands, to be ordered by him as the public good and advantage shall require: nay, it is fit that the laws themselves should in some cases give way to the executive power, or rather to this fundamental law of nature and government, viz. That as much as may be, all the members of the society are to be preserved: for since many accidents may happen, wherein a strict and rigid observation of the laws may do harm; (as not to pull down an innocent man's house to stop the fire, when the next to it is burning) and a man may come sometimes within the reach of the law, which makes no distinction of persons, by an action that may deserve reward and pardon; 'tis fit the ruler should have a power, in many cases, to mitigate the severity of the law, and pardon some offenders: for the end of government being the preservation of all, as much as may be, even the guilty are to be spared, where it can prove no prejudice to the innocent.
Sec. 160. This power to act according to discretion, for the public good, without the
prescription of the law, and sometimes even against it, is that which is called prerogative: for
since in some governments the lawmaking power is not always in being, and is usually too
numerous, and so too slow, for the dispatch requisite to execution; and because also it is
impossible to foresee, and so by laws to provide for, all accidents and necessities that may
concern the public, or to make such laws as will do no harm, if they are executed with an
inflexible rigour, on all occasions, and upon all persons that may come in their way; therefore
there is a latitude left to the executive power, to do many things of choice which the laws do not
prescribe.

Sec. 161. This power, whilst employed for the benefit of the community, and suitably to
the trust and ends of the government, is undisputed prerogative, and never is questioned: for the
people are very seldom or never scrupulous or nice in the point; they are far from examining
prerogative, whilst it is in any tolerable degree employed for the use it was meant, that is, for the
good of the people, and not manifestly against it: but if there comes to be a question between the
executive power and the people, about a thing claimed as a prerogative; the tendency of the
exercise of such prerogative to the good or hurt of the people, will easily decide that question.

Sec. 162. It is easy to conceive, that in the infancy of governments, when
commonwealths differed little from families in number of people, they differed from them too
but little in number of laws: and the governors, being as the fathers of them, watching over them
for their good, the government was almost all prerogative. A few established laws served the
turn, and the discretion and care of the ruler supplied the rest. But when mistake or flattery
prevailed with weak princes to make use of this power for private ends of their own, and not for
the public good, the people were fain by express laws to get prerogative determined in those
points wherein they found disadvantage from it: and thus declared limitations of prerogative
were by the people found necessary in cases which they and their ancestors had left, in the
utmost latitude, to the wisdom of those princes who made no other but a right use of it, that is,
for the good of their people.

Sec. 163. And therefore they have a very wrong notion of government, who say, that the
people have encroached upon the prerogative, when they have got any part of it to be defined by
positive laws: for in so doing they have not pulled from the prince any thing that of right
belonged to him, but only declared, that that power which they indefinitely left in his or his
ancestors hands, to be exercised for their good, was not a thing which they intended him when he
used it otherwise: for the end of government being the good of the community, whatsoever
alterations are made in it, tending to that end, cannot be an encroachment upon any body, since
no body in government can have a right tending to any other end: and those only are
encroachments which prejudice or hinder the public good. Those who say otherwise, speak as if
the prince had a distinct and separate interest from the good of the community, and was not made
for it; the root and source from which spring almost all those evils and disorders which happen in
kingly governments. And indeed, if that be so, the people under his government are not a society
of rational creatures, entered into a community for their mutual good; they are not such as have
set rulers over themselves, to guard, and promote that good; but are to be looked on as an herd of
inferior creatures under the dominion of a master, who keeps them and works them for his own
pleasure or profit. If men were so void of reason, and brutish, as to enter into society upon such
terms, prerogative might indeed be, what some men would have it, an arbitrary power to do
things hurtful to the people.
Sec. 164. But since a rational creature cannot be supposed, when free, to put himself into
subjection to another, for his own harm; (though, where he finds a good and wise ruler, he may
not perhaps think it either necessary or useful to set precise bounds to his power in all things)
prerogative can be nothing but the people's permitting their rulers to do several things, of their
own free choice, where the law was silent, and sometimes too against the direct letter of the law,
for the public good; and their acquiescing in it when so done: for as a good prince, who is
mindful of the trust put into his hands, and careful of the good of his people, cannot have too
much prerogative, that is, power to do good; so a weak and ill prince, who would claim that
power which his predecessors exercised without the direction of the law, as a prerogative
belonging to him by right of his office, which he may exercise at his pleasure, to make or
promote an interest distinct from that of the public, gives the people an occasion to claim their
right, and limit that power, which, whilst it was exercised for their good, they were content
should be tacitly allowed. Sec. 165. And therefore he that will look into the history of England,
will find, that prerogative was always largest in the hands of our wisest and best princes; because
the people, observing the whole tendency of their actions to be the public good, contested not
what was done without law to that end: or, if any human frailty or mistake (for princes are but
men, made as others) appeared in some small declinations from that end; yet 'twas visible, the
main of their conduct tended to nothing but the care of the public. The people therefore, finding
reason to be satisfied with these princes, whenever they acted without, or contrary to the letter of
the law, acquiesced in what they did, and, without the least complaint, let them inlarge their
prerogative as they pleased, judging rightly, that they did nothing herein to the prejudice of their
laws, since they acted conformable to the foundation and end of all laws, the public good.

Sec. 166. Such god-like princes indeed had some title to arbitrary power by that
argument, that would prove absolute monarchy the best government, as that which God himself
governs the universe by; because such kings partake of his wisdom and goodness. Upon this is
founded that saying, That the reigns of good princes have been always most dangerous to the
liberties of their people: for when their successors, managing the government with different
thoughts, would draw the actions of those good rulers into precedent, and make them the
standard of their prerogative, as if what had been done only for the good of the people was a
right in them to do, for the harm of the people, if they so pleased; it has often occasioned contest,
and sometimes public disorders, before the people could recover their original right, and get that
to be declared not to be prerogative, which truly was never so; since it is impossible that any
body in the society should ever have a right to do the people harm; though it be very possible,
and reasonable, that the people should not go about to set any bounds to the prerogative of those
kings, or rulers, who themselves transgressed not the bounds of the public good: for prerogative
is nothing but the power of doing public good without a rule…

Sec. 168. The old question will be asked in this matter of prerogative, But who shall be
judge when this power is made a right use of? I answer: between an executive power in being,
with such a prerogative, and a legislative that depends upon his will for their convening, there
can be no judge on earth; as there can be none between the legislative and the people, should
either the executive, or the legislative, when they have got the power in their hands, design, or go
about to enslave or destroy them. The people have no other remedy in this, as in all other cases
where they have no judge on earth, but to appeal to heaven: for the rulers, in such attempts,
exercising a power the people never put into their hands, (who can never be supposed to consent
that any body should rule over them for their harm) do that which they have not a right to do…
James Madison, Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787

I. Delegates agree on the need for an Executive

The Virginia Plan (introduced by Edmund Randolph, 29 May 1787)

7. Resd. that a National Executive be instituted; to be chosen by the National Legislature for the term of ----- years…and to be ineligible a second time; and that besides a general authority to execute the National laws, it ought to enjoy the Executive rights vested in Congress by the Confederation.

8. Resd. that the Executive and a convenient number of the National Judiciary, ought to compose a Council of revision with authority to examine every act of the National Legislature before it shall operate, & every act of a particular Legislature before a Negative thereon shall be final; and that the dissent of the said Council shall amount to a rejection, unless the Act of the National Legislature be again passed…by ----- of the members of each branch.

The New Jersey Plan (introduced by William Paterson, 15 June 1787)

4. Resd. that the U. States in Congs. be authorized to elect a federal Executive to consist of ------ persons, to continue in office for the term of ----- years…to be incapable of holding any other office or appointment during their time of service and for ------ years thereafter; to be ineligible a second time, & removeable by Congs. on application by a majority of the Executives of the several States; that the Executives besides their general authority to execute the federal acts ought to appoint all federal officers not otherwise provided for, & to direct all military operations; provided that none of the persons composing the federal Executive shall on any occasion take command of any troops, so as personally to conduct any enterprise as General or in other capacity.

The Hamilton Plan (introduced by Alexander Hamilton, 18 June 1787)

IV. The supreme Executive authority of the United States to be vested in a Governour to be elected to serve during good behaviour—the election to be made by Electors chosen by the people in the Election Districts aforesaid-The authorities & functions of the Executive to be as follows: to have a negative on all laws about to be passed, and the execution of all laws passed, to have the direction of war when authorized or begun; to have with the advice and approbation of the Senate the power of making all treaties; to have the sole appointment of the heads or chief officers of the departments of Finance, War and Foreign Affairs; to have the nomination of all other officers (Ambassadors to foreign Nations included) subject to the approbation or rejection of the Senate; to have the power of pardoning all offences except Treason; which he shall not pardon without the approbation of the Senate.
II. How many Executives?

Single executive most likely to possess “energy” (1 June 1787)

The Committee of the whole proceeded to Resolution 7. "that a national Executive be instituted, to be chosen by the national Legislature-for the term of ------ years to be ineligible thereafter, to possess the executive powers of Congress."

Mr. PINKNEY was for a vigorous Executive but was afraid the Executive powers of the existing Congress might extend to peace & war, which would render the Executive a monarchy, of the worst kind, to wit an elective one.

Mr. WILSON moved that the Executive consist of a single person…

Mr. RUTLIDGE…He said he was for vesting the Executive power in a single person, tho’ he was not for giving him the power of war and peace. A single man would feel the greatest responsibility and administer the public affairs best.

Mr. SHERMAN said he considered the Executive magistracy as nothing more than an institution for carrying the will of the Legislature into effect, that the person or persons ought to be appointed by and accountable to the Legislature only, which was the depositary of the supreme will of the Society. As they were the best judges of the business which ought to be done by the Executive department, and consequently of the number necessary from time to time for doing it, he wished the number might not be fixed but that the legislature should be at liberty to appoint one or more as experience might dictate.

Mr. WILSON preferred a single magistrate, as giving most energy dispatch and responsibility to the office…

Mr. RANDOLPH strenuously opposed a unity in the Executive magistracy. He regarded it as the foetus of monarchy…He could not see why the great requisites for the Executive department, vigor, despatch & responsibility could not be found in three men, as well as in one man. The Executive ought to be independent. It ought therefore in order to support its independence to consist of more than one.

Mr. WILSON said that unity in the Executive instead of being the fetus of monarchy would be the best safeguard against tyranny…

Fears of a “monarchy” (2 June 1787)

Mr. RUTLIDGE & Mr. C. PINKNEY moved that the blank for the no. of persons in the Executive be filled with the words "one person." He supposed the reasons to be so obvious & conclusive in favor of one that no member would oppose the motion.

Mr. RANDOLPH opposed it with great earnestness, declaring that he should not do justice to the Country which sent him if he were silently to suffer the establishmt. of a Unity in the Executive department. He felt an opposition to it which he believed he should continue to feel as long as he lived.
He urged 1. that the permanent temper of the people was adverse to the very semblance of Monarchy. 2. that a unity was unnecessary a plurality being equally competent to all the objects of the department. 3. that the necessary confidence would never be reposed in a single Magistrate. 4. that the appointments would generally be in favor of some inhabitant near the center of the Community, and consequently the remote parts would not be on an equal footing. He was in favor of three members of the Executive to be drawn from different portions of the Country.

Mr. BUTLER contended strongly for a single magistrate as most likely to answer the purpose of the remote parts. If one man should be appointed he would be responsible to the whole, and would be impartial to its interests. If three or more should be taken from as many districts, there would be a constant struggle for local advantages. In Military matters this would be particularly mischievous…

Delegates agree on a single executive (4 June 1787)

The Question was resumed on motion of Mr. PINKNEY, "shall the blank for the number of the Executive be filled with a single person?"

Mr. WILSON was in favor of the motion. It had been opposed by the gentleman from Virga. [Mr. Randolph] but the arguments used had not convinced him. He observed that the objections of Mr. R. were levelled not so much agst. the measure itself, as agst. its unpopularity…On examination he could see no evidence of the alleged antipathy of the people. On the contrary he was persuaded that it does not exist. All know that a single magistrate is not a King. One fact has great weight with him. All the 13 States tho agreeing in scarce any other instance, agree in placing a single magistrate at the head of the Governt. The idea of three heads has taken place in none…In addition to his former reasons for preferring a unity, he would mention another. The tranquility not less than the vigor of the Govt. he thought would be favored by it. Among three equal members, he foresaw nothing but uncontrouled, continued, & violent animosities; which would not only interrupt the public administration; but diffuse their poison thro' the other branches of Govt., thro' the States, and at length thro' the people at large…

Mr. SHERMAN. This matter is of great importance and ought to be well considered before it is determined. Mr. Wilson he said had observed that in each State a single magistrate was placed at the head of the Govt. It was so he admitted, and properly so, and he wished the same policy to prevail in the federal Govt. But then it should be also remarked that in all the States there was a Council of advice, without which the first magistrate could not act. A council he thought necessary to make the establishment acceptable to the people. Even in G. B. the King has a Council; and though he appoints it himself, its advice has its weight with him, and attracts the Confidence of the people…

Mr. GERRY was at a loss to discover the policy of three members for the Executive. It Wd. be extremely inconvenient in many instances, particularly in military matters, whether relating to the militia, an army, or a navy. It would be a general with three heads.

III. Mode of election – first round of arguments

Election by the people or Congress? (1 June 1787)

The next clause in Resolution 7, relating to the mode of appointing, & the duration of, the Executive being under consideration,

Mr. WILSON said he was almost unwilling to declare the mode which he wished to take place…He would say however at least that in theory he was for an election by the people…

Mr. SHERMAN was for the appointment by the Legislature, and for making him absolutely dependent on that body, as it was the will of that which was to be executed. An independence of the Executive on the supreme Legislature, was in his opinion the very essence of tyranny if there was any such thing…

Mr. WILSON renewed his declarations in favor of an appointment by the people. He wished to derive not only both branches of the Legislature from the people, without the intervention of the State Legislatures but the Executive also; in order to make them as independent as possible of each other, as well as of the States…

Electoral College introduced – and rejected (2 June 1787)

The mode of appointg ye Executive was resumed.

Mr. WILSON made the following motion, to be substituted for the mode proposed by Mr. Randolph's resolution, "that the Executive Magistracy shall be elected in the following manner: That the States be divided into -------- districts: & that the persons qualified to vote in each district for members of the first branch of the national Legislature elect -------- members for their respective districts to be electors of the Executive magistracy, that the said Electors of the Executive magistracy meet at -------- and they or any -------- of them so met shall proceed to elect by ballot, but not out of their own body -------- person in whom the Executive authority of the national Government shall be vested."

Mr. WILSON repeated his arguments in favor of an election without the intervention of the States. He supposed too that this mode would produce more confidence among the people in the first magistrate, than an election by the national Legislature.

Mr. GERRY opposed the election by the national legislature. There would be a constant intrigue kept up for the appointment. The Legislature & the candidates wd. bargain & play into one another's hands, votes would be given by the former under promises or expectations from the latter, of recompensing them by services to members of the Legislature or to their friends…He seemed to prefer the taking the suffrages of the States instead of Electors, or letting the Legislatures nominate, and the electors appoint. He was not clear that the people ought to act directly even in the choice of electors, being too little informed of personal characters in large districts, and liable to deceptions…

Election by state governors proposed (9 June 1787)

Mr. GERRY, according to previous notice given by him, moved "that the National Executive should be elected by the Executives of the States..." If the appointmt. should be made by the Natl. Legislature, it would lessen that independence of the Executive which ought to prevail, would give birth to intrigue and corruption between the Executive & Legislature previous to the election, and to partiality in the Executive afterwards to the friends who promoted him. Some other mode therefore appeared to him necessary. He proposed that of appointing by the State Executives...He supposed the Executives would be most likely to select the fittest men, and that it would be their interest to support the man of their own choice.

Mr. RANDOLPH, urged strongly the inexpediency of Mr. Gerry's mode of appointing the Natl. Executive...Bad appointments would be made; the Executives of the States being little conversant with characters not within their own small spheres. The State Executives too notwithstanding their constitutional independence, being in fact dependent on the State Legislatures will generally be guided by the views of the latter...A Natl. Executive thus chosen will not be likely to defend with becoming vigilance & firmness the National rights agst. State encroachments...

On the question for referring the appointment of the Natl. Executive to the State Executives as propd. by Mr. Gerry Massts. no. Cont. no. N. Y. no. N. J. no. Pa. no. Del. divd. Md. no. Va. no. S. C. no. Geo. no...

IV. Mode of election – second round of arguments

Election by the people or Congress? Part 2 (17 July 1787)

..."To be chosen by the National Legisl:"

Mr. GOVERNOR MORRIS was pointedly agst. his being so chosen. He will be the mere creature of the Legisl: if appointed & impeachable by that body. He ought to be elected by the people at large...If the Legislature elect, it will be the work of intrigue, of cabal, and of faction...He moved to strike out "National Legislature" & insert "citizens of U.S."

Mr. SHERMAN thought that the sense of the Nation would be better expressed by the Legislature, than by the people at large. The latter will never be sufficiently informed of characters, and besides will never give a majority of votes to any one man. They will generally vote for some man in their own State, and the largest State will have the best chance for the appointment...

Mr. PINKNEY did not expect this question would again have been brought forward; An Election by the people being liable to the most obvious & striking objections. They will be led by a few active & designing men...

Mr. Govr. MORRIS...If the Executive be chosen by the Natl. Legislature, he will not be independent on it; and if not independent, usurpation & tyranny on the part of the Legislature will be the consequence...

Col. MASON...He conceived it would be as unnatural to refer the choice of a proper character for chief Magistrate to the people, as it would, to refer a trial of colours to a blind man. The extent of the Country renders it impossible that the people can have the requisite capacity to judge of the respective pretensions of the Candidates...

Should the President be re-eligible for office? (19 July 1787)

Mr. WILSON. It seems to be the unanimous sense that the Executive should not be appointed by the Legislature, unless he be rendered in-eligible a 2d. time: he perceived with pleasure that the idea was gaining ground, of an election mediately or immediately by the people.

Mr. MADISON…It is essential then that the appointment of the Executive should either be drawn from some source, or held by some tenure, that will give him a free agency with regard to the Legislature…The people at large was in his opinion the fittest in itself. It would be as likely as any that could be devised to produce an Executive Magistrate of distinguished Character. The people generally could only know & vote for some Citizen whose merits had rendered him an object of general attention & esteem…

Mr. GERRY. If the Executive is to be elected by the Legislature he certainly ought not to be re-eligible. This would make him absolutely dependent. He was agst. a popular election. The people are uninformed, and would be misled by a few designing men. He urged the expediency of an appointment of the Executive by Electors to be chosen by the State Executives. The people of the States will then choose the 1st. branch: The legislatures of the States the 2d. branch of the National Legislature, and the Executives of the States, the National Executive. This he thought would form a strong attachnt. in the States to the National System. The popular mode of electing the chief Magistrate would certainly be the worst of all…

Dangers of election by Congress (24 July 1787)

Mr. HOUSTON moved that he be appointed by the "Natl. Legislature…”

Mr. GERRY. We seem to be entirely at a loss on this head. He would suggest whether it would not be adviseable to refer the clause relating to the Executive to the Committee of detail to be appointed. Perhaps they will be able to hit on something that may unite the various opinions which have been thrown out…

Mr. Govr. MORRIS. Of all possible modes of appointment that by the Legislature is the worst. If the Legislature is to appoint, and to impeach or to influence the impeachment, the Executive will be the mere creature of it…Much had been said of the intrigues that will be practised by the Executive to get into office. Nothing had been said on the other side of the intrigues to get him out of office. Some leader of party will always covet his seat, will perplex his administration, will cabal with the Legislature, till he succeeds in supplanting him…In order to get rid of the dependence of the Executive on the Legislature, the expedient of making him ineligible a 2d. time had been devised. This was as much as to say we shd. give him the benefit of experience, and then deprive ourselves of the use of it. But make him ineligible a 2d. time-and prolong his duration even to 15- years, will he by any wonderful interposition of providence at that period cease to be a man? No he will be unwilling to quit his exaltation, the road to his object thro' the Constitution will be shut; he will be in possession of the sword, a civil war will ensue, and the Commander of the victorious army on which ever side, will be the despot of America. This consideration renders him particularly anxious that the Executive should be properly constituted…It is the most difficult of all rightly to balance the Executive. Make him too weak: The Legislature will usurp his powers: Make him too strong. He will usurp on the
Legislature. He preferred a short period, a re-eligibility, but a different mode of election. A long period would prevent an adoption of the plan…

**Mason reviews the various proposals (26 July 1787)**

Col. MASON In every Stage of the Question relative to the Executive, the difficulty of the subject and the diversity of the opinions concerning it have appeared. Nor have any of the modes of constituting that department been satisfactory. 1. It has been proposed that the election should be made by the people at large; that is that an act which ought to be performed by those who know most of Eminent characters, & qualifications, should be performed by those who know least. 2. that the election should be made by the Legislatures of the States. 3. by the Executives of the States. Agst. these modes also strong objections have been urged. 4. It has been proposed that the election should be made by Electors chosen by the people for that purpose. This was at first agreed to: But on further consideration has been rejected…After reviewing all these various modes, he was led to conclude, that an election by the Natl. Legislature as originally proposed, was the best. If it was liable to objections, it was liable to fewer than any other…

**V. Mode of election – third round of arguments**

**Electoral College re-introduced (24 August 1787)**

Mr. Govr. MORRIS opposed the election of the President by the Legislature. He dwelt on the danger of rendering the Executive uninterested in maintaining the rights of his Station, as leading to Legislative tyranny. If the Legislature have the Executive dependen on them, they can perpetuate & support their usurpations by the influence of tax-gatherers & other officers, by fleets armies. Cabal & corruption are attached to that mode of election: so also is ineligibility a second time. Hence the Executive is interested in Courting popularity in the Legislature by sacrificing his Executive Rights; & then he can go into that Body, after the expiration of his Executive office, and enjoy there the fruits of his policy. To these considerations he added that rivals would be continually intriguing to oust the President from his place. To guard against all these evils he moved that the President "shall be chosen by Electors to be chosen by the People of the several States"


**Brearly Committee recommends electoral system (4 September 1787)**

Mr. BREARLY from the Committee of eleven made a further partial Report as follows. "The Committee of Eleven to whom sundry resolutions were referred on the 31st. of August, report that in their opinion the following additions and alterations should be made to the Report before the Convention, viz…

(4) After the word 'Excellency' in sect. 1. art. 10. to be inserted. 'He shall hold his office during the term of four years, and together with the vice-President, chosen for the same term, be
elected in the following manner, viz. Each State shall appoint in such manner as its Legislature may direct, a number of electors equal to the whole number of Senators and members of the House of Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Legislature. The Electors shall meet in their respective States, and vote by ballot for two persons, of whom one at least shall not be an inhabitant of the same State with themselves; and they shall make a list of all the persons voted for, and of the number of votes for each, which list they shall sign and certify and transmit sealed to the Seat of the Genl. Government, directed to the President of the Senate-The President of the Senate shall in that House open all the certificates; and the votes shall be then & there counted. The Person having the greatest number of votes shall be the President, if such number be a majority of that of the electors.’…”

The (4) clause was accordingly taken up…

Mr. RANDOLPH & Mr. PINKNEY wished for a particular explanation & discussion of the reasons for changing the mode of electing the Executive.

Mr. Govr. MORRIS said he would give the reasons of the Committee and his own. The 1st. was the danger of intrigue & faction if the appointmt. should be made by the Legislature. 2. the inconveniency of an ineligibility required by that mode in order to lessen its evils. 3. The difficulty of establishing a Court of Impeachments, other than the Senate which would not be so proper for the trial nor the other branch for the impeachment of the President, if appointed by the Legislature, 4. No body had appeared to be satisfied with an appointment by the Legislature. 5. Many were anxious even for an immediate choice by the people. 6. the indispensible necessity of making the Executive independent of the Legislature. -As the Electors would vote at the same time throughout the U. S. and at so great a distance from each other, the great evil of cabal was avoided. It would be impossible also to corrupt them. A conclusive reason for making the Senate instead of the Supreme Court the Judge of impeachments, was that the latter was to try the President after the trial of the impeachment…

Mr. BUTLER thought the mode not free from objections, but much more so than an election by the Legislature, where as in elective monarchies, cabal faction & violence would be sure to prevail.

Mr. PINKNEY stated as objections to the mode…2. The Electors will be strangers to the several candidates and of course unable to decide on their comparative merits. 3. It makes the Executive reeligible which will endanger the public liberty…

Mr. WILSON. This subject has greatly divided the House, and will also divide people out of doors. It is in truth the most difficult of all on which we have had to decide. He had never made up an opinion on it entirely to his own satisfaction. He thought the plan on the whole a valuable improvement on the former. It gets rid of one great evil, that of cabal & corruption; & Continental Characters will multiply as we more & more coalesce, so as to enable the electors in every part of the Union to know & judge of them. It clears the way also for a discussion of the question of reeligibility on its own merits, which the former mode of election seems to forbid…

“We have made a bold stroke for Monarchy” (5 September 1787)

The Report made yesterday as to the appointment of the Executive being taken up.

Mr. PINKNEY renewed his opposition to the mode, arguing 1. that the electors will not have sufficient knowledge of the fittest men, & will be swayed by an attachment to the eminent men of their respective States…
Mr. GERRY did not object to this plan of constituting the Executive in itself, but should be governed in his final vote by the powers that may be given to the President.

Mr. RUTLIDGE was much opposed to the plan reported by the Committee…He was also against a re-eligibility. He moved to postpone the Report under consideration & take up the original plan of appointment by the Legislature, to wit. "He shall be elected by joint ballot by the Legislature to which election a majority of the votes of the members present shall be required: He shall hold his office during the term of seven years; but shall not be elected a second time."


Mr. RANDOLPH. We have in some revolutions of this plan made a bold stroke for Monarchy…

Electoral College accepted (6 September 1787)

The Report relating to the appointment of the Executive stands as amended, as follows, "He shall hold his office during the term of four years, and together with the vice-President, chosen for the same term, be elected in the following manner.

Each State shall appoint in such manner as its Legislature may direct, a number of electors equal to the whole number of Senators and members of the House of Representatives, to which the State may be entitled in the Legislature:

But no person shall be appointed an Elector who is a member of the Legislature of the U. S. or who holds any office of profit or trust under the U. S.

The Electors shall meet in their respective States and vote by ballot for two persons, of whom one at least shall not be an inhabitant of the same State with themselves; and they shall make a list of all the persons voted for, and of the number of votes for each, which list they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the Seat of the General Government, directed to the President of the Senate.

The President of the Senate shall in the presence of the Senate and House of Representatives open all the certificates & the votes shall then be counted.

The person having the greatest number of votes shall be the President (if such number be a majority of the whole number of electors appointed)…

VI. Term of office – first round of arguments

Shorter term and eligible for re-election (1 June 1787)

The next clause in Resolution 7, relating to the mode of appointing, & the duration of, the Executive being under consideration…

Mr. WILSON moves that the blank for the term of duration should be filled with three years, observing at the same time that he preferred this short period, on the supposition that a reeligibility would be provided for.

Mr. PINKNEY moves for seven years.

Mr. SHERMAN was for three years, and agst. the doctrine of rotation as throwing out of office the men best qualified to execute its duties.
Mr. MASON was for seven years at least, and for prohibiting a re-eligibility…

Mr. BEDFORD was strongly opposed to so long a term as seven years. He begged the committee to consider what the situation of the Country would be, in case the first magistrate should be saddled on it for such a period and it should be found on trial that he did not possess the qualifications ascribed to him, or should lose them after his appointment. An impeachment he said would be no cure for this evil, as an impeachment would reach misfeasance only, not incapacity. He was for a triennial election, and for an ineligibility after a period of nine years.

Should the President be impeachable? (2 June 1787)

Mr. DICKENSON moved "that the Executive be made removeable by the National Legislature on the request of a majority of the Legislatures of individual States." It was necessary he said to place the power of removing somewhere…

Mr. SHERMAN contended that the National Legislature should have power to remove the Executive at pleasure.

Mr. MASON. Some mode of displacing an unfit magistrate is rendered indispensable by the fallibility of those who choose, as well as by the corruptibility of the man chosen. He opposed decidedly the making the Executive the mere creature of the Legislature as a violation of the fundamental principle of good Government…

Mr. DICKENSON considered the business as so important that no man ought to be silent or reserved. He went into a discourse of some length, the sum of which was, that the Legislative, Executive, & Judiciary departments ought to be made as independent as possible; but that such an Executive as some seemed to have in contemplation was not consistent with a republic: that a firm Executive could only exist in a limited monarchy…A limited Monarchy he considered as one of the best Governments in the world…A limited Monarchy however was out of the question. The spirit of the times-the state of our affairs, forbade the experiment, if it were desireable…

On Mr. DICKENSON'S motion for making Executive removeable by Natl.; Legislature at request of majority of State Legislatures was also rejected-all the States being in the negative Except Delaware which gave an affirmative vote…

Mr. WILLIAMSON 2ded. by Mr. DAVIE moved to add to the last Clause, the words-"and to be removeable on impeachment & conviction of mal-practice or neglect of duty"-which was agreed to.

“Let the Executive be for life” (18 June 1787)

Mr. HAMILTON…As to the Executive, it seemed to be admitted that no good one could be established on Republican principles. Was not this giving up the merits of the question: for can there be a good Govt. without a good Executive…What is the inference from all these observations? That we ought to go as far in order to attain stability and permanency, as republican principles will admit. Let one branch of the Legislature hold their places for life or at least during good behaviour. Let the Executive also be for life. He appealed to the feelings of the members present whether a term of seven years, would induce the sacrifices of private affairs which an acceptance of public trust would require, so as to ensure the services of the best Citizens…But is this a Republican Govt., it will be asked? Yes if all the Magistrates are appointed, and vacancies are filled, by the people, or a process of election originating with the people…It will be objected probably, that such an Executive will be an elective Monarch, and
will give birth to the tumults which characterize that form of Govt. He wd. reply that Monarch is an indefinite term. It marks not either the degree or duration of power. If this Executive Magistrate wd. be a monarch for life-the other propd. by the Report from the Comttee of the whole, wd. be a monarch for seven years…Having made these observations he would read to the Committee a sketch of a plan which he shd. prefer to either of those under consideration…

IV. The supreme Executive authority of the United States to be vested in a Governour to be elected to serve during good behaviour…

**VII. Term of office – second round of arguments**

Mason argues against monarchy (17 July 1787)

Col. MASON…He considered an Executive during good behavior as a softer name only for an Executive for life. And that the next would be an easy step to hereditary Monarchy. If the motion should finally succeed, he might himself live to see such a Revolution. If he did not it was probable his children or grand children would. He trusted there were few men in that House who wished for it. No state he was sure had so far revolted from Republican principles as to have the least bias in its favor…

The dangers of ineligibility (19 July 1787)

On reconsideration of the vote rendering the Executive re-eligible a 2d. time…

Mr. GOVERNEUR MORRIS… What effect will this have?

1. it will destroy the great incitement to merit public esteem by taking away the hope of being rewarded with a reappointment…The love of fame is the great spring to noble & illustrious actions. Shut the Civil road to Glory & he may be compelled to seek it by the sword.

2. It will tempt him to make the most of the short space of time allotted him, to accumulate wealth and provide for his friends.

3. It will produce violations of the very constitution it is meant to secure. In moments of pressing danger the tried abilities and established character of a favorite Magistrate will prevail over respect for the forms of the Constitution…

These then are the faults of the Executive establishment as now proposed. Can no better establishmt. be devised? If he is to be the Guardian of the people let him be appointed by the people? If he is to be a check on the Legislature let him not be impeachable. Let him be of short duration, that he may with propriety be re-eligible…He suggested a biennial election of the Executive…

Mr. RANDOLPH urged the motion of Mr. L. Martin for restoring the words making the Executive ineligible a 2d. time. If he ought to be independent, he should not be left under a temptation to court a re-appointment. If he should be re- appointable by the Legislature, he will be no check on it…

Impeachment accepted (20 July 1787)

..."to be removeable on impeachment and conviction for mal practice or neglect of duty."

Mr. PINKNEY & Mr. Govr. MORRIS moved to strike out this part of the Resolution.

Mr. P. observd. he ought not to be impeachable whilst in office

Mr. DAVIE...He considered this as an essential security for the good behaviour of the Executive.

Mr. WILSON concurred in the necessity of making the Executive impeachable whilst in office...

Col. MASON. No point is of more importance than that the right of impeachment should be continued. Shall any man be above Justice? Above all shall that man be above it, who can commit the most extensive injustice?...

Docr. FRANKLIN was for retaining the clause as favorable to the Executive...What was the practice before this in cases where the chief Magistrate rendered himself obnoxious? Why recourse was had to assassination in wch. he was not only deprived of his life but of the opportunity of vindicating his character. It wd. be the best way therefore to provide in the Constitution for the regular punishment of the Executive where his misconduct should deserve it, and for his honorable acquittal when he should be unjustly accused...

Mr. MADISON thought it indispensable that some provision should be made for defending the Community agst. the incapacity, negligence or perfidy of the chief Magistrate. The limitation of the period of his service, was not a sufficient security. He might lose his capacity after his appointment. He might pervert his administration into a scheme of peculation or oppression. He might betray his trust to foreign powers...

Mr. PINKNEY did not see the necessity of impeachments. He was sure they ought not to issue from the Legislature who would in that case hold them as a rod over the Executive and by that means effectually destroy his independence. His revisionary power in particular would be rendered altogether insignificant.

Mr. GERRY urged the necessity of impeachments. A good magistrate will not fear them. A bad one ought to be kept in fear of them. He hoped the maxim would never be adopted here that the chief magistrate could do no wrong...

Mr. RANDOLPH. The propriety of impeachments was a favorite principle with him...The Executive will have great opportunities of abusing his power; particularly in time of war when the military force, and in some respects the public money will be in his hands...


Longer term and ineligible for re-election (24 July 1787)

Mr. WILLIAMSON was for going back to the original ground; to elect the Executive for 7 years and render him ineligible a 2d. time...It was pretty certain he thought that we should at some time or other have a King; but he wished no precaution to be omitted that might postpone the event as long as possible. -Ineligibility a 2d. time appeared to him to be the best precaution. With this precaution he had no objection to a longer term than 7 years. He would go as far as 10 or 12 years...

Mr. L. MARTIN & Mr. GERRY moved to re-instate the ineligibility of the Executive a 2d. time.
Mr. ELSEWORTH…The Executive he thought should be reelected if his conduct proved him worthy of it. And he will be more likely to render himself, worthy of it if he be rewardable with it…

Mr. GERRY. That the Executive shd. be independent of the Legislature is a clear point. The longer the duration of his appointment the more will his dependence be diminished. It will be better then for him to continue 10, 15, or even 20, years and be ineligible afterwards…

Mr. L. MARTIN…moved "that the appointmt. of the Executive shall continue for Eleven years.

Mr. GERRY suggested fifteen years
Mr. KING twenty years. This is the medium life of princes.
Mr. DAVIE Eight years…

VIII. Term of office – third round of arguments

Brearly Committee recommends four year term and re-eligibility (4 September 1787)

Mr. BREARLY from the Committee of eleven made a further partial Report as follows…

(4) After the word 'Excellency' in sect. 1. art. 10. to be inserted. 'He shall hold his office during the term of four years…

The latter part of Sect. 2. Art: 10. to read as follows.

(9) 'He shall be removed from his office on impeachment by the House of Representatives, and conviction by the Senate, for Treason, or bribery, and in case of his removal as aforesaid, death, absence, resignation or inability to discharge the powers or duties of his office, the vice-president shall exercise those powers and duties until another President be chosen, or until the inability of the President be removed.'…

Four year term accepted (6 September 1787)

Mr. SPAIGHT & Mr. WILLIAMSON moved to insert "seven" instead of "four" years for the term of the President. On this motion N. H. ay. Mas. no. Ct. no. N. J. no. Pa. no. Del. no. Md. no. Va. ay. N. C. ay. S. C. no. Geo. no.

Mr. SPAIGHT & Mr. WILLIAMSON, then moved to insert "six" instead of "four." On which motion N. H. no. Mas. no. Ct. no. N. J. no. Pa. no. Del. no. Md. no. Va. no. N. C. ay. S. C. ay. Geo. no

On the term "four" all the States were ay, except N. Carolina, no.

Impeachment clause expanded (8 September 1787)

The clause referring to the Senate, the trial of impeachments agst. the President, for Treason & bribery, was taken up.

Col. MASON. Why is the provision restrained to Treason & bribery only? Treason as defined in the Constitution will not reach many great and dangerous offences…Attempts to subvert the Constitution may not be Treason as above defined…He movd. to add after "bribery" "or maladministration."…
Mr. Govr. MORRIS…An election of every four years will prevent maladministration.
Col. MASON withdrew "maladministration" & substitutes "other high crimes & misdemeanors agst. the State"

IX. Absolute or qualified veto power?

Absolute veto rejected (4 June 1787)

Mr. GERRY…moves to…propose "that the National Executive shall have a right to negative any Legislative act which shall not be afterwards passed by -------- parts of each branch of the national Legislature."
…Mr. WILSON …The Executive ought to have an absolute negative. Without such a self-defense the Legislature can at any moment sink it into non-existence…
Mr. SHERMAN was agst. enabling any one man to stop the will of the whole. No one man could be found so far above all the rest in wisdom. He thought we ought to avail ourselves of his wisdom in revising the laws, but not permit him to overrule the decided and cool opinions of the Legislature…
Mr. WILSON believed as others did that this power would seldom be used. The Legislature would know that such a power existed, and would refrain from such laws, as it would be sure to defeat…
Mr. BUTLER had been in favor of a single Executive Magistrate; but could he have entertained an idea that a compleat negative on the laws was to be given him he certainly should have acted very differently. It had been observed that in all countries the Executive power is in a constant course of increase…Gentlemen seemed to think that we had nothing to apprehend from an abuse of the Executive power…
Col. MASON…The Executive may refuse its assent to necessary measures till new appointments shall be referred to him; and having by degrees engrossed all these into his own hands, the American Executive, like the British, will by bribery & influence, save himself the trouble & odium of exerting his negative afterwards. We are Mr. Chairman going very far in this business. We are not indeed constituting a British Government, but a more dangerous monarchy, an elective one…Do gentlemen mean to pave the way to hereditary Monarchy? Do they flatter themselves that the people will ever consent to such an innovation? If they do I venture to tell them, they are mistaken. The people never will consent…He never could agree to give up all the rights of the people to a single Magistrate. If more than one had been fixed on, greater powers might have been entrusted to the Executive. He hoped this attempt to give such powers would have its weight hereafter as an argument for increasing the number of the Executive…
On a question for enabling two thirds of each branch of the Legislature to overrule the revisionary check: it passed in the affirmative sub silentio; and was inserted in the blank of Mr. Gerry's motion…
X. Foreign policy and treaty-making powers

“To direct all military operations” (15 June 1787)

The propositions from N. Jersey moved by Mr. Patterson were in the words following…

4. Resolved that the Executives besides their general authority to execute the federal acts ought to appoint all federal officers not otherwise provided for, & to direct all military operations; provided that none of the persons composing the federal Executive shall on any occasion take command of any troops, so as personally to conduct any enterprise as General or in other capacity…

The power to “make” but not “declare war” (17 August 1787)

[On the proposed power of Congress] “To make war”

Mr. PINKNEY opposed the vesting this power in the Legislature. Its proceedings were too slow. It wd. meet but once a year. The Hs. of Reps. would be too numerous for such deliberations. The Senate would be the best depositary, being more acquainted with foreign affairs, and most capable of proper resolutions…It would be singular for one authority to make war, and another peace.

Mr. BUTLER. The objections agst. the Legislature lie in great degree agst. the Senate. He was for vesting the power in the President, who will have all the requisite qualities, and will not make war but when the Nation will support it.

Mr. MADISON and Mr. GERRY moved to insert "declare," striking out "make" war; leaving to the Executive the power to repel sudden attacks.

Mr. SHARMAN thought it stood very well. The Executive shd. be able to repel and not to commence war. "Make" better than "declare" the latter narrowing the power too much.

Mr. GERRY never expected to hear in a republic a motion to empower the Executive alone to declare war.

Mr. ELSWORTH. there is a material difference between the cases of making war and making peace. It shd. be more easy to get out of war, than into it. War also is a simple and overt declaration. peace attended with intricate & secret negociations.

Mr. MASON was agst. giving the power of war to the Executive, because not safely to be trusted with it…

On the motion to insert declare-in place of make, it was agreed to…[See Note below]

Mr. BUTLER moved to give the Legislature3 power of peace, as they were to have that of war.

Mr. GERRY 2ds. him. 8 Senators may possibly exercise the power if vested in that body, and 14 if all should be present; and may consequently give up part of the U. States. The Senate are more liable to be corrupted by an Enemy than the whole Legislature.


[Note: On the remark by Mr. King that "make" war might be understood to "conduct" it which was an Executive function, Mr. Elseworth gave up his objection, and the vote of Cont. was changed to-ay.]
Brearly Committee recommends treaty-making power (4 September 1787)

Mr. BREARLY from the Committee of eleven made a further partial Report as follows. "The Committee of Eleven to whom sundry resolutions were referred on the 31st. of August, report that in their opinion the following additions and alterations should be made to the Report before the Convention, viz…

(7) 'Sect. 4. The President by and with the advice and Consent of the Senate, shall have power to make Treaties…But no Treaty shall be made without the consent of two thirds of the members present.'

Treaty power shared with Senate (7 September 1787)

Mr. MADISON then moved to authorise a concurrence of two thirds of the Senate to make treaties of peace, without the concurrence of the President."-The President he said would necessarily derive so much power and importance from a state of war that he might be tempted, if authorised, to impede a treaty of peace…

Mr. GORHAM thought the precaution unnecessary as the means of carrying on the war would not be in the hands of the President, but of the Legislature.

Mr. Govr. MORRIS thought the power of the President in this case harmless; and that no peace ought to be made without the concurrence of the President, who was the general Guardian of the National interests.

Mr. BUTLER was strenuous for the motion, as a necessary security against ambitious & corrupt Presidents…


XI. The appointment power

Appointing Federal judges (18 July 1787)

Resol. 11 "that a Natl. Judiciary be estabd. to consist of one supreme tribunal." agd. to nem. con. "The Judges of which to be appointd. by the 2d. branch of the Natl. Legislature."

Mr. GHORUM…He suggested that the Judges be appointed by the Execuve. with the advice & consent of the 2d. branch, in the mode prescribed by the constitution of Masts. This mode had been long practised in that country, & was found to answer perfectly well.

Mr. WILSON, still wd. prefer an appointmt. by the Executive; but if that could not be attained, wd.. prefer in the next place, the mode suggested by Mr. Ghorum. He thought it his duty however to move in the first instance "that the Judges be appointed by the Executive." Mr. Govr. MORRIS 2ded. the motion…

Mr. MASON. The mode of appointing the Judges may depend in some degree on the mode of trying impeachments of the Executive. If the Judges were to form a tribunal for that purpose, they surely ought not to be appointed by the Executive…

Mr. MADISON, suggested that the Judges might be appointed by the Executive with the concurrence of 1/3 at least, of the 2d. branch. This would unite the advantage of responsibility in the Executive with the security afforded in the 2d. branch agst. any incautious or corrupt nomination by the Executive.
Mr. SHERMAN, was clearly for an election by the Senate. It would be composed of men nearly equal to the Executive, and would of course have on the whole more wisdom. They would bring into their deliberations a more diffusive knowledge of characters. It would be less easy for candidates to intrigue with them, than with the Executive Magistrate. For these reasons he thought there would be a better security for a proper choice in the Senate than in the Executive…


Mr. GHORUM moved "that the Judges be nominated and appointed by the Executive by & with the advice & consent of the 2d. branch & every such nomination shall be made at least days prior to such appointment."…


Mr. MADISON moved that the Judges should be nominated by the Executive, & such nomination should become an appointment if not disagreed to within days by 2/3 of the 2d. branch…

By common consent the consideration of it was postponed till tomorrow.

Appointment by Executive or Congress? (21 July 1787)

Executive & such nominations become appointments unless disagreed to by 2/3 of the 2d. branch of the Legislature," was now resumed.

Mr. MADISON stated as his reasons for the motion. 1. that it secured the responsibility of the Executive who would in general be more capable & likely to select fit characters than the Legislature, or even the 2d. b. of it, who might hide their selfish motives under the number concerned in the appointment. -2. that in case of any flagrant partiality or error, in the nomination it might be fairly presumed that 2/3 of the 2d. branch would join in putting a negative on it…

Mr. PINKNEY was for placing the appointmt. in the 2d. b. exclusively. The Executive will possess neither the requisite knowledge of characters, nor confidence of the people for so high a trust…

Mr. ELSEWORTH would prefer a negative in the Executive on a nomination by the 2d. branch, the negative to be overruled by a concurrence of 2/3 of the 2d. b. to the mode proposed by the motion; but preferred an absolute appointment by the 2d. branch to either. The Executive will be regarded by the people with a jealous eye. Every power for augmenting unnecessarily his influence will be disliked. As he will be stationary it was not to be supposed he could have a better knowledge of characters. He will be more open to caresses & intrigues than the Senate…

Col. MASON…He considered the appointment by the Executive as a dangerous prerogative. It might even give him an influence over the Judiciary department itself…

On the question, the motion now being that the executive should nominate, & such nominations should become appointments unless disagreed to by the Senate" Mas. ay. Ct. no. Pa. ay. Del. no. Md. no. Va. ay. N. C. no. S. C. no. Geo. no.

On question for agreeing to the clause as it stands by which the Judges are to be appointed by 2d. branch Mas. no. Ct. ay. Pa. no. Del. ay. Md. ay. Va. no. N. C. ay. S. C. ay. Geo. ay.
Brearly Committee recommends shared appointment power (4 September 1787)

Mr. BREARLY from the Committee of eleven made a further partial Report as follows…
(7) ‘Sect. 4. The President…shall nominate and by and with the advice and consent of the Senate shall appoint ambassadors, and other public Ministers, Judges of the Supreme Court, and all other Officers of the U. S., whose appointments are not otherwise herein provided for.’

Shared appointment power accepted (7 September 1787)

Mr. Govr. MORRIS said that as the President was to nominate, there would be responsibility, and as the Senate was to concur, there would be security. As Congress now make appointments there is no responsibility.

Mr. GERRY. The idea of responsibility in the nomination to offices is chimerical. The President can not know all characters, and can therefore always plead ignorance… On the question on these words in the clause viz—"He shall nominate & by & with the advice and consent of the Senate, shall appoint ambassadors, and other public ministers (and Consuls) Judges of the Supreme Court." Agreed to nem: con…
George Mason’s Objections to the Proposed Constitution

…The President of the United States has no constitutional Council (a thing unknown in any safe & regular Government) he will therefore be unsupported by proper information and Advice; and will generally be directed by Minions and Favourites. Or he will become a Tool to the Senate—or a Council of State will grow out of the principal Officers of the great Departments; the worst & most dangerous of all Ingredients for such a Council, in a free country.

From this fatal Defect has arisen the improper Power of the Senate in the appointment of public Officers, and the alarming Dependence & Connection between that Branch of the Legislature and the supreme Executive.

Hence also sprung that unnecessary Officer, the Vice-President; who for want of other Employment, is made President of the Senate; thereby dangerously blending the executive and legislative Powers; besides always giving to some one of the States an unnecessary and unjust pre-eminence over the others.

The President of the United States has the unrestrained Power of granting Pardons for Treason; which may be sometimes exercised to screen from punishment those whom he had secretly instigated to commit the Crime, & thereby prevent a Discovery of his own Guilt.

By declaring all Treaties supreme Laws of the Land, the Executive & the Senate have in many Cases, an exclusive Power of legislation; which might have been avoided by proper Distinctions with respect to Treaties, and requiring the Assent of the House of Representatives, where it could be done, with Safety…

This Government will set out a moderate Aristocracy: it is at present impossible to foresee whether it will, in its operation, produce a Monarchy, or a corrupt tyrannical Aristocracy; it will most probably vibrate some years between the two, and then terminate in the one or the other.

Federal Farmer XIV

January 17, 1788.

…By art. 2. sect. 1. the executive power shall be vested in a president elected for four years, by electors to be appointed from time to time, in such manner as the state legislatures shall direct — the electors to be equal in numbers to the federal senators and representatives: but congress may determine the time of chusing senators [i.e. electors], and the day on which they shall give their votes; and if no president be chosen by the electors, by a majority of votes, the states, as states in congress, shall elect one of the five highest on the list for president. It is to be observed, that in chusing the president, the principle of electing by a majority of votes is adopted; in chusing the vice president, that of electing by a plurality. Viewing the principles and checks established in the election of the president, and especially considering the several states may guard the appointment of the electors as they shall judge best, I confess there appears to be a judicious combination of principles and precautions. Were the electors more numerous than they will be, in case the representation be not increased, I think, the system would be improved; not that I consider the democratic character so important in the choice of the electors as in the choice of representatives: be the electors more or less democratic, the president will be one of the very
few of the most elevated characters. But there is danger, that a majority of a small number of electors may be corrupted and influenced, after appointed electors, and before they give their votes, especially if a considerable space of time elapse between the appointment and voting. I have already considered the advisory council in the executive branch: there are two things further in the organization of the executive, to which I would particularly draw your attention; the first, which, is a single executive. I confess, I approve; the second, by which any person from period to period may be re-elected president. I think very exceptionable.

Each state in the union has uniformly shewn its preference for a single executive, and generally directed the first executive magistrate to act in certain cases by the advice of an executive council. Reason, and the experience of enlightened nations, seem justly to assign the business of making laws to numerous assemblies; and the execution of them, principally, to the direction and care of one man. Independent of practice a single man seems to be peculiarly well circumstanced to superintend the execution of laws with discernment and decision, with promptitude and uniformity: the people usually point out a first man — he is to be seen in civilized as well as uncivilized nations — in republics as well as in other governments. In every large collection of people there must be a visible point serving as a common centre in the government, towards which to draw their eyes and attachments. The constitution must fix a man, or a congress of men, superior in the opinion of the people, to the most popular men in the different parts of the community, else the people will be apt to divide and follow their respective leaders. Aspiring men, armies and navies, have not often been kept in tolerable order by the decrees of a senate or an executive council. The advocates for lodging the executive power in the hands of a number of equals, as an executive council, say, that much wisdom may be collected in such a council, and that it will be safe; but they agree, that it cannot be so prompt and responsible as a single man — they admit that such a council will generally consist of the aristocracy, and not stand so indifferent between it and the people as a first magistrate. But the principal objection made to a single man is, that when possessed of power he will be constantly struggling for more, disturbing the government, and encroaching on the rights of others. It must be admitted, that men, from the monarch down to the porter, are constantly aiming at power and importance and this propensity must be as constantly guarded against in the forms of the government. Adequate powers must be delegated to those who govern, and our security must be in limiting, defining, and guarding the exercise of them, so that those given shall not be abused, or made use of for openly or secretly seizing more. Why do we believe this abuse of power peculiar to a first magistrate? Is it because in the wars and contests of men, one man has often established his power over the rest? Or are men naturally fond of accumulating powers in the hands of one man? I do not see any similitude between the cases of those tyrants, who have sprung up in the midst of wars and tumults, and the cases of limited executives in established governments; nor shall we, on a careful examination, discover much likeness between the executives in Sweden, Denmark, Holland, &c. which have, from time to time, increased their powers, and become more absolute, and the executives, whose powers are well ascertained and defined, and which remain, by the constitution, only for a short and limited period in the hands of any one man or family. A single man, or family, can long and effectually direct its exertions to one point. There may be many favourable opportunities in the course of a man’s life to seize on additional powers, and many more where powers are hereditary; and there are many circumstances favourable to usurpations, where the powers of the man or family are undefined, and such as often may be unduly extended before the people discover it. If we examine history attentively, we shall find that such exertions, such opportunities, and such circumstances as these have attended all the
executives which have usurped upon the rights of the people, and which appear originally to have been, in some degree, limited. Admitting that moderate and even well defined powers, long in the hands of the same man or family, will, probably, be unreasonably increased, it will not follow that even extensive powers placed in the hands of a man only for a few years will be abused. The Roman consuls and Carthagenian suffetes possessed extensive powers while in office; but being annually appointed, they but seldom, if ever, abused them. The Roman dictators often possessed absolute power while in office; but usually being elected for short periods of time, no one of them for ages usurped upon the rights of the people. The kings of France, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, &c. have become absolute merely from the encroachments and abuse of power made by the nobles. As to kings, and limited monarchs, generally, history furnishes many more instances in which their powers have been abridged or annihilated by the nobles or people, or both, than in which they have been increased or made absolute; and in almost all the latter cases, we find the people were inattentive and fickle, and evidently were not born to be free. I am the more particular respecting this subject, because I have heard many mistaken observations relative to it. Men of property, and even men who hold powers for themselves and posterity, have too much to lose, wantonly to hazard a shock of the political system; the game must be large, and the chance of winning great, to induce them to risque what they have, for the uncertain prospect of gaining more. Our executive may be altogether elective, and possess no power, but as the substitute of the people, and that we'll limited, and only for a limited time. The great object is, in a republican government, to guard effectually against perpetuating any portion of power, great or small, in the same man or family; this perpetuation of power is totally uncongenial to the true spirit of republican governments: on the one hand the first executive magistrate ought to remain in office so long as to avoid instability in the execution of the laws; on the other, not so long as to enable him to take any measures to establish himself. The convention, it seems, first agreed that the president should be chosen for seven years, and never after to be eligible. Whether seven years is a period too long or not, is rather matter of opinion; but clear it is, that this mode is infinitely preferable to the one finally adopted. When a man shall get the chair, who may be re-elected, from time to time, for life, his greatest object will be to keep it; to gain friends and votes, at any rate; to associate some favourite son with himself, to take the office after him: whenever he shall have any prospect of continuing the office in himself and family, he will spare no artifice, no address, and no exertions, to increase the powers and importance of it; the servile supporters of his wishes will be placed in all offices, and tools constantly employed to aid his views and sound his praise. A man so situated will have no permanent interest in the government to lose, by contests and convulsions in the state, but always much to gain, and frequently the seducing and flattering hope of succeeding. If we reason at all on the subject, we must irresistibly conclude, that this will be the case with nine tenths of the presidents; we may have, for the first president, and, perhaps, one in a century or two afterwards (if the government should withstand the attacks of others) a great and good man, governed by superior motives; but these are not events to be calculated upon in the present state of human nature.

A man chosen to this important office for a limited period, and always afterwards rendered, by the constitution, ineligible, will be governed by very different considerations: he can have no rational hopes or expectations of retaining his office after the expiration of a known limited time, or of continuing the office in his family, as by the constitution there must be a constant transfer of it from one man to another, and consequently from one family to another. No man will wish to be a mere cypher at the head of the government: the great object of each president then will be, to render his government a glorious period in the annals of his country.
When a man constitutionally retires from office, he retires without pain; he is sensible he retires because the laws direct it, and not from the success of his rivals, nor with that public disapprobation which being left out, when eligible, implies. It is said, that a man knowing that at a given period he must quit his office, will unjustly attempt to take from the public, and lay in store the means of support and splendour in his retirement; there can, I think, be but very little in this observation. The same constitution that makes a man eligible for a given period only, ought to make no man eligible till he arrive to the age of forty or forty-five years: if he be a man of fortune, he will retire with dignity to his estate; if not, he may, like the Roman consuls, and other eminent characters in republics, find an honorable support and employment in some respectable office. A man who must, at all events, thus leave his office, will have but few or no temptations to fill its dependant offices with his tools, or any particular set of men; whereas the man constantly looking forward to his future elections, and, perhaps, to the aggrandizement of his family, will have every inducement before him to fill all places with his own props and dependants. As to public monies, the president need handle none of them, and he may always rigidly be made to account for every shilling he shall receive.

On the whole, it would be, in my opinion, almost as well to create a limited monarchy at once, and give some family permanent power and interest in the community, and let it have something valuable to itself to lose in convulsions in the state, and in attempts of usurpation, as to make a first magistrate eligible for life, and to create hopes and expectations in him and his family, of obtaining what they have not. In the latter case, we actually tempt them to disturb the state, to foment struggles and contests, by laying before them the flattering prospect of gaining much in them without risking any thing.

The constitution provides only that the president shall hold his office during the term of four years; that, at most, only implies, that one shall be chosen every fourth year; it also provides, that in case of the removal, death, resignation, or inability, both of the president and vice-president, congress may declare what officer shall act as president; and that such officers shall act accordingly, until the disability be removed, or a president shall be elected: it also provides that congress may determine the time of chusing electors, and the day on which they shall give their votes. Considering these clauses together, I submit this question — whether in case of a vacancy in the office of president, by the removal, death, resignation, or inability of the president and vice-president, and congress should declare, that a certain officer, as secretary for foreign affairs, for instance, shall act as president, and suffer such officer to continue several years, or even for his life, to act as president, by omitting to appoint the time for chusing electors of another president, it would be any breach of the constitution? This appears to me to be an intended provision for supplying the office of president, not only for any remaining portion of the four years, but in cases of emergency, until another president shall be elected; and that at a period beyond the expiration of the four years: we do not know that it is improbable; we do not know that it is impossible; we do not know that it is improbable, in case a popular officer should thus be declared the acting president, but that he might continue for life, and without any violent act, but merely by neglects and delays on the part of congress.

I shall conclude my observations on the organization of the legislature and executive, with making some remarks, rather as a matter of amusement, on the branch, or partial negative, in the legislation: — The third branch in the legislature may answer three valuable purposes, to impede in their passage hasty and intemperate laws, occasionally to assist the senate or people, and to prevent the legislature from encroaching upon the executive or judiciary. In Great Britain the king has a complete negative upon all laws, but he very seldom exercises it. This may be well
lodged in him, who possesses strength to support it, and whose family has independent and hereditary interests and powers, rights and prerogatives, in the government, to defend: but in a country where the first executive officer is elective, and has no rights, but in common with the people, a partial negative in legislation, as in Massachusetts and New-York, is, in my opinion, clearly best: in the former state, as before observed, it is lodged in the governor alone; in the latter, in the governor, chancellor, and judges of the supreme court — the new constitution lodges it in the president. This is simply a branch of legislative power, and has in itself no relation to executive or judicial powers. The question is, in what hands ought it to be lodged, to answer the three purposes mentioned the most advantageously? The prevailing opinion seems to be in favour of vesting it in the hands of the first executive magistrate. I will not say this opinion is ill founded. The negative, in one case, is intended to prevent hasty laws, not supported and revised by two-thirds of each of the two branches; in the second, it is to aid the weaker branch; and in the third, to defend the executive and judiciary. To answer these ends, there ought, therefore, to be collected in the hands which hold this negative, firmness, wisdom, and strength; the very object of the negative is occasional opposition to the two branches. By lodging it in the executive magistrate, we give him a share in making the laws, which he must execute; by associating the judges with him, as in New-York, we give them a share in making the laws, upon which they must decide as judicial magistrates; this may be a reason for excluding the judges: however, the negative in New-York is certainly well calculated to answer its great purposes: the governor and judges united must possess more firmness and strength, more wisdom and information, than either alone, and also more of the confidence of the people; and as to the balance among the departments, why should the executive alone hold the scales, and the judicial be left defenceless? I think the negative in New-York is found best in practice; we see it there frequently and wisely put upon the measures of the two branches; whereas in Massachusetts it is hardly ever exercised, and the governor, I believe, has often permitted laws to pass to which he had substantial objections, but did not make them; he, however, it is to be observed, is annually elected.

**The Federalist No. 23**

*Publius* (*Alexander Hamilton*)  
December 18, 1787

The necessity of a Constitution, at least equally energetic with the one proposed, to the preservation of the Union is the point at the examination of which we are now arrived…

The principal purposes to be answered by union are these—the common defense of the members; the preservation of the public peace, as well against internal convulsions as external attacks; the regulation of commerce with other nations and between the States; the superintendence of our intercourse, political and commercial, with foreign countries.

The authorities essential to the common defense are these: to raise armies; to build and equip fleets; to prescribe rules for the government of both; to direct their operations; to provide for their support. These powers ought to exist without limitation, because it is impossible to foresee or define the extent and variety of national exigencies, and the correspondent extent and variety of the means which may be necessary to satisfy them. The circumstances that endanger the safety of nations are infinite, and for this reason no constitutional shackles can wisely be
imposed on the power to which the care of it is committed. This power ought to be coextensive with all the possible combinations of such circumstances; and ought to be under the direction of the same councils which are appointed to preside over the common defense.

This is one of those truths which to a correct and unprejudiced mind carries its own evidence along with it, and may be obscured, but cannot be made plainer by argument or reasoning. It rests upon axioms as simple as they are universal; The means ought to be proportioned to the end; the persons from whose agency the attainment of any end is expected ought to possess the means by which it is to be attained.

Whether there ought to be a federal government intrusted with the care of the common defense is a question in the first instance open to discussion; but the moment it is decided in the affirmative, it will follow that that government ought to be clothed with all the powers requisite to the complete execution of its trust. And unless it can be shown that the circumstances which may affect the public safety are reducible within certain determinate limits; unless the contrary of this position can be fairly and rationally disputed, it must be admitted as a necessary consequence that there can be no limitation of that authority which is to provide for the defense and protection of the community in any matter essential to its efficacy—that is, in any matter essential to the formation, direction or support of the NATIONAL FORCES…

Every view we may take of the subject, as candid enquirers after truth, will serve to convince us that it is both unwise and dangerous to deny the federal government an unconfined authority in respect to all those objects which are intrusted to its management. It will indeed deserve the most vigilant and careful attention of the people to see that it be modeled in such a manner as to admit of its being safely vested with the requisite powers…

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**The Federalist No. 68**

*Publius (Alexander Hamilton)*  
March 12, 1788

THE mode of appointment of the Chief Magistrate of the United States is almost the only part of the system, of any consequence, which has escaped without severe censure or which has received the slightest mark of approbation from its opponents. The most plausible of these, who has appeared in print, has even deigned to admit that the election of the President is pretty well guarded. I venture somewhat further, and hesitate not to affirm that if the manner of it be not perfect, it is at least excellent. It unites in an eminent degree all the advantages the union of which was to be desired.

It was desirable that the sense of the people should operate in the choice of the person to whom so important a trust was to be confided. This end will be answered by committing the right of making it, not to any pre-established body, but to men chosen by the people for the special purpose, and at the particular conjuncture.

It was equally desirable that the immediate election should be made by men most capable of analyzing the qualities adapted to the station and acting under circumstances favorable to deliberation, and to a judicious combination of all the reasons and inducements which were proper to govern their choice. A small number of persons, selected by their fellow-citizens from the general mass, will be most likely to possess the information and discernment requisite to such complicated investigations.
It was also peculiarly desirable to afford as little opportunity as possible to tumult and disorder. This evil was not least to be dreaded in the election of a magistrate who was to have so important an agency in the administration of the government as the President of the United States. But the precautions which have been so happily concerted in the system under consideration promise an effectual security against this mischief. The choice of several to form an intermediate body of electors will be much less apt to convulse the community with any extraordinary or violent movements than the choice of one who was himself to be the final object of the public wishes. And as the electors, chosen in each State, are to assemble and vote in the State in which they are chosen, this detached and divided situation will expose them much less to heats and ferments, which might be communicated from them to the people, than if they were all to be convened at one time, in one place.

Nothing was more to be desired than that every practicable obstacle should be opposed to cabal, intrigue, and corruption. These most deadly adversaries of republican government might naturally have been expected to make their approaches from more than one quarter, but chiefly from the desire in foreign powers to gain an improper ascendant in our councils. How could they better gratify this than by raising a creature of their own to the chief magistracy of the Union? But the convention have guarded against all danger of this sort with the most provident and judicious attention. They have not made the appointment of the President to depend on any pre-existing bodies of men who might be tampered with beforehand to prostitute their votes; but they have referred it in the first instance to an immediate act of the people of America, to be exerted in the choice of persons for the temporary and sole purpose of making the appointment. And they have excluded from eligibility to this trust all those who from situation might be suspected of too great devotion to the President in office. No senator, representative, or other person holding a place of trust or profit under the United States can be of the numbers of the electors. Thus without corrupting the body of the people, the immediate agents in the election will at least enter upon the task free from any sinister bias. Their transient existence and their detached situation, already taken notice of, afford a satisfactory prospect of their continuing so, to the conclusion of it. The business of corruption, when it is to embrace so considerable a number of men, requires time as well as means. Nor would it be found easy suddenly to embark them, dispersed as they would be over thirteen States, in any combinations founded upon motives which, though they could not properly be denominated corrupt, might yet be of a nature to mislead them from their duty.

Another and no less important desideratum was that the executive should be independent for his continuance in office on all but the people themselves. He might otherwise be tempted to sacrifice his duty to his complaisance for those whose favor was necessary to the duration of his official consequence. This advantage will also be secured, by making his re-election to depend on a special body of representatives, deputed by the society for the single purpose of making the important choice…

The process of election affords a moral certainty that the office of President will never fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications. Talents for low intrigue, and the little arts of popularity, may alone suffice to elevate a man to the first honors in a single State; but it will require other talents, and a different kind of merit, to establish him in the esteem and confidence of the whole Union, or of so considerable a portion of it as would be necessary to make him a successful candidate for the distinguished office of President of the United States. It will not be too strong to say that there will be a constant probability of seeing the station filled by characters pre-eminent for ability and
There is an idea, which is not without its advocates, that a vigorous executive is inconsistent with the genius of republican government. The enlightened well-wishers to this species of government must at least hope that the supposition is destitute of foundation; since they can never admit its truth, without at the same time admitting the condemnation of their own principles. Energy in the executive is a leading character in the definition of good government. It is essential to the protection of the community against foreign attacks; it is not less essential to the steady administration of the laws; to the protection of property against those irregular and high-handed combinations which sometimes interrupt the ordinary course of justice; to the security of liberty against the enterprises and assaults of ambition, of faction, and of anarchy. Every man the least conversant in Roman history knows how often that republic was obliged to take refuge in the absolute power of a single man, under the formidable title of dictator, as well against the intrigues of ambitious individuals who aspired to the tyranny, and the seditions of whole classes of the community whose conduct threatened the existence of all government, as against the invasions of external enemies who menaced the conquest and destruction of Rome.

There can be no need, however, to multiply arguments or examples on this head. A feeble executive implies a feeble execution of the government. A feeble execution is but another phrase for a bad execution; and a government ill executed, whatever it may be in theory, must be, in practice, a bad government.

Taking it for granted, therefore, that all men of sense will agree in the necessity of an energetic executive; it will only remain to inquire, what are the ingredients which constitute this energy? How far can they be combined with those other ingredients which constitute safety in the republican sense? And how far does this combination characterize the plan which has been reported by the convention?

The ingredients which constitute energy in the executive are unity; duration; an adequate provision for its support; and competent powers.

The ingredients which constitute safety in the republican sense are a due dependence on the people, secondly a due responsibility…

That unity is conducive to energy will not be disputed. Decision, activity, secrecy, and dispatch will generally characterize the proceedings of one man in a much more eminent degree than the proceedings of any greater number; and in proportion as the number is increased, these qualities will be diminished…

In the legislature, promptitude of decision is oftener an evil than a benefit. The differences of opinion, and the jarrings of parties in that department of the government, though
they may sometimes obstruct salutary plans, yet often promote deliberation and circumspection, and serve to check excesses in the majority. When a resolution too is once taken, the opposition must be at an end. That resolution is a law, and resistance to it punishable. But no favorable circumstances palliate or atone for the disadvantages of dissention in the executive department. Here they are pure and unmixed. There is no point at which they cease to operate. They serve to embarrass and weaken the execution of the plan or measure to which they relate, from the first step to the final conclusion of it. They constantly counteract those qualities in the executive which are the most necessary ingredients in its composition—vigor and expedition, and this without any counterbalancing good. In the conduct of war, in which the energy of the executive is the bulwark of the national security, everything would be to be apprehended from its plurality…

But one of the weightiest objections to a plurality in the executive, and which lies as much against the last as the first plan is that it tends to conceal faults and destroy responsibility. Responsibility is of two kinds—to censure and to punishment. The first is the most important of the two, especially in an elective office. Men in public trust will much oftener act in such a manner as to render them unworthy of being any longer trusted, than in such a manner as to make him obnoxious to legal punishment. But the multiplication of the executive adds to the difficulty of detection in either case. It often becomes impossible, amidst mutual accusations, to determine on whom the blame or the punishment of a pernicious measure, or series of pernicious measures, ought really to fall. It is shifted from one to another with so much dexterity, and under such plausible appearances, that the public opinion is left in suspense about the real author. The circumstances which may have led to any national miscarriage or misfortune are sometimes so complicated that where there are a number of actors who may have had different degrees and kinds of agency, though we may clearly see upon the whole that there has been mismanagement, yet it may be impracticable to pronounce to whose account the evil which may have been incurred is truly chargeable…

In England, the king is a perpetual magistrate; and it is a maxim which has obtained for the sake of the public peace that he is unaccountable for his administration, and his person sacred. Nothing, therefore, can be wiser in that kingdom than to annex to the king a constitutional council, who may be responsible to the nation for the advice they give. Without this, there would be no responsibility whatever in the executive department—an idea inadmissible in a free government. But even there the king is not bound by the resolutions of his council, though they are answerable for the advice they give. He is the absolute master of his own conduct in the exercise of his office and may observe or disregard the council given to him at his sole discretion.

But in a republic where every magistrate ought to be personally responsible for his behavior in office, the reason which in the British Constitution dictates the propriety of a council not only ceases to apply, but turns against the institution. In the monarchy of Great Britain, it furnishes a substitute for the prohibited responsibility of the Chief Magistrate, which serves in some degree as a hostage to the national justice for his good behavior. In the American republic, it would serve to destroy, or would greatly diminish, the intended and necessary responsibility of the Chief Magistrate himself…
DURATION in office has been mentioned as the second requisite to the energy of the executive authority. This has relation to two objects: to the personal firmness of the executive magistrate in the employment of his constitutional powers, and to the stability of the system of administration which may have been adopted under his auspices. With regard to the first, it must be evident that the longer the duration in office, the greater will be the probability of obtaining so important an advantage. It is a general principle of human nature that a man will be interested in whatever he possesses, in proportion to the firmness or precariousness of the tenure by which he holds it; will be less attached to what he holds by a momentary or uncertain title, than to what he enjoys by a durable or certain title; and, of course, will be willing to risk more for the sake of the one than for the sake of the other. This remark is not less applicable to a political privilege, or honor, or trust, than to any article of ordinary property. The inference from it is that a man acting in the capacity of chief magistrate, under a consciousness that in a very short time he must lay down his office, will be apt to feel himself too little interested in it to hazard any material censure or perplexity from the independent exertion of his powers, or from encountering the ill-humors, however transient, which may happen to prevail, either in a considerable part of the society itself, or even in a predominant faction in the legislative body. If the case should only be that he might lay it down, unless continued by a new choice, and if he should be desirous of being continued, his wishes, conspiring with his fears, would tend still more powerfully to corrupt his integrity, or debase his fortitude. In either case, feebleness and irresolution must be the characteristics of the station.

There are some who would be inclined to regard the servile pliancy of the executive to a prevailing current, either in the community or in the legislature, as its best recommendation. But such men entertain very crude notions, as well of the purposes for which government was instituted, as of the true means by which the public happiness may be promoted. The republican principle demands that the deliberate sense of the community should govern the conduct of those to whom they intrust the management of their affairs; but it does not require an unqualified complaisance to every sudden breeze of passion, or to every transient impulse which the people may receive from the arts of men, who flatter their prejudices to betray their interests. It is a just observation, that the people commonly intend the PUBLIC GOOD. This often applies to their very errors. But their good sense would despise the adulator who should pretend that they always reason right about the means of promoting it. They know from experience that they sometimes err; and the wonder is that they so seldom err as they do, beset as they continually are by the wiles of parasites and sycophants, by the snares of the ambitious, the avaricious, the desperate, by the artifices of men who possess their confidence more than they deserve it, and of those who seek to possess rather than to deserve it. When occasions present themselves in which the interests of the people are at variance with their inclinations, it is the duty of the persons whom they have appointed to be the guardians of those interests to withstand the temporary delusion in order to give them time and opportunity for more cool and sedate reflection. Instances might be cited in which a conduct of this kind has saved the people from very fatal consequences of their
own mistakes, and has procured lasting monuments of their gratitude to the men who had
courage and magnanimity enough to serve them at the peril of their displeasure.

But however inclined we might be to insist upon an unbounded complaisance in the
executive to the inclinations of the people, we can with no propriety contend for a like
complaisance to the humors of the legislature. The latter may sometimes stand in opposition to
the former, and at other times the people may be entirely neutral. In either supposition, it is
certainly desirable that the executive should be in a situation to dare to act his own opinion with
vigor and decision.

The same rule which teaches the propriety of a partition between the various branches of
power teaches us likewise that this partition ought to be so contrived as to render the one
independent of the other. To what purpose separate the executive or the judiciary from the
legislative, if both the executive and the judiciary are so constituted as to be at the absolute
devotion of the legislative? Such a separation must be merely nominal, and incapable of
producing the ends for which it was established. It is one thing to be subordinate to the laws, and
another to be dependent on the legislative body. The first comports with, the last violates, the
fundamental principles of good government; and, whatever may be the forms of the Constitution,
unites all power in the same hands. The tendency of the legislative authority to absorb every
other has been fully displayed and illustrated by examples in some preceding numbers. In
governments purely republican, this tendency is almost irresistible. The representatives of the
people, in a popular assembly, seem sometimes to fancy that they are the people themselves, and
betray strong symptoms of impatience and disgust at the least sign of opposition from any other
quarter; as if the exercise of its rights, by either the executive or judiciary, were a breach of their
privilege and an outrage to their dignity. They often appear disposed to exert an imperious
control over the other departments; and as they commonly have the people on their side, they
always act with such momentum as to make it very difficult for the other members of the
government to maintain the balance of the Constitution…

As on the one hand, a duration of four years will contribute to the firmness of the
executive in a sufficient degree to render it a very valuable ingredient in the composition, so, on
the other, it is not enough to justify any alarm for the public liberty…
George Washington to Alexander Hamilton

Mount Vernon, October 3, 1788.

Dear Sir: In acknowledging the receipt of your candid and kind letter by the last Post; little more is incumbent upon me, than to thank you sincerely for the frankness with which you communicated your sentiments, and to assure you that the same manly tone of intercourse will always be more than barely welcome, indeed it will be highly acceptable to me. I am particularly glad in the present instance, that you have dealt thus freely and like a friend.

Although I could not help observing, from several publications and letters that my name had been sometimes spoken of, and that it was possible the Contingency which is the subject of your letter might happen; yet I thought it best to maintain a guarded silence and to seek the counsel of my best friends (which I certainly hold in the highest estimation) rather than to hazard an imputation unfriendly to the delicacy of my feelings. For, situated as I am, I could hardly bring the question into the slightest discussion, or ask an opinion even in the most confidential manner, without betraying, in my judgment, some impropriety of conduct, or without feeling an apprehension, that a premature display of anxiety might be construed into a vain-glorious desire of pushing myself into notice as a candidate. Now, if I am not grossly deceived in myself, I should unfeignedly rejoice, in case the Electors, by giving their votes in favor of some other person, would save me from the dreaded Dilemma of being forced to accept or refuse.

If that may not be, I am, in the next place, earnestly desirous of searching out the truth, and of knowing whether there does not exist a probability that the government would be just as happily and effectually carried into execution without my aid, as with it. I am truly solicitous to obtain all the previous information which the circumstances will afford, and to determine (when the determination can with propriety be no longer postponed) according to the principles of right reason, and the dictates of a clear conscience; without too great a reference to the unforeseen consequences, which may affect my person or reputation. Untill that period, I may fairly hold myself open to conviction; though I allow your sentiments to have weight in them; and I shall not pass by your arguments without giving them as dispassionate a consideration, as I can possibly bestow upon them.

In taking a survey of the subject, in whatever point of light I have been able to place it, I will not suppress the acknowledgment, my Dr. Sir that I have always felt a kind of gloom upon my mind, as often as I have been taught to expect, I might, and perhaps must ere long, be called to make a decision. You will, I am well assured, believe the assertion (though I have little expectation it would gain credit from those who are less acquainted with me) that if I should receive the appointment and if I should be prevailed upon to accept it, the acceptance would be attended with more diffidence and reluctance that I ever experienced before in my life. It would be, however, with a fixed and sole determination of lending whatever assistance might be in my power to promote the public weal, in hopes that at a convenient and early period my services might be dispensed with, and that I might be permitted once more to retire, to pass an unclouded evening after the stormy day of life, in the bosom of domestic tranquility…
George Washington to Benjamin Lincoln

Mount Vernon, October 26, 1788.

My dear Sir:
I have been lately favored with the receipt of your letters of the 24th and 30th of September, with their enclosures, and thank you sincerely for your free and friendly communications. As the period is now rapidly approaching which must decide the fate of the new Constitution, as to the manner of its being carried into execution, and probably as to its usefulness, it is not wonderful that we should all feel an unusual degree of anxiety on the occasion…There will however, be no room for the advocates of the Constitution to relax in their exertions; for if they should be lulled into security, appointments of Antifederal men may probably take place, and the consequences, which you so justly dread, be realized…

I would willingly pass over in silence that part of your letter, in which you mention the persons who are Candidates for the two first Offices in the Executive, if I did not fear the omission might seem to betray a want of confidence. Motives of delicacy have prevented me hitherto from conversing or writing on this subject, whenever I could avoid it with decency. I may, however with great sincerity and I believe without offending against modesty or propriety say to you, that I most heartily wish the choice to which you allude may not fall upon me: and that, if it should, I must reserve to myself the right of making up my final decision, at the last moment when it can be brought into one view, and when the expediency inexpediency of a refusal can be more judiciously determined than at present. But be assured, my dear Sir, if from any inducement I shall be persuaded ultimately to accept, it will not be (so far as I know my own heart) from any of a private or personal nature. Every personal consideration conspires to rivet me (if I may use the expression) to retirement. At my time of life, and under my circumstances, nothing in this world can ever draw me from it, unless it be a conviction that the partiality of my Countrymen had made my services absolutely necessary, joined to a fear that my refusal might induce a belief that I preferred the conservation of my own reputation and private ease, to the good of my Country. After all, if I should conceive myself in a manner constrained to accept, I call Heaven to witness, that this very act would be the greatest sacrifice of my personal feelings and wishes that ever I have been called upon to make. It would be to forego repose and domestic enjoyment, for trouble, perhaps for public obloquy: for I should consider myself as entering upon an unexplored field, enveloped on every side with clouds and darkness…

George Washington, First Inaugural Address

April 30, 1789

Fellow Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives:

Among the vicissitudes incident to life no event could have filled me with greater anxieties than that of which the notification was transmitted by your order, and received on the fourteenth day of the present month. On the one hand, I was summoned by my country, whose voice I can never hear but with veneration and love, from a retreat which I had chosen with the fondest predilection, and, in my flattering hopes, with an immutable decision, as the asylum of my declining years—a retreat which was rendered every day more necessary as well as more
dear to me by the addition of habit to inclination, and of frequent interruptions in my health to
the gradual waste committed on it by time. On the other hand, the magnitude and difficulty of the
trust to which the voice of my country called me, being sufficient to awaken in the wisest and
most experienced of her citizens a distrustful scrutiny into his qualifications, could not but
overwhelm with despondence, one, who inheriting inferior endowments from nature and
unpracticed in the duties of civil administration, ought to be peculiarly conscious of his own
deficiencies. In this conflict of emotions all I dare aver, is, that it has been my faithful study to
collect my duty from a just appreciation of every circumstance by which it might be affected. All
I dare hope is that, if, in executing this task, I have been too much swayed by a grateful
remembrance of former instances, or by an affectionate sensibility to this transcendent proof of
the confidence of my fellow-citizens, and have thence too little consulted my incapacity as well
as disinclination for the weighty and untried cares before me, my error will be palliated by the
motives which misled me, and its consequences be judged by my country with some share of the
partiality in which they originated.

Such being the impressions under which I have, in obedience to the public summons,
repaired to the present station, it would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my
fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe; who presides in the
councils of nations; and whose providential aid can supply every human defect; that his
benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the People of the United States, a
Government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes, and may enable every
instrument employed in its administration to execute with success the functions allotted to his
charge. In tendering this homage to the Great Author of every public and
private good, I assure
myself that it expresses your sentiments not less than my own, nor those of my fellow-citizens at
large less than either. No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand,
which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States. Every step by which
they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished
by some token of providential agency. And in the important revolution just accomplished in the
system of their united government, the tranquil deliberations and voluntary consent of so many
distinct communities from which the event has resulted can not be compared with the means by
which most governments have been established without some return of pious gratitude, a
long
with an humble anticipation of the future blessings which the past seem to presage. These
reflections, arising out of the present crisis, have forced themselves too strongly on my mind to
be suppressed. You will join with me, I trust, in thinking that
there are none under the influence
of which the proceedings of a new and free government can more auspiciously commence.

By the article establishing the Executive Department it is made the duty of the President
"to recommend to your consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient."
The circumstances under which I now meet you will acquit me from entering into that subject,
farther than to refer to the great constitutional charter under which you are assembled, and
which, in defining your powers, designates the objects to which your attention is to be given. It
will be more consistent with those circumstances, and far more congenial with the feelings which
actuate me, to substitute, in place of a recommendation of particular measures, the tribute that is
due to the talents, the rectitude, and the patriotism, which adorn the characters selected to devise
and adopt them. In these honorable qualifications I behold the surest pledges that as on one side
no local prejudices or attachments—no separate views, nor party animosities, will misdirect the
comprehensive and equal eye which ought to watch over this great assemblage of communities
and interests; so, on another, that the foundation of our national policy will be laid in the pure
and immutable principles of private morality, and the pre-eminence of free government be
exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens and command the
respect of the world. I dwell on this prospect with every satisfaction which an ardent love for my
country can inspire: since there is no truth more thoroughly established than that there exists in
the economy and course of nature an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness; between
duty and advantage; between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy and the
solid rewards of public prosperity and felicity; since we ought to be no less persuaded that 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: and since the preservation of the sacred fire of
liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are justly considered, perhaps, as
deeply, perhaps as finally, staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American
people.

Besides the ordinary objects submitted to your care, it will remain with your judgment to
decide how far an exercise of the occasional power delegated by the fifth article of the
Constitution is rendered expedient at the present juncture, by the nature of objections which have
been urged against the system, or by the degree of inquietude which has given birth to them.
Instead of undertaking particular recommendations on this subject, in which I could be guided by
no lights derived from official opportunities, I shall again give way to my entire confidence in
your discernment and pursuit of the public good: for I assure myself, that, whilst you carefully
avoid every alteration which might endanger the benefits of an united and effective government,
or which ought to await the future lessons of experience, a reverence for the characteristic rights
of freemen, and a regard for the public harmony, will sufficiently influence your deliberations on
the question, how far the former can be impregnably fortified or the latter be safely and
advantageously promoted.

To the preceding observations I have one to add, which will be most properly addressed
to the House of Representatives. It concerns myself, and will therefore be as brief as possible.
When I was first honored with a call into the service of my country, then on the eve of an
arduous struggle for its liberties, the light in which I contemplated my duty required that I should
renounce every pecuniary compensation. From this resolution I have in no instance departed.
And being still under the impressions which produced it, I must decline, as inapplicable to
myself, any share in the personal emoluments which may be indispensably included in a
permanent provision for the Executive Department; and must accordingly pray that the pecuniary
estimates for the station in which I am placed, may, during my continuance in it, be limited to
such actual expenditures as the public good may be thought to require.

Having thus imparted to you my sentiments as they have been awakened by the occasion
which brings us together, I shall take my present leave; but not without resorting once more to
the benign Parent of the human race in humble supplication that, since he has been pleased to
favor the American People with opportunities for deliberating in perfect tranquility, and
dispositions for deciding with unparalleled unanimity on a form of government for the security
of their union, and the advancement of their happiness, so his divine blessing may be equally
conspicuous in the enlarged views, the temperate consultations, and the wise measures on which
the success of this Government must depend.
Friday, January 8, 1790.

Fellow—Citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives: I embrace with great satisfaction the opportunity which now presents itself, of congratulating you on the present favourable prospects of our public affairs. The recent accession of the important State of North Carolina to the Constitution of the United States (of which official information has been received); the rising credit and respectability of our Country; the general and increasing good will towards the Government of the Union, and the concord, peace, and plenty, with which we are blessed are circumstances auspicious in an eminent degree, to our national prosperity.

In resuming your consultations for the general good, you cannot but derive encouragement from the reflection that the measures of the last Session have been as satisfactory to your Constituents, as the novelty and difficulty of the work allowed you to hope. Still further to realize their expectations and to secure the blessings which a Gracious Providence has placed within our reach, will in the course of the present important Session, call for the cool and deliberate exertion of your patriotism, firmness and wisdom.

Among the many interesting objects, which will engage your attention, that of providing for the common defence will merit particular regard. To be prepared for War is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.

A free people ought not only to be armed but disciplined; to which end a uniform and well digested plan is requisite: And their safety and interest require, that they should promote such manufactory, as tend to render them independent on others for essential, particularly for military supplies.

The proper establishment of the Troops, which may be deemed indispensable, will be entitled to mature deliberation. In the arrangements, which may be made respecting it, it will be of importance to conciliate the comfortable support of the Officers and Soldiers with a due regard to economy.

There was reason to hope that the pacific measures adopted with regard to certain hostile tribes of Indians would have relieved the Inhabitants of our Southern and Western frontiers from their depredations. But you will perceive from the information contained in the papers which I shall direct to be laid before you (comprehending a communication from the Commonwealth of Virginia) that we ought to be prepared to afford protection to those parts of the Union; and if necessary to punish aggressors.

The interests of the United States requires that our intercourse with other nations should be facilitated, by such provisions as will enable me to fulfill my duty in that respect, in the manner which circumstances may render most conducive to the public good: And to this end that the compensations to be made to the persons who may be employed, should according to the nature of their appointments, be defined by law; and a competent fund designated for defraying the expenses incident to the conduct of our foreign affairs.

Various considerations also render it expedient, that the terms on which foreigners may be admitted to the rights of Citizens should be speedily ascertained by a uniform rule of naturalization…

The advancement of Agriculture, Commerce and Manufactures by all proper means, will not I trust need recommendation. But I cannot forbear intimating to you the expediency of giving effectual encouragement as well to the introduction of new and useful inventions from abroad, as
Nor am I less persuaded, that you will agree with me in opinion, that there is nothing which can better deserve your patronage than the promotion of Science and Literature. Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness. In one in which the measures of Government receive their impression so immediately from the sense of the Community as in ours it is proportionably essential. To the security of a free Constitution it contributes in various ways: By convincing those who are intrusted with the public administration, that every valuable end of Government is best answered by the enlightened confidence of the people: and by teaching the people themselves to know and to value their own rights; to discern and provide against invasions of them; to distinguish between oppression and the necessary exercise of lawful authority; between burthens proceeding from a disregard to their convenience and those resulting from the inevitable exigencies of Society; to discriminate the spirit of Liberty from that of licentiousness—cherishing the first, avoiding the last, and uniting a speedy, but temperate vigilance against encroachments, with an inviolable respect to the Laws.

Whether this desirable object will be the best promoted by affording aids to seminaries of learning already established, by the institution of a national University, or by any other expedients, will be well worthy of a place in the deliberations of the Legislature.

Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives: I have directed the proper officers to lay before you, respectively, such papers and estimates as regard the affairs particularly recommended to your consideration, and necessary to convey to you that information of the state of the Union which it is my duty to afford.

The welfare of your country is the great object to which our cares and efforts ought to be directed. And I shall derive great satisfaction from a co—operation with you in the pleasing, though arduous task, of ensuring to our fellow—citizens the blessings which they a right to expect from a free, efficient, and equal government.

George Washington to David Stuart

New York, June 15, 1790

Dear Sir:

…That Congress does not proceed with all that dispatch which people at a distance expect; and which, were they to hurry business, they possibly might; is not to be denied…

I do not mean however, from what I have here said, to justify the conduct of Congress in all its movements; for some of these movements, in my opinion, have been injudicious and others unseasonable, whilst the questions of Assumption; Residence and other matters have been agitated with a warmth and intemperance; with prolixity and threats; which it is to be feared has lessened the dignity of that body and decreased that respect which was once entertained for it. And this misfortune is increased by many members, even among those who wish well to the Government, ascribing in letters to their respective States when they are unable to carry a
favourite measure, the worst motives for the conduct of their opponents; who, viewing matters through a different medium may, and do retort in their turn; by which means jealousies and distrusts are spread most impolitickly, far and wide; and will, it is to he feared, have a most unhappy tendency to injure our public affairs, which, if wisely conducted might make us (as we are now by Europeans thought to be) the happiest people upon Earth…

I can truly say I had rather be at Mount Vernon with a friend or two about me, than to be attended at the Seat of Government by the Officers of State and the Representatives of every Power in Europe.

These visits are optional. They are made without invitation. Between the hours of three and four every Tuesday I am prepared to receive them. Gentlemen, often in great numbers, come and go, chat with each other, and act as they please. A Porter shows them into the room, and they retire from it when they please, and without ceremony. At their first entrance they salute me, and I them, and as many as I can talk to I do. What pomp there is in all this, I am unable to discover. Perhaps it consists in not sitting…[I]f I was to give indulgence to my inclinations, every moment that I could withdraw from the fatigues of my station should be spent in retirement. That they are not proceeds from the sense I entertain of the propriety of giving to everyone as free access, as consists with that respect which is due to the Chair of government; and that respect I conceive is neither to be acquired or preserved but by observing a just medium between much state and too great familiarity.

George Washington, Second Annual Message

[December 8, 1790]

Fellow citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives…

It has been heretofore known to Congress, that frequent incursions have been made on our frontier settlements by certain banditti of Indians from the North West side of the Ohio. These with some of the tribes dwelling on and near the Wabash have of late been particularly active in their depredations; and being emboldened by the impunity of their crimes, and aided by such parts of the neighboring tribes as could be seduced to join in their hostilities or afford them a retreat for their prisoners and plunder, they have, instead of listening to the humane overtures made on the part of the United States, renewed their violences with fresh alacrity and greater effect. The lives of a number of valuable Citizens have thus been sacrificed, and some of them under circumstances peculiarly shocking; whilst others have been carried into a deplorable captivity.

These aggravated provocations rendered it essential to the safety of the Western Settlements that the aggressors should be made sensible that the Government of the Union is not less capable of punishing their crimes, than it is disposed to respect their rights and reward their attachments. As this object could not be effected by defensive measures it became necessary to put in force the Act, which empowers the President to call out the Militia for the protection of the frontiers. And I have accordingly authorized an expedition in which the regular troops in that quarter are combined with such drafts of Militia as were deemed sufficient. The event of the measure is yet unknown to me. The Secretary of war is directed to lay before you a statement of
the information on which it is founded, as well as an estimate of the expence with which it will be attended.

The disturbed situation of Europe, and particularly the critical posture of the great maritime powers, whilst it ought to make us more thankful for the general peace and security enjoyed by the United States, reminds us at the same time of the circumspection with which it becomes us to preserve these blessings. It requires also that we should not overlook the tendency of a war and even of preparations for a war, among the Nations most concerned in active Commerce with this Country, to abridge the means, and thereby at least enhance the price of transporting its valuable productions to their proper markets. I recommend it to your serious reflexion how far and in what mode, it may be expedient to guard against embarrassments from these contingencies, by such encouragements to our own Navigation as will render our commerce and agriculture less dependent on foreign bottoms, which may fail us in the very moments most interesting to both of these great objects. Our fisheries, and the transportation of our own produce offer us abundant means for guarding ourselves against this evil.

Your attention seems to be not less due to that particular branch of our trade which belongs to the Mediterranean. So many circumstances unite in rendering the present state of it distressful to us, that you will not think any deliberations misemployed, which may lead to its relief and protection.

The laws you have already passed for the establishment of a Judiciary System have opened the doors of Justice to all descriptions of persons. You will consider in your wisdom, whether improvements in that system may yet be made; and particularly whether a uniform process of execution on sentences issuing, from the federal Courts be not desireable through all the states...

George Washington, Third Annual Message

October 25, 1791.

Fellow Citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives...

In the interval of your recess due attention has been paid to the execution of the different objects which were specially provided for by the laws and Resolutions of the last Session.

Among the most important of these is the defence and security of the Western Frontiers. To accomplish it on the most humane principles was a primary wish. Accordingly, at the same time that treaties have been provisionally concluded, and other proper means used to attach the wavering, and to confirm in their friendship, the well-disposed tribes of Indians; effectual measures have been adopted to make those of a hostile description sensible that a pacification was desired upon terms of moderation and justice.

These measures having proved unsuccessful, it became necessary to convince the refractory of the power of the United States to punish their depredations. Offensive operations have therefore been directed; to be conducted however, as consistently as possible with the dictates of humanity. Some of these have been crowned with full success, and others are yet depending. The expeditions which have been completed were carried on under the authority, and at the expense of the United States by the Militia of Kentucky; whose enterprise, intripidity and good conduct, are entitled to peculiar commendation.
Overtures of peace are still continued to the deluded Tribes, and considerable numbers of individuals belonging to them, have lately renounced all further opposition, removed from their former situations, and placed themselves under the immediate protection of the United States.

It is sincerely to be desired that all need of coercion, in future, may cease; and that an intimate intercourse may succeed; calculated to advance the happiness of the Indians, and to attach them firmly to the United States.

In order to this it seems necessary—
That they should experience the benefits of an impartial dispensation of justice;
That the mode of alienating their lands, the main source of discontent and war, should be so defined and regulated, as to obviate imposition, and, as far as may be practicable, controversy concerning the reality, and extent of the alienations which are made. That commerce with them should be promoted under regulations tending to secure an equitable deportment towards them, and that such rational experiments should be made, for imparting to them the blessings of civilization, as may, from time to time suit their condition.

That the Executive of the United States should be enabled to employ the means to which the Indians have been long accustomed for uniting their immediate Interests with the preservation of Peace.

And that efficacious provision should be made for inflicting adequate penalties upon all those who, by violating their rights, shall infringe the Treaties, and endanger the peace of the Union.

A System corresponding with the mild principles of Religion and Philanthropy towards an unenlightened race of Men, whose happiness materially depends on the conduct of the United States, would be as honorable to the national character as conformable to the dictates of sound policy.

The powers specially vested in me by the Act laying certain duties on distilled spirits, which respect the subdivisions of the districts into Surveys, the appointment of Officers, and the assignment of compensations, have likewise been carried into effect…The impressions with which this law has been received by the community, have been, upon the whole, such as were to be expected among enlightened and well-disposed Citizens, from the propriety and necessity of the measure. The novelty, however of the tax, in a considerable part of the United States, and a misconception of some of its provisions, have given occasion, in particular places to some degree of discontent. But it is satisfactory to know that this disposition yields to proper explanations and more just apprehensions of the true nature of the law. and I entertain a full confidence, that it will, in all, give way to motives which arise out of a just sense of duty, and a virtuous regard to the public welfare…

George Washington, Proclamation of Neutrality, 22 April 1793

Whereas it appears that a state of war exists between Austria, Prussia, Sardinia, Great Britain, and the United Netherlands, of the one part, and France on the other; and the duty and interest of the United States require, that they should with sincerity and good faith adopt and pursue a conduct friendly and impartial toward the belligerent Powers;

I have therefore thought fit by these presents to declare the disposition of the United States to observe the conduct aforesaid towards those Powers respectfully; and to exhort and
warn the citizens of the United States carefully to avoid all acts and proceedings whatsoever, which may in any manner tend to contravene such disposition.

And I do hereby also make known, that whatsoever of the citizens of the United States shall render himself liable to punishment or forfeiture under the law of nations, by committing, aiding, or abetting hostilities against any of the said Powers, or by carrying to any of them those articles which are deemed contraband by the modern usage of nations, will not receive the protection of the United States, against such punishment or forfeiture; and further, that I have given instructions to those officers, to whom it belongs, to cause prosecutions to be instituted against all persons, who shall, within the cognizance of the courts of the United States, violate the law of nations, with respect to the Powers at war, or any of them…

**Pacificus (Hamilton) and Helvidius (Madison) letters (excerpts)**

*“Pacificus” No. 1, June 29, 1793*

The objections which have been raised against the proclamation of neutrality, lately issued by the President, have been urged in a spirit of acrimony and invective, which demonstrates that more was in view than merely a free discussion of an important public measure…

The objections in question fall under four heads:

1. That the proclamation was without authority.
2. That it was contrary to our treaties with France.
3. That it was contrary to the gratitude which is due from this to that country, for the succors afforded to us in our own revolution.
4. That it was out of time and unnecessary.

In order to judge of the solidity of the first of these objections, it is necessary to examine what is the nature and design of a proclamation of neutrality.

It is to make known to the Powers at war, and to the citizens of the country whose government does the act, that such country is in the condition of a nation at peace with the belligerent parties, and under no obligations of treaty to become an associate in the war with either, and that this being its situation, its intention is to observe a corresponding conduct by performing towards each the duties of neutrality; to warn all persons within the jurisdiction of that country to abstain from acts that shall contravene those duties, under the penalties which the laws of the land, of which the jus gentium is part, will inflict.

This, and no more, is conceived to be the true import of a proclamation of neutrality…

If this be a just view of the force and import of the proclamation, it will remain to see whether the President, in issuing it, acted within his proper sphere, or stepped beyond the bounds of his constitutional authority and duty.

It will not be disputed that the management of the affairs of this country with foreign nations is confided to the Government of the United States.

It can as little be disputed that a proclamation of neutrality, when a nation is at liberty to decline or avoid a war in which other nations are engaged, and means to do so, is a usual and a proper measure. Its main object is to prevent the nation’s being responsible for acts done by its citizens, without the privity or connivance of the government, in contravention of the principles of neutrality; an object of the greatest moment to a country whose true interest lies in the preservation of peace.
The inquiry, then, is, what department of our government is the proper one to make a declaration of neutrality, when the engagements of the nation permit, and its interests require that it should be done?

A correct mind will discern at once, that it can belong neither to the legislative nor judicial department, and therefore of course must belong to the executive.

The legislative department is not the organ of intercourse between the United States and foreign nations. It is charged neither with making nor interpreting treaties. It is therefore not naturally that member of the government which is to pronounce on the existing condition of the nation with regard to foreign powers, or to admonish the citizens of their obligations and duties in consequence; still less is it charged with enforcing the observance of those obligations and duties.

It is equally obvious, that the act in question is foreign to the judiciary department. The province of that department is to decide the litigation in particular cases...

It must, then, of necessity belong to the executive department to exercise the function in question, when a proper case for it occurs.

It appears to be connected with that department in various capacities:—As the organ of intercourse between the nation and foreign nations; as the interpreter of the national treaties, in those cases in which the judiciary is not competent—that is, between government and government; as the power which is charged with the execution of the laws, of which treaties form a part; as that which is charged with the command and disposition of the public force.

This view of the subject is so natural and obvious, so analogous to general theory and practice, that no doubt can be entertained of its justness, unless to be deduced from particular provisions of the Constitution of the United States.

Let us see, then, if cause for such doubt is to be found there.

The second article of the Constitution of the United States, section first, establishes this general proposition, that "the EXECUTIVE POWER shall be vested in a President of the United States of America."

The same article, in a succeeding section, proceeds to delineate particular cases of executive power. It declares, among other things, that the President shall be commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States, and of the militia of the several States, when called into the actual service of the United States; that he shall have power, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, to make treaties; that it shall be his duty to receive ambassadors and other public ministers, and to take care that the laws be faithfully executed.

It would not consist with the rules of sound construction, to consider this enumeration of particular authorities as derogating from the more comprehensive grant in the general clause, further than as it may be coupled with express restrictions or limitations; as in regard to the co-operation of the Senate in the appointment of officers and the making of treaties; which are plainly qualifications of the general executive powers of appointing officers and making treaties. The difficulty of a complete enumeration of all the cases of executive authority would naturally dictate the use of general terms, and would render it improbable that a specification of certain particulars was designed as a substitute for those terms, when antecedently used. The different mode of expression employed in the Constitution, in regard to the two powers, the legislative and the executive, serves to confirm this inference. In the article which gives the legislative powers of the government, the expressions are: "All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States." In that which grants the executive power, the expressions are: "The executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States."
The enumeration ought therefore to be considered as intended merely to specify the
principal articles implied in the definition of executive power; leaving the rest to flow from the
general grant of that power, interpreted in conformity with other parts of the Constitution, and
with the principles of free government.

The general doctrine of our Constitution, then, is, that the executive power of the nation is
vested in the President; subject only to the exceptions and qualifications which are expressed in
the instrument…

With these exceptions, the executive power of the United States is completely lodged in
the President…It will follow, that if a proclamation of neutrality is merely an executive act, as, it
is believed, has been shown, the step which has been taken by the President is liable to no just
exception on the score of authority.

It may be said, that this inference would be just, if the power of declaring war had not
been vested in the Legislature; but that this power naturally includes the right of judging whether
the nation is or is not under obligations to make war.

The answer is, that, however true this position may be, it will not follow that the
executive is in any case excluded from a similar right of judgment, in the execution of its own
functions.

If, on the one hand, the Legislature have a right to declare war, it is on the other, the duty
of the executive to preserve peace till the declaration is made; and in fulfilling this duty, it must
necessarily possess a right of judging what is the nature of the obligations which the treaties of
the country impose on the government; and when it has concluded that there is nothing in them
inconsistent with neutrality, it becomes both its province and its duty to enforce the laws incident
to that state of the nation. The executive is charged with the execution of all laws, the law of
nations, as well as the municipal law, by which the former are recognized and adopted. It is
consequently bound, by executing faithfully the laws of neutrality, when the country is in a
neutral position, to avoid giving cause of war to foreign Powers.

This is the direct end of the proclamation of neutrality. It declares to the United States
their situation with regard to the contending parties, and makes known to the community, that the
laws incident to that state will be enforced. In doing this, it conforms to an established usage of
nations, the operation of which, as before remarked, is to obviate a responsibility on the part of
the whole society, for secret and unknown violations of the rights of any of the warring Powers
by its citizens…

This serves as an example of the right of the executive, in certain cases, to determine the
condition of the nation, though it may, in its consequences, affect the exercise of the power of the
Legislature to declare war. Nevertheless, the executive cannot thereby control the exercise of that
power. The Legislature is still free to perform its duties, according to its own sense of them;
though the executive, in the exercise of its constitutional powers, may establish an antecedent
state of things, which ought to weigh in the legislative decisions.

The division of the executive power in the Constitution creates a concurrent authority in
the cases to which it relates.

Hence, in the instance stated, treaties can only be made by the President and Senate
jointly; but their activity may be continued or suspended by the President alone.

No objection has been made to the President's having acknowledged the republic of
France, by the reception of its minister, without having consulted the Senate; though that body is
connected with him in the making of treaties, and though the consequence of his act of reception
is to give operation to those heretofore made with that country. But he is censured for having
declared the United States to be in a state of peace and neutrality with regard to the Powers at war, because the right of *changing* that state, and *declaring war*, belongs to the Legislature.

It deserves to be remarked, that as the participation of the Senate in the making of treaties, and the power of the Legislature to declare war, are exceptions out of the general "executive power" vested in the President, they are to be construed strictly, and ought to be extended no further than is essential to their execution.

While, therefore, the Legislature can alone declare war, can alone actually transfer the nation from a state of peace to a state of hostility, it belongs to the "executive power" to do whatever else the law of nations, co-operating with the treaties of the country, enjoin in the intercourse of the United States with foreign Powers.

In this distribution of authority, the wisdom of our Constitution is manifested. It is the province and duty of the executive to preserve to the nation the blessings of peace. The Legislature alone can interrupt them by placing the nation in a state of war.

But though it has been thought advisable to vindicate the authority of the executive on this broad and comprehensive ground, it was not absolutely necessary to do so. That clause of the Constitution which makes it his duty to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed," might alone have been relied upon, and this simple process of argument pursued:

The President is the Constitutional EXECUTOR of the laws. Our treaties, and the laws of nations, form a part of the law of the land. He who is to execute the laws must first judge for himself of their meaning. In order to the observance of that conduct which the laws of nations, combined with our treaties, prescribed to this country, in reference to the present war in Europe, it was necessary for the President to judge for himself, whether there was any thing in our treaties incompatible with an adherence to neutrality. Having decided that there was not, he had a right, and if in his opinion the interest of the nation required it, it was his duty as executor of the laws, to proclaim the neutrality of the nation, to exhort all persons to observe it, and to warn them of the penalties which would attend its non-observance…

"Helvidius" No. 1, 24 August 1793

Several pieces with the signature of Pacificus were lately published, which have been read with singular pleasure and applause by the foreigners and degenerate citizens among us, who hate our republican government and the French Revolution… The substance of the first piece, sifted from its inconsistencies and its vague expressions, may be thrown into the following propositions:

That the powers of declaring war and making treaties are, in their nature, executive powers:
That being particularly vested by the constitution in other departments, they are to be considered as exceptions out of the general grant to the executive department:
That being, as exceptions, to be construed strictly, the powers not strictly within them remain with the executive:
That the executive consequently, as the organ of intercourse with foreign nations and the interpreter and executor of treaties and the law of nations, is authorized to expound all articles of treaties, those involving questions of war and peace, as well as others; to judge of the obligations of the United States to make war or not, under any casus federis or eventual operation of the contract relating to war; and to pronounce the state of things resulting from the obligations of the United States as understood by the executive:
That in particular the executive had authority to judge whether in the case of the mutual guaranty between the United States and France, the former were bound by it to engage in the war:

That the executive has, in pursuance of that authority, decided that the United States are not bound:

And, That its proclamation of the 22nd of April last is to be taken as the effect and expression of that decision.

The basis of the reasoning is, we perceive, the extraordinary doctrine that the powers of making war and treaties are in their nature executive; and therefore comprehended in the general grant of executive power, where not specially and strictly excepted out of the grant.

Let us examine this doctrine; and that we may avoid the possibility of mistating the writer, it shall be laid down in his own words: a precaution the more necessary, as scarce any thing else could outweigh the improbability that so extravagant a tenet should be hazarded, at so early a day, in the face of the public.

His words are…“It deserves to be remarked, that as the participation of the Senate in the making of treaties and the power of the legislature to declare war are exceptions out of the general executive power vested in the President, they are to be construed strictly, and ought to be extended no farther than is essential to their execution.”

If there be any countenance to these positions, it must be found either 1st, in the writers of authority on public law; or 2nd, in the quality and operation of the powers to make war and treaties; or 3rd, in the Constitution of the United States…

1. Writers such as Locke and Montesquieu, who have discussed more particularly the principles of liberty and the structure of government…are evidently warped by a regard to the particular government of England, to which one of them owed allegiance and the other professed an admiration bordering on idolatry. Montesquieu, however, has rather distinguished himself by enforcing the reasons and the importance of avoiding a confusion of the several powers of government than by enumerating and defining the powers which belong to each particular class. And Locke, notwithstanding the early date of his work on civil government and the example of his own government before his eyes, admits that the particular powers in question, which, after some of the writers on public law, he calls federative, are really distinct from the executive, though almost always united with it and hardly to be separated into distinct hands. Had he not lived under a monarchy, in which these powers were united; or had he written by the lamp which truth now presents to lawgivers, the last observation would probably never have dropt from his pen…

2. If we consult for a moment the nature and operation of the two powers to declare war and make treaties, it will be impossible not to see that they can never fall within a proper definition of executive powers. The natural province of the executive magistrate is to execute laws, as that of the legislature is to make laws. All his acts therefore, properly executive, must pre-suppose the existence of the laws to be executed. A treaty is not an execution of laws: it does not pre-suppose the existence of laws. It is, on the contrary, to have itself the force of a law and to be carried into execution, like all other laws, by the executive magistrate. To say then that the power of making treaties, which are confessedly laws, belongs naturally to the department which is to execute laws, is to say that the executive department naturally includes a legislative power…

The power to declare war is subject to similar reasoning. A declaration that there shall be war is not an execution of laws: it does not suppose pre-existing laws to be executed: it is not in
any respect an act merely executive. It is, on the contrary, one of the most deliberative acts that can be performed; and when performed, has the effect of repealing all the laws operating in a state of peace, so far as they are inconsistent with a state of war; and of enacting as a rule for the executive a new code adapted to the relation between the society and its foreign enemy. In like manner a conclusion of peace annuls all the laws peculiar to a state of war and revives the general laws incident to a state of peace. These remarks will be strengthened by adding that treaties, particularly treaties of peace, have sometimes the effect of changing not only the external laws of the society, but operate also on the internal code, which is purely municipal, and to which the legislative authority of the country is of itself competent and compleat.

From this view of the subject it must be evident that, although the executive may be a convenient organ of preliminary communications with foreign governments on the subjects of treaty or war, and the proper agent for carrying into execution the final determinations of the competent authority, yet it can have no pretensions from the nature of the powers in question compared with the nature of the executive trust, to that essential agency which gives validity to such determinations...

3. It remains to be enquired whether there be any thing in the constitution itself which shows that the powers of making war and peace are considered as of an executive nature and as comprehended within a general grant of executive power.

It will not be pretended that this appears from any direct position to be found in the instrument.

If it were deducible from any particular expressions it may be presumed that the publication would have saved us the trouble of the research...

In the general distribution of powers, we find that of declaring war expressly vested in the Congress, where every other legislative power is declared to be vested, and without any other qualification than what is common to every other legislative act. The constitutional idea of this power would seem then clearly to be that it is of a legislative and not an executive nature.

This conclusion becomes irresistible when it is recollected that the constitution cannot be supposed to have placed either any power legislative in its nature entirely among executive powers or any power executive in its nature entirely among legislative powers, without charging the constitution with that kind of intermixture and consolidation of different powers which would violate a fundamental principle in the organization of free governments. If it were not unnecessary to enlarge on this topic here, it could be shown that the constitution was originally vindicated, and has been constantly expounded, with a disavowal of any such intermixture [Madison makes reference to The Federalist Nos. 47-48 – editor]...

“The President shall be commander in chief of the army and navy of the United States, and of the militia when called into the actual service of the United States.”…Those who are to conduct a war cannot in the nature of things be proper or safe judges whether a war ought to be commenced, continued, or concluded. They are barred from the latter functions by a great principle in free government analogous to that which separates the sword from the purse, or the power of executing from the power of enacting laws...

“He shall take care that the laws shall be faithfully executed and shall commission all officers of the United States.” To see the laws faithfully executed constitutes the essence of the executive authority. But what relation has it to the power of making treaties and war, that is, of determining what the laws shall be with regard to other nations? No other certainly than what subsists between the powers of executing and enacting laws; no other consequently, than what forbids a coalition of the powers in the same department…
Thus it appears that by whatever standard we try this doctrine, it must be condemned as no less vicious in theory than it would be dangerous in practice. It is countenanced neither by the writers on law, not by the nature of the powers themselves, not by any general arrangements or particular expressions, or plausible analogies, to be found in the constitution. Whence then can the writer have borrowed it? There is but one answer to this question. The power of making treaties and the power of declaring war are royal prerogatives in the British government, and are accordingly treated as Executive prerogatives by British commentators…

George Washington, Sixth Annual Message

November 19, 1794

Fellow—Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives: When we call to mind the gracious indulgence of Heaven, by which the American People became a nation; when we survey the general prosperity of our country, and look forward to the riches, power, and happiness, to which it seems destined; with the deepest regret do I announce to you, that during your recess, some of the citizens of the United States have been found capable of an insurrection. It is due, however, to the character of our government, and to its stability, which cannot be shaken by the enemies of order, freely to unfold the course of this event.

During the session of the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety, it was expedient to exercise the legislative power, granted by the constitution of the United States, "to lay and collect excises." In a majority of the States, scarcely an objection was heard to this mode of taxation. In some, indeed, alarms were at first conceived, until they were banished by reason and patriotism. In the four western counties of Pennsylvania, a prejudice, fostered and embittered by the artifice of men, who labored for an ascendancy over the will of others, by the guidance of their passions, produced symptoms of riot and violence. It is well known, that Congress did not hesitate to examine the complaints which were presented, and to relieve them, as far as justice dictated, or general convenience would permit. But the impression, which this moderation made on the discontented, did not correspond, with what it deserved. The arts of delusion were no longer confined to the efforts of designing individuals.

The very forbearance to press prosecutions was misinterpreted into a fear of urging the execution of the laws; and associations of men began to denounce threats against the officers employed. From a belief, that by a more formal concert, their operation might be defeated, certain self-created societies assumed the tone of condemnation. Hence, while the greater part of Pennsylvania itself were conforming themselves to the acts of excise, a few counties were resolved to frustrate them. It was now perceived, that every expectation from the tenderness which had been hitherto pursued, was unavailing, and that further delay could only create an opinion of impotency or irresolution in the government. Legal process was, therefore, delivered to the marshal, against the rioters and delinquent distillers.

No sooner was he understood to be engaged in this duty, than the vengeance of armed men was aimed at his person, and the person and property of the inspector of the revenue. They fired upon the marshal, arrested him, and detained him for some time, as a prisoner. He was obliged, by the jeopardy of his life, to renounce the service of other process, on the west side of the Allegheny mountain; and a deputation was afterwards sent to him to demand a surrender of that which he had served. A numerous body repeatedly attacked the house of the inspector, seized his papers of office, and finally destroyed by fire, his buildings, and whatsoever they contained.
Both of these officers, from a just regard to their safety, fled to the seat of government; it being
avowed, that the motives to such outrages were to compel the resignation of the inspector, to
withstand by force of arms the authority of the United States, and thereby to extort a repeal of the
laws of excise, and an alteration in the conduct of government.

Upon the testimony of these facts, an associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the
United States notified to me, that "in the counties of Washington and Allegheny, in
Pennsylvania, laws of the United States were opposed, and the execution thereof obstructed by
combinations, too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings, or
by the powers vested in the marshal of that district." On this call, momentous in the extreme, I
sought and weighed, what might best subdue the crisis. On the one hand, the judiciary was
pronounced to be stripped of its capacity to enforce the laws; crimes, which reached the very
existence of social order, were perpetrated without control, the friends of government were
insulted, abused, and overawed into silence, or an apparent acquiescence; and the yield to the
treasonable fury of so small a portion of the United States, would be to violate the fundamental
principle of our constitution, which enjoins that the will of the majority shall prevail. On the
other, to array citizen against citizen, to publish the dishonor of such excesses, to encounter the
expense, and other embarrassments of so distant an expedition, were steps too delicate, too
closely interwoven with many affecting considerations, to be lightly adopted. I postponed,
therefore, the summoning of the militia immediately into the field. But I required them to be held
in readiness, that if my anxious endeavors to reclaim the deluded, and to convince the malignant
of their danger, should be fruitless, military force might be prepared to act, before the season
should be too far advanced.

My Proclamation of the 7th of August last was accordingly issued, and accompanied by
the appointment of Commissioners, who were charged to repair to the scene of insurrection.
They were authorized to confer with any bodies of men, or individuals. They were instructed to
be candid and explicit, in stating the sensations, which had been excited in the Executive, and his
earnest wish to avoid a resort to coercion. To represent, however, that without submission,
coercion must be the resort; but to invite them, at the same time, to return to the demeanor of
faithful citizens, by such accommodations as lay within the sphere of the executive power.
Pardon, too, was tendered to them by the government of the United States, and that of
Pennsylvania, upon no other condition, than a satisfactory assurance of obedience to the laws.

Although the report of the commissioners marks their firmness and abilities, and must
unite all virtuous men, by shewing, that the means of conciliation have been exhausted, all of
those who had committed or abetted the tumults, did not subscribe the mild form, which was
proposed, as the atonement; and the indications of a peaceable temper were neither sufficiently
general, nor conclusive, to recommend or warrant, a further suspension of the march of the
militia.

Thus, the painful alternative could not be discarded. I ordered the militia to march, after
once more admonishing the insurgents, in my proclamation of the 25th of September last.

It was a task too difficult to ascertain with precision, the lowest degree of force,
competent to the quelling of the insurrection. From a respect, indeed, to oeconomy, and the ease
of my fellow citizens belonging to the militia, it would have gratified me to accomplish such an
estimate. My very reluctance to ascribe too much importance to the opposition, had its extent
been accurately seen, would have been a decided inducement to the smallest efficient numbers.
In this uncertainty, therefore, I put in motion fifteen thousand men, as being an army, which,
according to all human calculation, would be prompt, and adequate in every view; and might
perhaps, by rendering resistance desperate, prevent the effusion of blood. Quotas had been assigned to the states of New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia; the governor of Pennsylvania having declared on this occasion, an opinion which justified a requisition to the other states.

As commander in chief of the militia, when called into the actual service of the United States, I have visited the places of general rendezvous, to obtain more exact information, and to direct a plan for ulterior movements. Had there been room for a persuasion, that the laws were secure from obstruction; that the civil magistrate was able to bring to justice such of the most culpable, as have not embraced the proffered terms of amnesty, and may be deemed fit objects of example; that the friends to peace and good government were not in need of that aid and countenance, which they ought always to receive, and I trust, ever will receive, against the vicious and turbulent; I should have caught with avidity the opportunity of restoring the militia to their families and home. But succeeding intelligence has tended to manifest the necessity of what has been done; it being now confessed by those who were not inclined to exaggerate the ill-conduct of the insurgents, that their malevolence was not pointed merely to a particular law; but that a spirit, inimical to all order, has actuated many of the offenders. If the state of things had afforded reason for the continuance of my presence with the army, it would not have been withheld. But every appearance assuring such an issue, as will redound to the reputation and strength of the United States, I have judged it most proper, to resume my duties at the seat of government, leaving the chief command with the governor of Virginia.

Still, however, as it is probable, that in a commotion like the present, whatsoever may be the pretence, the purposes of mischief and revenge may not be laid aside; the stationing of a small force for a certain period in the four western counties of Pennsylvania will be indispensable; whether we contemplate the situation of those, who are connected with the execution of the laws; or of others who may have exposed themselves by an honorable attachment to them.

Thirty days from the commencement of this session, being the legal limitation of the employment of the militia, Congress cannot be too early occupied with this subject.

Among the discussions, which may arise from this aspect of our affairs, and from the documents which will be submitted to Congress, it will not escape their observation, that not only the inspector of the revenue, but other officers of the United States in Pennsylvania have, from their fidelity in the discharge of their functions, sustained material injuries to their property. The obligation and policy of indemnifying them are strong and obvious. It may also merit attention, whether policy will not enlarge this provision to the retribution of other citizens, who, though not under the ties of office, may have suffered damage by their generous exertions for upholding the constitution and the laws. The amount, even if all the injured were included, would not be great; and on future emergencies, the government would be amply repaid by the influence of an example, that he, who incurs a loss in its defence shall find a recompense in its liberality.

While there is cause to lament, that occurrences of this nature should have disgraced the name, or interrupted the tranquillity of any part of our community, or should have diverted to a new application, any portion of the public resources, there are not wanting real and substantial consolations for the misfortune. 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. It has been a spectacle, displaying to the highest advantage, the value of Republican Government, to behold the most and least wealthy of our citizens standing in the same ranks as private soldiers; pre-eminently distinguished by being the army of the constitution; undeterred by a march of three hundred miles over rugged mountains, by the approach of an inclement season, or by any other discouragement. Nor ought I to omit to acknowledge the efficacious and patriotic co-operation, which I have experienced from the chief magistrates of the states, to which my requisitions have been addressed.

To every description, indeed, of citizens let praise be given. But let them persevere in their affectionate vigilance over that precious depository of American happiness, the constitution of the United States. Let them cherish it too, for the sake of those, who from every clime are daily seeking a dwelling in our land. And when in the calm moments of reflection, they shall have retraced the origin and progress of the insurrection, let them determine, whether it has not been fomented by combinations of men, who, careless of consequences, and disregarding the unerring truth, that those who rouse, cannot always appease a civil convulsion, have disseminated, from an ignorance or version of facts, suspicions, jealousies, and accusations of the whole government.

Having thus fulfilled the engagement, which I took, when I entered into office, “to the best of my ability to preserve, protect, and defend the constitution of the United States,” on you, Gentlemen, and the people by whom you are deputed, I rely for support.

In the arrangements, to which the possibility of a similar contingency will naturally draw your attention, it ought not to be forgotten, that the militia laws have exhibited such striking defects, as could not have been supplied but by the zeal of our citizens. Besides the extraordinary expense and waste, which are not the least of the defects, every appeal to those laws is attended with a doubt of its success…

George Washington, Farewell Address

October 19, 1796

Friends, and Fellow-Citizens:

The period for a new election of a Citizen, to Administer the Executive government of the United States being not far distant, and the time actually arrived, when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person, who is to be cloathed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those, out of whom a choice is to be made…

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a solicitude for your welfare which cannot end but with my life, and the apprehension of danger, natural to that solicitude, urge me on an occasion like the present, to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments; which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all important to the permanency of your felicity as a People. These will be offered to you with the more freedom, as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to biass his counsel. Nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your endulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.
Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

The Unity of Government which constitutes you one people is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main Pillar in the Edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home; your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; of that very Liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee, that from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth; as this is the point in your political fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national Union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual and immoveable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the Palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned, and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our Country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of AMERICAN, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of Patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same Religion, Manners, Habits, and political Principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils, and joint efforts; of common dangers, sufferings and successes.

But these considerations, however powerfully they address themselves to your sensibility are greatly outweighed by those which apply more immediately to your Interest. Here every portion of our country finds the most commanding motives for carefully guarding and preserving the Union of the whole…

In contemplating the causes wch. may disturb our Union, it occurs as matter of serious concern, that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by Geographical discriminations: Northern and Southern; Atlantic and Western; whence designing men may endeavour to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views. One of the expedients of Party to acquire influence, within particular districts, is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other Districts. You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart burnings which spring from these misrepresentations. They tend to render Alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection…

To the efficacy and permanency of Your Union, a Government for the whole is indispensable. No Alliances however strict between the parts can be an adequate substitute. They must inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions which all Alliances in all times have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay, by the adoption of a Constitution of Government, better calculated than your former for an intimate Union, and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. 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, 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.

All obstructions to the execution of the Laws, all combinations and Associations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the Constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force; to put in the place of the delegated will of the Nation, the will of a party; often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the Community; and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the Mirror of the ill concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common councils and modified by mutual interests. However combinations or Associations of the above description may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the Power of the People, and to usurp for themselves the reins of Government; destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.

Towards the preservation of your Government and the permanency of your present happy state, it is requisite, not only that you steadily discountenance irregular oppositions to its acknowledged authority, but also that you resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles, however specious the pretexts. One method of assault may be to effect, in the forms of the Constitution, alterations which will impair the energy of the system, and thus to undermine what cannot be directly overthrown. In all the changes to which you may be invited, remember that time and habit are at least as necessary to fix the true character of Governments, as of other human institutions; that experience is the surest standard by which to test the real tendency of the existing Constitution of a country; that facility in changes upon the credit of mere hypotheses and opinion exposes to perpetual change, from the endless variety of hypotheses and opinion: and remember, especially, that for the efficient management of your common interests, in a country so extensive as ours, a Government of as much vigour as is consistent with the perfect security of Liberty is indispensable. Liberty itself will find in such a Government, with powers properly distributed and adjusted, its surest Guardian. It is indeed little else than a name, where the Government is too feeble to withstand the enterprises of faction, to confine each member of the Society within the limits prescribed by the laws and to maintain all in the secure and tranquil enjoyment of the rights of person and property.

I have already intimated to you the danger of Parties in the State, with particular reference to the founding of them on Geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the Spirit of Party, generally.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseperable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human Mind. It exists under different shapes in all Governments, more or less stifled, controled, or repressed; but, in those of the popular form it is seen in its greatest rankness and is truly their worst enemy.
The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissention, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries, which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an Individual: and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of Public Liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight) the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of Party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise People to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the Public Councils and enfeeble the Public administration. It agitates the Community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another; foments occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which find a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country, are subjected to the policy and will of another.

There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the Administration of the Government and serve to keep alive the spirit of Liberty. This within certain limits is probably true, and in Governments of a Monarchical cast Patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favour, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in Governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be, by force of public opinion, to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched; it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest instead of warming it should consume.

It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free Country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration, to confine themselves within their respective Constitutional spheres; avoiding in the exercise of the Powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in 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 distribution or modification of the Constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance in permanent evil any partial or transient benefit which the use can at any time yield. Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism who should labour to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and citizens. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be
asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle. 'Tis substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free Government. Who that is a sincere friend to it, can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric.

Promote then as an object of primary importance, Institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened…

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, at no distant period, 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 advantages wch. might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be, that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a Nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human Nature.

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 towards 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. Antipathy in one Nation against another, disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable, when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. Hence frequent collisions, obstinate envenomed, and bloody contests. The Nation, prompted by ill will and resentment sometimes impels to War the Government, contrary to the best calculations of policy. The government sometimes participates in the national propensity, and adopts through passion what reason would reject; at other times, it makes the animosity of the Nation subservient to projects of hostility instigated by pride, ambition and other sinister and pernicious motives. The peace often, sometimes perhaps the Liberty, of Nations has been the victim.

So, likewise, a passionate attachment of one Nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favourite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest, in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and Wars of the latter without adequate inducement or justification: It leads also to concessions to the favourite Nation of privilgedes denied to others, which is apt doubly to injure the Nation making the concessions; by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained; and by exciting jealousy, ill will, and a disposition to retaliate, in the parties from whom equl. privilages are withheld: And it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favourite Nation) facility to betray, or sacrifice the interests of their own country, without odium, sometimes even
with popularity; gilding with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation a commendable
deferece for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances
of ambition corruption or infatuation.

As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly
alarming to the truly enlightened and independent Patriot. How many opportunities do they
afford to tamper with domestic factions, to practice the arts of seduction, to mislead public
opinion, to influence or awe the public Councils! Such an attachment of a small or weak, towards
a great and powerful Nation, dooms the former to be the satellite of the latter.

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 defense against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive
dislike of another, cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to
veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real Patriots, who may resist the
intrigues of the favourite, are liable to become suspected and odious; while its tools and dupes
usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests.

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. Here let us stop.

Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation.
Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign
to our concerns. Hence therefore it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties,
in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her
friendships, or enmities:

Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If
we remain one People, under an efficient government, the period is not far off, when we may
defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause
the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent
nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving
us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest guided by justice shall
Counsel.

Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon
foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our
peace and prosperity in the toils of European Ambition, Rivalship, Interest, Humour or Caprice?

’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
patronising infidelity to existing engagements (I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than
to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy). I repeat it therefore, let those
engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But in my opinion, it is unnecessary and would
be unwise to extend them.

Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectably
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; consulting the natural course of things;
diffusing and deversifying by gentle means the streams of Commerce, but forcing nothing; establishing with Powers so disposed; in order to give trade a stable course, to define the rights of our Merchants, and to enable the Government to support them; conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinion will permit, but temporary, and liable to be from time to time abandoned or varied, as experience and circumstances shall dictate; constantly keeping in view, that 'tis folly in one Nation to look for disinterested favors from another; that it must pay with a portion of its Independence for whatever it may accept under that character; that by such acceptance, it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favours and yet of being reproached with ingratitude for not giving more. There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favours from Nation to Nation. 'Tis an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard. In offering to you, my Countrymen these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression, I could wish; that they will controul the usual current of the passions, or prevent our Nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the Destiny of Nations: But if I may even flatter myself, that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good; that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign Intrigue, to guard against the Impostures of pretended patriotism; this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare, by which they have been dictated…

In relation to the still subsisting War in Europe, my Proclamation of the 22d. of April 1793 is the index to my Plan. Sanctioned by your approving voice and by that of Your Representatives in both Houses of Congress, the spirit of that measure has continually governed me; uninfluenced by any attempts to deter or divert me from it…

The duty of holding a Neutral conduct may be inferred, without any thing more, from the obligation which justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to maintain inviolate the relations of Peace and amity toward other Nations.

The inducements of interest for observing that conduct will best be referred to your own reflections and experience. With me, a predominant motive has been to endeavour to gain time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions, and to progress without interruption, to that degree of strength and consistency, which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

Though in reviewing the incidents of my Administration, I am unconscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my Country will never cease to view them with indulgence; and that after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its Service, with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the Mansions of rest.

Relying on its kindness in this as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love toward it, which is so natural to a Man, who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several Generations; I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat, in which I promise myself to realize, without alloy, the sweet enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow Citizens, the benign influence of good Laws under a free Government, the ever favourite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labours, and dangers.
Andrew Jackson, First Inaugural Address

March 4, 1829

Fellow-Citizens:

About to undertake the arduous duties that I have been appointed to perform by the choice of a free people, I avail myself of this customary and solemn occasion to express the gratitude which their confidence inspires and to acknowledge the accountability which my situation enjoins. While the magnitude of their interests convinces me that no thanks can be adequate to the honor they have conferred, it admonishes me that the best return I can make is the zealous dedication of my humble abilities to their service and their good.

As the instrument of the Federal Constitution it will devolve on me for a stated period to execute the laws of the United States, to superintend their foreign and their confederate relations, to manage their revenue, to command their forces, and, by communications to the Legislature, to watch over and to promote their interests generally. And the principles of action by which I shall endeavor to accomplish this circle of duties it is now proper for me briefly to explain.

In administering the laws of Congress I shall keep steadily in view the limitations as well as the extent of the Executive power, trusting thereby to discharge the functions of my office without transcending its authority. With foreign nations it will be my study to preserve peace and to cultivate friendship on fair and honorable terms, and in the adjustment of any differences that may exist or arise to exhibit the forbearance becoming a powerful nation rather than the sensibility belonging to a gallant people.

In such measures as I may be called on to pursue in regard to the rights of the separate States I hope to be animated by a proper respect for those sovereign members of our Union, taking care not to confound the powers they have reserved to themselves with those they have granted to the Confederacy.

The management of the public revenue—that searching operation in all governments—is among the most delicate and important trusts in ours, and it will, of course, demand no inconsiderable share of my official solicitude. Under every aspect in which it can be considered it would appear that advantage must result from the observance of a strict and faithful economy. This I shall aim at the more anxiously both because it will facilitate the extinguishment of the national debt, the unnecessary duration of which is incompatible with real independence, and because it will counteract that tendency to public and private profligacy which a profuse expenditure of money by the Government is but too apt to engender. Powerful auxiliaries to the attainment of this desirable end are to be found in the regulations provided by the wisdom of Congress for the specific appropriation of public money and the prompt accountability of public officers.

With regard to a proper selection of the subjects of impost with a view to revenue, it would seem to me that the spirit of equity, caution, and compromise in which the Constitution was formed requires that the great interests of agriculture, commerce, and manufactures should be equally favored, and that perhaps the only exception to this rule should consist in the peculiar encouragement of any products of either of them that may be found essential to our national independence.

Internal improvement and the diffusion of knowledge, so far as they can be promoted by the constitutional acts of the Federal Government, are of high importance…
The recent demonstration of public sentiment inscribes on the list of Executive duties, in characters too legible to be overlooked, the task of reform, which will require particularly the correction of those abuses that have brought the patronage of the Federal Government into conflict with the freedom of elections, and the counteraction of those causes which have disturbed the rightful course of appointment and have placed or continued power in unfaithful or incompetent hands.

In the performance of a task thus generally delineated I shall endeavor to select men whose diligence and talents will insure in their respective stations able and faithful cooperation, depending for the advancement of the public service more on the integrity and zeal of the public officers than on their numbers.

A diffidence, perhaps too just, in my own qualifications will teach me to look with reverence to the examples of public virtue left by my illustrious predecessors, and with veneration to the lights that flow from the mind that founded and the mind that reformed our system. The same diffidence induces me to hope for instruction and aid from the coordinate branches of the Government, and for the indulgence and support of my fellow-citizens generally. And a firm reliance on the goodness of that Power whose providence mercifully protected our national infancy, and has since upheld our liberties in various vicissitudes, encourages me to offer up my ardent supplications that He will continue to make our beloved country the object of His divine care and gracious benediction.

Andrew Jackson, State of the Union Address

December 8, 1829

Fellow Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives:

It affords me pleasure to tender my friendly greetings to you on the occasion of your assembling at the seat of Government to enter upon the important duties to which you have been called by the voice of our country—men. The task devolves on me, under a provision of the Constitution, to present to you, as the Federal Legislature of 24 sovereign States and 12,000,000 happy people, a view of our affairs, and to propose such measures as in the discharge of my official functions have suggested themselves as necessary to promote the objects of our Union…

[Here Jackson writes extensively about foreign relations – editor]

I consider it one of the most urgent of my duties to bring to your attention the propriety of amending that part of the Constitution which relates to the election of President and Vice-President. Our system of government was by its framers deemed an experiment, and they therefore consistently provided a mode of remedying its defects.

To the people belongs the right of electing their Chief Magistrate; it was never designed that their choice should in any case be defeated, either by the intervention of electoral colleges or by the agency confided, under certain contingencies, to the House of Representatives. Experience proves that in proportion as agents to execute the will of the people are multiplied there is danger of their wishes being frustrated. Some may be unfaithful; all are liable to err. So far, therefore, as the people can with convenience speak, it is safer for them to express their own will.
The number of aspirants to the Presidency and the diversity of the interests which may influence their claims leave little reason to expect a choice in the first instance, and in that event the election must devolve on the House of Representatives, where it is obvious the will of the people may not be always ascertained, or, if ascertained, may not be regarded. From the mode of voting by States the choice is to be made by 24 votes, and it may often occur that one of these will be controlled by an individual Representative. Honors and offices are at the disposal of the successful candidate. Repeated balloting may make it apparent that a single individual holds the cast in his hand. May he not be tempted to name his reward?

But even without corruption, supposing the probity of the Representative to be proof against the powerful motives by which it may be assailed, the will of the people is still constantly liable to be misrepresented. One may err from ignorance of the wishes of his constituents; another from a conviction that it is his duty to be governed by his own judgment of the fitness of the candidates; finally, although all were inflexibly honest, all accurately informed of the wishes of their constituents, yet under the present mode of election a minority may often elect a President, and when this happens it may reasonably be expected that efforts will be made on the part of the majority to rectify this injurious operation of their institutions. But although no evil of this character should result from such a perversion of the first principle of our system—that the majority is to govern—it must be very certain that a President elected by a minority can not enjoy the confidence necessary to the successful discharge of his duties.

In this as in all other matters of public concern policy requires that as few impediments as possible should exist to the free operation of the public will. Let us, then, endeavor so to amend our system that the office of Chief Magistrate may not be conferred upon any citizen but in pursuance of a fair expression of the will of the majority.

I would therefore recommend such an amendment of the Constitution as may remove all intermediate agency in the election of the President and Vice-President. The mode may be so regulated as to preserve to each State its present relative weight in the election, and a failure in the first attempt may be provided for by confining the second to a choice between the two highest candidates. In connection with such an amendment it would seem advisable to limit the service of the Chief Magistrate to a single term of either four or six years. If, however, it should not be adopted, it is worthy of consideration whether a provision disqualifying for office the Representatives in Congress on whom such an election may have devolved would not be proper.

While members of Congress can be constitutionally appointed to offices of trust and profit it will be the practice, even under the most conscientious adherence to duty, to select them for such stations as they are believed to be better qualified to fill than other citizens; but the purity of our Government would doubtless be promoted by their exclusion from all appointments in the gift of the President, in whose election they may have been officially concerned. The nature of the judicial office and the necessity of securing in the Cabinet and in diplomatic stations of the highest rank the best talents and political experience should, perhaps, except these from the exclusion.

There are, perhaps, few men who can for any great length of time enjoy office and power without being more or less under the influence of feelings unfavorable to the faithful discharge of their public duties. Their integrity may be proof against improper considerations immediately addressed to themselves, but they are apt to acquire a habit of looking with indifference upon the public interests and of tolerating conduct from which an unpracticed man would revolt. Office is considered as a species of property, and government rather as a means of promoting individual interests than as an instrument created solely for the service of the people. Corruption in some
and in others a perversion of correct feelings and principles divert government from its legitimate ends and make it an engine for the support of the few at the expense of the many. The duties of all public officers are, or at least admit of being made, so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance; and I can not but believe that more is lost by the long continuance of men in office than is generally to be gained by their experience. I submit, therefore, to your consideration whether the efficiency of the Government would not be promoted and official industry and integrity better secured by a general extension of the law which limits appointments to four years.

In a country where offices are created solely for the benefit of the people no one man has any more intrinsic right to official station than another. Offices were not established to give support to particular men at the public expense. No individual wrong is, therefore, done by removal, since neither appointment to nor continuance in office is a matter of right. The incumbent became an officer with a view to public benefits, and when these require his removal they are not to be sacrificed to private interests. It is the people, and they alone, who have a right to complain when a bad officer is substituted for a good one. He who is removed has the same means of obtaining a living that are enjoyed by the millions who never held office. The proposed limitation would destroy the idea of property now so generally connected with official station, and although individual distress may be some times produced, it would, by promoting that rotation which constitutes a leading principle in the republican creed, give healthful action to the system…

Considered in connection with the difficulties which have heretofore attended appropriations for purposes of internal improvement, and with those which this experience tells us will certainly arise when ever power over such subjects may be exercised by the Central Government, it is hoped that it may lead to the adoption of some plan which will reconcile the diversified interests of the States and strengthen the bonds which unite them…

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. This is not the reflection of a day, but belongs to the most deeply rooted convictions of my mind. I can not, therefore, too strongly or too earnestly, for my own sense of its importance, warn you against all encroachments upon the legitimate sphere of State sovereignty. Sustained by its healthful and invigorating influence the federal system can never fall…

The condition and ulterior destiny of the Indian tribes within the limits of some of our States have become objects of much interest and importance. It has long been the policy of Government to introduce among them the arts of civilization, in the hope of gradually reclaiming them from a wandering life. This policy has, however, been coupled with another wholly incompatible with its success. Professing a desire to civilize and settle them, we have at the same time lost no opportunity to purchase their lands and thrust them farther into the wilderness. By this means they have not only been kept in a wandering state, but been led to look upon us as unjust and indifferent to their fate. Thus, though lavish in its expenditures upon the subject, Government has constantly defeated its own policy, and the Indians in general, receding farther and farther to the west, have retained their savage habits. A portion, however, of the Southern tribes, having mingled much with the whites and made some progress in the arts of civilized life, have lately attempted to erect an independent government within the limits of Georgia and
Alabama. These States, claiming to be the only sovereigns within their territories, extended their laws over the Indians, which induced the latter to call upon the United States for protection…

Actuated by this view of the subject, I informed the Indians inhabiting parts of Georgia and Alabama that their attempt to establish an independent government would not be countenanced by the Executive of the United States, and advised them to emigrate beyond the Mississippi or submit to the laws of those States.

Our conduct toward these people is deeply interesting to our national character. Their present condition, contrasted with what they once were, makes a most powerful appeal to our sympathies. Our ancestors found them the uncontrolled possessors of these vast regions. By persuasion and force they have been made to retire from river to river and from mountain to mountain, until some of the tribes have become extinct and others have left but remnants to preserve for a while their once terrible names. Surrounded by the whites with their arts of civilization, which by destroying the resources of the savage doom him to weakness and decay, the fate of the Mohegan, the Narragansett, and the Delaware is fast over—taking the Choctaw, the Cherokee, and the Creek. That this fate surely awaits them if they remain within the limits of the States does not admit of a doubt. Humanity and national honor demand that every effort should be made to avert so great a calamity. It is too late to inquire whether it was just in the United States to include them and their territory within the bounds of new States, whose limits they could control. That step can not be retraced. A State can not be dismembered by Congress or restricted in the exercise of her constitutional power. But the people of those States and of every State, actuated by feelings of justice and a regard for our national honor, submit to you the interesting question whether something can not be done, consistently with the rights of the States, to preserve this much—injured race. As a means of effecting this end I suggest for your consideration the propriety of setting apart an ample district west of the Mississippi, and without the limits of any State or Territory now formed, to be guaranteed to the Indian tribes as long as they shall occupy it, each tribe having a distinct control over the portion designated for its use. There they may be secured in the enjoyment of governments of their own choice, subject to no other control from the United States than such as may be necessary to preserve peace on the frontier and between the several tribes. There the benevolent may endeavor to teach them the arts of civilization, and, by promoting union and harmony among them, to raise up an interesting commonwealth, destined to perpetuate the race and to attest the humanity and justice of this Government.

This emigration should be voluntary, for it would be as cruel as unjust to compel the aborigines to abandon the graves of their fathers and seek a home in a distant land. But they should be distinctly informed that if they remain within the limits of the States they must be subject to their laws. In return for their obedience as individuals they will without doubt be protected in the enjoyment of those possessions which they have improved by their industry. But it seems to me visionary to suppose that in this state of things claims can be allowed on tracts of country on which they have neither dwelt nor made improvements, merely because they have seen them from the mountain or passed them in the chase. Submitting to the laws of the States, and receiving, like other citizens, protection in their persons and property, they will ere long become merged in the mass of our population…

The charter of the Bank of the United States expires in 1836, and its stock holders will most probably apply for a renewal of their privileges. In order to avoid the evils resulting from precipitancy in a measure involving such important principles and such deep pecuniary interests, I feel that I can not, in justice to the parties interested, too soon present it to the deliberate
consideration of the Legislature and the people. Both the constitutionality and the expediency of
the law creating this bank are well questioned by a large portion of our fellow citizens, and it
must be admitted by all that it has failed in the great end of establishing an uniform and sound
currency.

Under these circumstances, if such an institution is deemed essential to the fiscal
operations of the Government, I submit to the wisdom of the Legislature whether a national one,
founded upon the credit of the Government and its revenues, might not be devised which would
avoid all constitutional difficulties and at the same time secure all the advantages to the
Government and country that were expected to result from the present bank…

Andrew Jackson, State of the Union Address

December 6, 1830

Fellow Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives…

[Here Jackson writes extensively about foreign relations – editor]

In my objections to the bills authorizing subscriptions to the Maysville and Rockville
road companies I expressed my views fully in regard to the power of Congress to construct roads
and canals within a State of to appropriate money for improvements of a local character. I at the
same time intimated me belief that the right to make appropriations for such as were of a national
character had been so generally acted upon and so long acquiesced in by the Federal and State
Governments and the constituents of each as to justify its exercise on the ground of continued
and uninterrupted usage, but that it was, never the less, highly expedient that appropriations even
of that character should, with the exception made at the time, be deferred until the national debt
is paid, and that in the mean while some general rule for the action of the Government in that
respect ought to be established.

These suggestions were not necessary to the decision of the question then before me, and
were, I readily admit, intended to awake the attention and draw forth the opinion and
observations of our constituents upon a subject of the highest importance to their interests, and
one destined to exert a powerful influence upon the future operations of our political system. I
know of no tribunal to which a public man in this country, in a case of doubt and difficulty, can
appeal with greater advantage or more propriety than the judgment of the people; and although I
must necessarily in the discharge of my official duties be governed by the dictates of my own
judgment, I have no desire to conceal my anxious wish to conform as far as I can to the views of
those for whom I act…

It is due to candor, as well as to my own feelings, that I should express the reluctance and
anxiety which I must at all times experience in exercising the undoubted right of the Executive to
withhold his assent from bills on other grounds than their constitutionality. That this right should
not be exercised on slight occasions all will admit. It is only in matters of deep interest, when the
principle involved may be justly regarded as next in importance to infractions of the Constitution
itself, that such a step can be expected to meet with the approbation of the people. Such an
occasion do I conscientiously believe the present to be.

In the discharge of this delicate and highly responsible duty I am sustained by the
reflection that the exercise of this power has been deemed consistent with the obligation of
official duty by several of my predecessors, and by the persuasion, too, that what ever liberal institutions may have to fear from the encroachments of Executive power, which has been every where the cause of so much strife and bloody contention, but little danger is to be apprehended from a precedent by which that authority denies to itself the exercise of powers that bring in their train influence and patronage of great extent, and thus excludes the operation of personal interests, every where the bane of official trust…

Profoundly impressed with the importance of the subject, not merely as relates to the general prosperity of the country, but to the safety of the federal system, I can not avoid repeating my earnest hope that all good citizens who take a proper interest in the success and harmony of our admirable political institutions, and who are incapable of desiring to convert an opposite state of things into means for the gratification of personal ambition, will, laying aside minor considerations and discarding local prejudices, unite their honest exertions to establish some fixed general principle which shall be calculated to effect the greatest extent of public good in regard to the subject of internal improvement, and afford the least ground for sectional discontent…

Among the objects of great national concern I can not omit to press again upon your attention that part of the Constitution which regulates the election of President and Vice—President. The necessity for its amendment is made so clear to my mind by observation of its evils and by the many able discussions which they have elicited on the floor of Congress and elsewhere that I should be wanting to my duty were I to withhold another expression of my deep solicitude on the subject. Our system fortunately contemplates a recurrence to first principles, differing in this respect from all that have preceded it, and securing it, I trust, equally against the decay and the commotions which have marked the progress of other governments.

Our fellow citizens, too, who in proportion to their love of liberty keep a steady eye upon the means of sustaining it, do not require to be reminded of the duty they owe to themselves to remedy all essential defects in so vital a part of their system. While they are sensible that every evil attendant upon its operation is not necessarily indicative of a bad organization, but may proceed from temporary causes, yet the habitual presence, or even a single instance, of evils which can be clearly traced to an organic defect will not, I trust, be over—looked through a too scrupulous veneration for the work of their ancestors.

The Constitution was an experiment committed to the virtue and intelligence of the great mass of our country—men, in whose ranks the framers of it themselves were to perform the part of patriotic observation and scrutiny, and if they have passed from the stage of existence with an increased confidence in its general adaptation to our condition we should learn from authority so high the duty of fortifying the points in it which time proves to be exposed rather than be deterred from approaching them by the suggestions of fear or the dictates of misplaced reverence.

A provision which does not secure to the people a direct choice of their Chief Magistrate, but has a tendency to defeat their will, presented to my mind such an inconsistence with the general spirit of our institutions that I was indeed to suggest for your consideration the substitute which appeared to me at the same time the most likely to correct the evil and to meet the views of our constituents. The most mature reflection since has added strength to the belief that the best interests of our country require the speedy adoption of some plan calculated to effect this end. A contingency which some times places it in the power of a single member of the House of Representatives to decide an election of so high and solemn a character is unjust to the people,
and becomes when it occurs a source of embarrassment to the individuals thus brought into power and a cause of distrust of the representative body…

It was a leading object with the framers of the Constitution to keep as separate as possible the action of the legislative and executive branches of the Government. To secure this object nothing is more essential than to preserve the former from all temptations of private interest, and therefore so to direct the patronage of the latter as not to permit such temptations to be offered. Experience abundantly demonstrates that every precaution in this respect is a valuable safeguard of liberty, and one which my reflections upon the tendencies of our system incline me to think should be made still stronger.

It was for this reason that, in connection with an amendment of the Constitution removing all intermediate agency in the choice of the President, I recommended some restrictions upon the re—eligibility of that officer and upon the tenure of offices generally. The reason still exists, and I renew the recommendation with an increased confidence that its adoption will strengthen those checks by which the Constitution designed to secure the independence of each department of the Government and promote the healthful and equitable administration of all the trusts which it has created.

The agent most likely to contravene this design of the Constitution is the Chief Magistrate. In order, particularly, that his appointment may as far as possible be placed beyond the reach of any improper influences; in order that he may approach the solemn responsibilities of the highest office in the gift of a free people uncommitted to any other course than the strict line of constitutional duty, and that the securities for this independence may be rendered as strong as the nature of power and the weakness of its possessor will admit, I can not too earnestly invite your attention to the propriety of promoting such an amendment of the Constitution as will render him ineligible after one term of service.

It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly 30 years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements is approaching to a happy consummation. Two important tribes have accepted the provision made for their removal at the last session of Congress, and it is believed that their example will induce the remaining tribes also to seek the same obvious advantages.

The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual States, and to the Indians themselves. The pecuniary advantages which it promises to the Government are the least of its recommendations. It puts an end to all possible danger of collision between the authorities of the General and State Governments on account of the Indians. It will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters. By opening the whole territory between Tennessee on the north and Louisiana on the south to the settlement of the whites it will incalculably strengthen the south west frontier and render the adjacent States strong enough to repel future invasions without remote aid. It will relieve the whole State of Mississippi and the western part of Alabama of Indian occupancy, and enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power. It will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own rude institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers, and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community. These consequences, some of them so certain and the rest so probable, make the
complete execution of the plan sanctioned by Congress at their last session an object of much solicitude.

Toward the aborigines of the country no one can indulge a more friendly feeling than myself, or would go further in attempting to reclaim them from their wandering habits and make them a happy, prosperous people. I have endeavored to impress upon them my own solemn convictions of the duties and powers of the General Government in relation to the State authorities. For the justice of the laws passed by the States within the scope of their reserved powers they are not responsible to this Government. As individuals we may entertain and express our opinions of their acts, but as a Government we have as little right to control them as we have to prescribe laws for other nations.

With a full understanding of the subject, the Choctaw and the Chickasaw tribes have with great unanimity determined to avail themselves of the liberal offers presented by the act of Congress, and have agreed to remove beyond the Mississippi River. Treaties have been made with them, which in due season will be submitted for consideration. In negotiating these treaties they were made to understand their true condition, and they have preferred maintaining their independence in the Western forests to submitting to the laws of the States in which they now reside. These treaties, being probably the last which will ever be made with them, are characterized by great liberality on the part of the Government. They give the Indians a liberal sum in consideration of their removal, and comfortable subsistence on their arrival at their new homes. If it be their real interest to maintain a separate existence, they will there be at liberty to do so without the inconveniences and vexations to which they would unavoidably have been subject in Alabama and Mississippi.

Humanity has often wept over the fate of the aborigines of this country, and Philanthropy has been long busily employed in devising means to avert it, but its progress has never for a moment been arrested, and one by one have many powerful tribes disappeared from the earth. To follow to the tomb the last of his race and to tread on the graves of extinct nations excite melancholy reflections. But true philanthropy reconciles the mind to these vicissitudes as it does to the extinction of one generation to make room for another. In the monuments and fortifications of an unknown people, spread over the extensive regions of the West, we behold the memorials of a once powerful race, which was exterminated of has disappeared to make room for the existing savage tribes. Nor is there any thing in this which, upon a comprehensive view of the general interests of the human race, is to be regretted. Philanthropy could not wish to see this continent restored to the condition in which it was found by our forefathers. What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms, embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion?

The present policy of the Government is but a continuation of the same progressive change by a milder process. The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the Eastern States were annihilated or have melted away to make room for the whites. The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward, and we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the South and West by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to a land where their existence may be prolonged and perhaps made perpetual.

Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers; but what do they more than our ancestors did or than our children are now doing? To better their condition in an
unknown land our forefathers left all that was dear in earthly objects. Our children by thousands yearly leave the land of their birth to seek new homes in distant regions. Does Humanity weep at these painful separations from every thing, animate and inanimate, with which the young heart has become entwined? Far from it. It is rather a source of joy that our country affords scope where our young population may range unconstrained in body or in mind, developing the power and faculties of man in their highest perfection.

These remove hundreds and almost thousands of miles at their own expense, purchase the lands they occupy, and support themselves at their new homes from the moment of their arrival. Can it be cruel in this Government when, by events which it can not control, the Indian is made discontented in his ancient home to purchase his lands, to give him a new and extensive territory, to pay the expense of his removal, and support him a year in his new abode? How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of removing to the West on such conditions! If the offers made to the Indians were extended to them, they would be hailed with gratitude and joy.

And is it supposed that the wandering savage has a stronger attachment to his home than the settled, civilized Christian? Is it more afflicting to him to leave the graves of his fathers than it is to our brothers and children? Rightly considered, the policy of the General Government toward the red man is not only liberal, but generous. He is unwilling to submit to the laws of the States and mingle with their population. To save him from this alternative, or perhaps utter annihilation, the General Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement...

Andrew Jackson, “Veto of the Bank Bill,” 10 July 1832

July 10, 1832.

To the Senate.

The bill "to modify and continue" the act entitled "An act to incorporate the subscribers to the Bank of the United States" was presented to me on the 4th July instant. Having considered it with that solemn regard to the principles of the Constitution which the day was calculated to inspire, and come to the conclusion that it ought not to become a law, I herewith return it to the Senate, in which it originated, with my objections.

A bank of the United States is in many respects convenient for the Government and useful to the people. Entertaining this opinion, and deeply impressed with the belief that some of the powers and privileges possessed by the existing bank are unauthorized by the Constitution, subversive of the rights of the States, and dangerous to the liberties of the people, I felt it my duty at an early period of my Administration to call the attention of Congress to the practicability of organizing an institution combining all its advantages and obviating these objections. I sincerely regret that in the act before me I can perceive none of those modifications of the bank charter which are necessary, in my opinion, to make it compatible with justice, with sound policy, or with the Constitution of our country.

...It is not our own citizens only who are to receive the bounty of our Government. More than eight millions of the stock of this bank are held by foreigners. By this act the American Republic proposes virtually to make them a present of some millions of dollars...
…I can not perceive the justice or policy of this course. If our Government must sell monopolies, it would seem to be its duty to take nothing less than their full value, and if gratuities must be made once in fifteen or twenty years let them not be bestowed on the subjects of a foreign government nor upon a designated and favored class of men in our own country. It is but justice and good policy, as far as the nature of the case will admit, to confine our favors to our own fellow-citizens, and let each in his turn enjoy an opportunity to profit by our bounty. In the bearings of the act before me upon these points I find ample reasons why it should not become a law…

The modifications of the existing charter proposed by this act are not such, in my view, as make it consistent with the rights of the States or the liberties of the people…Is there no danger to our liberty and independence in a bank that in its nature has so little to bind it to our country?...Should the stock of the bank principally pass into the hands of the subjects of a foreign country, and we should unfortunately become involved in a war with that country, what would be our condition? Of the course which would be pursued by a bank almost wholly owned by the subjects of a foreign power, and managed by those whose interests, if not affections, would run in the same direction there can be no doubt. All its operations within would be in aid of the hostile fleets and armies without. Controlling our currency, receiving our public moneys, and holding thousands of our citizens in dependence, it would be more formidable and dangerous than the naval and military power of the enemy.

If we must have a bank with private stockholders, every consideration of sound policy and every impulse of American feeling admonishes that it should be purely American. Its stockholders should be composed exclusively of our own citizens, who at least ought to be friendly to our Government and willing to support it in times of difficulty and danger…

It is maintained by the advocates of the bank that its constitutionality in all its features ought to be considered as settled by precedent and by the decision of the Supreme Court. To this conclusion I cannot assent. Mere precedent is a dangerous source of authority, and should not be regarded as deciding questions of constitutional power except where the acquiescence of the people and the States can be considered as well settled…

If the opinion of the Supreme Court covered the whole ground of this act, it ought not to control the coordinate authorities of this Government. The Congress, the Executive, and the Court must each for itself be guided by its own opinion of the Constitution. Each public officer who takes an oath to support the Constitution swears that he will support it as he understands it, and not as it is understood by others. It is as much the duty of the House of Representatives, of the Senate, and of the President to decide upon the constitutionality of any bill or resolution which may be presented to them for passage or approval as it is of the supreme judges when it may be brought before them for judicial decision. The opinion of the judges has no more authority over Congress than the opinion of Congress has over the judges, and on that point the President is independent of both. The authority of the Supreme Court must not, therefore, be permitted to control the Congress or the Executive when acting in their legislative capacities, but to have only such influence as the force of their reasoning may deserve…

A bank is constitutional, but it is the province of the Legislature to determine whether this or that particular power, privilege, or exemption is "necessary and proper" to enable the bank to discharge its duties to the Government, and from their decision there is no appeal to the courts of justice. Under the decision of the Supreme Court [Jackson here refers to McCulloch v. Maryland, 1819], therefore, it is the exclusive province of Congress and the President to decide whether the particular features of this act are necessary and proper in order to enable the bank to
perform conveniently and efficiently the public duties assigned to it as a fiscal agent, and therefore constitutional, or unnecessary and improper, and therefore unconstitutional…

[I]t becomes us to proceed in our legislation with the utmost caution. Though not directly, our own powers and the rights of the States may be indirectly legislated away in the use of means to execute substantive powers… That a bank of the United States, competent to all the duties which may be required by the Government, might be so organized as not to infringe on our own delegated powers or the reserved rights of the States I do not entertain a doubt. Had the Executive been called upon to furnish the project of such an institution, the duty would have been cheerfully performed. In the absence of such a call it was obviously proper that he should confine himself to pointing out those prominent features in the act presented which in his opinion make it incompatible with the Constitution and sound policy. A general discussion will now take place, eliciting new light and settling important principles; and a new Congress, elected in the midst of such discussion, and furnishing an equal representation of the people according to the last census, will bear to the Capitol the verdict of public opinion, and, I doubt not, bring this important question to a satisfactory result…

It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes. Distinctions in society will always exist under every just government. Equality of talents, of education, or of wealth can not be produced by human institutions. In the full enjoyment of the gifts of Heaven and the fruits of superior industry, economy, and virtue, every man is equally entitled to protection by law; but when the laws undertake to add to these natural and just advantages 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. There are no necessary evils in government. Its evils exist only in its abuses. If it would confine itself to equal protection, and, as Heaven does its rains, shower its favors alike on the high and the low, the rich and the poor, it would be an unqualified blessing. In the act before me there seems to be a wide and unnecessary departure from these just principles.

Nor is our Government to be maintained or our Union preserved by invasions of the rights and powers of the several States. In thus attempting to make our General Government strong we make it weak. Its true strength consists in leaving individuals and States as much as possible to themselves-in making itself felt, not in its power, but in its beneficence; not in its control, but in its protection; not in binding the States more closely to the center, but leaving each to move unobstructed in its proper orbit.

Experience should teach us wisdom. Most of the difficulties our Government now encounters and most of the dangers which impend over our Union have sprung from an abandonment of the legitimate objects of Government by our national legislation, and the adoption of such principles as are embodied in this act. Many of our rich men have not been content with equal protection and equal benefits, but have besought us to make them richer by act of Congress. By attempting to gratify their desires we have in the results of our legislation arrayed section against section, interest against interest, and man against man, in a fearful commotion which threatens to shake the foundations of our Union. It is time to pause in our career to review our principles, and if possible revive that devoted patriotism and spirit of compromise which distinguished the sages of the Revolution and the fathers of our Union…
Fellow Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives…

I can not too cordially congratulate Congress and my fellow citizens on the near approach of that memorable and happy event——the extinction of the public debt of this great and free nation…

The final removal of this great burthen from our resources affords the means of further provision for all the objects of general welfare and public defense which the Constitution authorizes, and presents the occasion for such further reductions in the revenue [raised through tariffs] as may not be required for them…

Long and patient reflection has strengthened the opinions I have heretofore expressed to Congress on this subject, and I deem it my duty on the present occasion again to urge them upon the attention of the Legislature. The soundest maxims of public policy and the principals upon which our republican institutions are founded recommend a proper adaptation of the revenue to the expenditure, and they also require that the expenditure shall be limited to what, by an economical administration, shall be consistent with the simplicity of the Government and necessary to an efficient public service.

In effecting this adjustment it is due, in justice to the interests of the different States, and even to the preservation of the Union itself, that the protection afforded by existing laws to any branches of the national industry should not exceed what may be necessary to counteract the regulations of foreign nations and to secure a supply of those articles of manufacture essential to the national independence and safety in time of war. If upon investigation it shall be found, as it is believed it will be, that the legislative protection granted to any particular interest is greater than is indispensably requisite for these objects, I recommend that it be gradually diminished, and that as far as may be consistent with these objects the whole scheme of duties be reduced to the revenue standard as soon as a just regard to the faith of the Government and to the preservation of the large capital invested in establishments of domestic industry will permit.

That manufactures adequate to the supply of our domestic consumption would in the abstract be beneficial to our country there is no reason to doubt, and to effect their establishment there is perhaps no American citizen who would not for a while be willing to pay a higher price for them. But for this purpose it is presumed that a tariff of high duties, designed for perpetual protection, which they maintain has the effect to reduce the price by domestic competition below that of the foreign article. Experience, however, our best guide on this as on other subjects, makes it doubtful whether the advantages of this system are not counter—balanced by many evils, and whether it does not tend to beget in the minds of a large portion of our country—men a spirit of discontent and jealousy dangerous to the stability of the Union.

What, then, shall be done? Large interests have grown up under the implied pledge of our national legislation, which it would seem a violation of public faith suddenly to abandon. Nothing could justify it but the public safety, which is the supreme law. But those who have vested their capital in manufacturing establishments can not expect that the people will continue permanently to pay high taxes for their benefit, when the money is not required for any legitimate purpose in the administration of the Government. Is it not enough that the high duties have been paid as long as the money arising from them could be applied to the common benefit in the extinguishment of the public debt?
Those who take an enlarged view of the condition of our country must be satisfied that the policy of protection must be ultimately limited to those articles of domestic manufacture which are indispensable to our safety in time of war. Within this scope, on a reasonable scale, it is recommended by every consideration of patriotism and duty, which will doubtless always secure to it a liberal and efficient support. But beyond this object we have already seen the operation of the system productive of discontent. In some sections of the Republic its influence is deprecated as tending to concentrate wealth into a few hands, and as creating those germs of dependence and vice which in other countries have characterized the existence of monopolies and proved so destructive of liberty and the general good. A large portion of the people in one section of the Republic declares it not only inexpedient on these grounds, but as disturbing the equal relations of property by legislation, and therefore unconstitutional and unjust.

Doubtless these effects are in a great degree exaggerated, and may be ascribed to a mistaken view of the considerations which led to the adoption of the tariff system; but they are never the less important in enabling us to review the subject with a more thorough knowledge of all its bearings upon the great interests of the Republic, and with a determination to dispose of it so that none can with justice complain.

It is my painful duty to state that in one quarter of the United States opposition to the revenue laws has arisen to a height which threatens to thwart their execution, if not to endanger the integrity of the Union. What ever obstructions may be thrown in the way of the judicial authorities of the General Government, it is hoped they will be able peaceably to overcome them by the prudence of their own officers and the patriotism of the people. But should this reasonable reliance on the moderation and good sense of all portions of our fellow citizens be disappointed, it is believed that the laws themselves are fully adequate to the suppression of such attempts as may be immediately made. Should the exigency arise rendering the execution of the existing laws impracticable from any cause what ever, prompt notice of it will be given to Congress, with a suggestion of such views and measures as may be deemed necessary to meet it…

Limited to a general superintending power to maintain peace at home and abroad, and to prescribe laws on a few subjects of general interest not calculated to restrict human liberty, but to enforce human rights, this Government will find its strength and its glory in the faithful discharge of these plain and simple duties. Relieved by its protecting shield from the fear of war and the apprehension of oppression, the free enterprise of our citizens, aided by the State sovereignties, will work out improvements and ameliorations which can not fail to demonstrate that the great truth that the people can govern themselves is not only realized in our example, but that it is done by a machinery in government so simple and economical as scarcely to be felt…

Andrew Jackson, Proclamation Regarding Nullification, 10 December 1832

Whereas a convention, assembled in the State of South Carolina, have passed an ordinance, by which they declare that the several acts and parts of acts of the Congress of the United States, purporting to be laws for the imposing of duties and imposts on the importation of foreign commodities, and now having actual operation and effect within the United States, and more especially "two acts for the same purposes, passed on the 29th of May, 1828, and on the 14th of July, 1832, are unauthorized by the Constitution of the United States, and violate the true meaning and intent thereof, and are null and void, and no law," nor binding on the citizens of that
State or its officers, and by the said ordinance it is further declared to be unlawful for any of the constituted authorities of the State, or of the United States, to enforce the payment of the duties imposed by the said acts within the same State, and that it is the duty of the legislature to pass such laws as may be necessary to give full effect to the said ordinances…

And, finally, the said ordinance declares that the people of South Carolina will maintain the said ordinance at every hazard, and that they will consider the passage of any act by Congress abolishing or closing the ports of the said State, or otherwise obstructing the free ingress or egress of vessels to and from the said ports, or any other act of the Federal Government to coerce the State, shut up her ports, destroy or harass her commerce, or to enforce the said acts otherwise than through the civil tribunals of the country, as inconsistent with the longer continuance of South Carolina in the Union; and that the people of the said State will thenceforth hold themselves absolved from all further obligation to maintain or preserve their political connection with the people of the other States, and will forthwith proceed to organize a separate government, and do all other acts and things which sovereign and independent States may of right do.

And whereas the said ordinance prescribes to the people of South Carolina a course of conduct in direct violation of their duty as citizens of the United States, contrary to the laws of their country, subversive of its Constitution, and having for its object the instruction of the Union—that Union, which, coeval with our political existence, led our fathers, without any other ties to unite them than those of patriotism and common cause, through the sanguinary struggle to a glorious independence—that sacred Union, hitherto inviolate, which, perfected by our happy Constitution, has brought us, by the favor of Heaven, to a state of prosperity at home, and high consideration abroad, rarely, if ever, equaled in the history of nations; to preserve this bond of our political existence from destruction, to maintain inviolate this state of national honor and prosperity, and to justify the confidence my fellow-citizens have reposed in me, I, Andrew Jackson, President of the United States, have thought proper to issue this my PROCLAMATION, stating my views of the Constitution and laws applicable to the measures adopted by the Convention of South Carolina, and to the reasons they have put forth to sustain them, declaring the course which duty will require me to pursue, and, appealing to the understanding and patriotism of the people, warn them of the consequences that must inevitably result from an observance of the dictates of the Convention.

Strict duty would require of me nothing more than the exercise of those powers with which I am now, or may hereafter be, invested, for preserving the Union, and for the execution of the laws. But the imposing aspect which opposition has assumed in this case, by clothing itself with State authority, and the deep interest which the people of the United States must all feel in preventing a resort to stronger measures, while there is a hope that anything will be yielded to reasoning and remonstrances, perhaps demand, and will certainly justify, a full exposition to South Carolina and the nation of the views I entertain of this important question, as well as a distinct enunciation of the course which my sense of duty will require me to pursue. The ordinance is founded, not on the indefeasible right of resisting acts which are plainly unconstitutional, and too oppressive to be endured, but on the strange position that any one State may not only declare an act of Congress void, but prohibit its execution— that they may do this consistently with the Constitution—that the true construction of that instrument permits a State to retain its place in the Union, and yet be bound by no other of its laws than those it may choose to consider as constitutional. It is true they add, that to justify this abrogation of a law, it must be palpably contrary to the Constitution, but it is evident, that to give the right of resisting laws of
that description, coupled with the uncontrolled right to decide what laws deserve that character, is to give the power of resisting all laws. For, as by the theory, there is no appeal, the reasons alleged by the State, good or bad, must prevail... But reasoning on this subject is superfluous, when our social compact in express terms declares, that the laws of the United States, its Constitution, and treaties made under it, are the supreme law of the land; and for greater caution adds, "that the judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding." And it may be asserted, without fear of refutation, that no federative government could exist without a similar provision. Look, for a moment, to the consequence. If South Carolina considers the revenue laws unconstitutional, and has a right to prevent their execution in the port of Charleston, there would be a clear constitutional objection to their collection in every other port, and no revenue could be collected anywhere; for all imposts must be equal. It is no answer to repeat that an unconstitutional law is no law, so long as the question of its legality is to be decided by the State itself, for every law operating injuriously upon any local interest will be perhaps thought, and certainly represented, as unconstitutional, and, as has been shown, there is no appeal.

If this doctrine had been established at an earlier day, the Union would have been dissolved in its infancy. The excise law in Pennsylvania, the embargo and non-intercourse law in the Eastern States, the carriage tax in Virginia, were all deemed unconstitutional, and were more unequal in their operation than any of the laws now complained of; but, fortunately, none of those States discovered that they had the right now claimed by South Carolina. The war into which we were forced, to support the dignity of the nation and the rights of our citizens, might have ended in defeat and disgrace instead of victory and honor, if the States, who supposed it a ruinous and unconstitutional measure, had thought they possessed the right of nullifying the act by which it was declared, and denying supplies for its prosecution. Hardly and unequally as those measures bore upon several members of the Union, to the legislatures of none did this efficient and peaceable remedy, as it is called, suggest itself. The discovery of this important feature in our Constitution was reserved to the present day. To the statesmen of South Carolina belongs the invention, and upon the citizens of that State will, unfortunately, fall the evils of reducing it to practice...

I consider, then, the power to annul a law of the United States, assumed by one State, incompatible with the existence of the Union, contradicted expressly by the letter of the Constitution, unauthorized by its spirit, inconsistent with every principle on which It was founded, and destructive of the great object for which it was formed...

This right to secede (put forth in the act of South Carolina) is deduced from the nature of the Constitution, which they say is a compact between sovereign States who have preserved their whole sovereignty, and therefore are subject to no superior; that because they made the compact, they can break it when in their opinion it has been departed from by the other States. Fallacious as this course of reasoning is, it enlists State pride, and finds advocates in the honest prejudices of those who have not studied the nature of our government sufficiently to see the radical error on which it rests.

The people of the United States formed the Constitution, acting through the State legislatures, in making the compact, to meet and discuss its provisions, and acting in separate conventions when they ratified those provisions; but the terms used in its construction show it to be a government in which the people of all the States collectively are represented. We are ONE PEOPLE in the choice of the President and Vice President. Here the States have no other agency than to direct the mode in which the vote shall be given. The candidates having the majority of
all the votes are chosen. The electors of a majority of States may have given their votes for one candidate, and yet another may be chosen. The people, then, and not the States, are represented in the executive branch.

In the House of Representatives there is this difference, that the people of one State do not, as in the case of President and Vice President, all vote for all the members, each State electing only its own representatives. But this creates no material distinction. When chosen, they are all representatives of the United States, not representatives of the particular State from which they come. They are paid by the United States, not by the State; nor are they accountable to it for any act done in performance of their legislative functions; and however they may in practice, as it is their duty to do, consult and prefer the interests of their particular constituents when they come in conflict with any other partial or local interest, yet it is their first and highest duty, as representatives of the United States, to promote the general good.

The Constitution of the United States, then, forms a government, not a league, and whether it be formed by compact between the States, or in any other manner, its character is the same. It is a government in which all the people are represented, which operates directly on the people individually, not upon the States; they retained all the power they did not grant. But each State having expressly parted with so many powers as to constitute jointly with the other States a single nation, cannot from that period possess any right to secede, because such secession does not break a league, but destroys the unity of a nation, and any injury to that unity is not only a breach which would result from the contravention of a compact, but it is an offense against the whole Union. To say that any State may at pleasure secede from the Union, is to say that the United States are not a nation... Secession, like any other revolutionary act, may be morally justified by the extremity of oppression; but to call it a constitutional right, is confounding the meaning of terms, and can only be done through gross error, or to deceive those who are willing to assert a right, but would pause before they made a revolution, or incur the penalties consequent upon a failure.

Because the Union was formed by compact, it is said the parties to that compact may, when they feel themselves aggrieved, depart from it; but it is precisely because it is a compact that they cannot. A compact is an agreement or binding obligation. It may by its terms have a sanction or penalty for its breach, or it may not. If it contains no sanction, it may be broken with no other consequence than moral guilt; if it have a sanction, then the breach incurs the designated or implied penalty. A league between independent nations, generally, has no sanction other than a moral one; or if it should contain a penalty, as there is no common superior, it cannot be enforced. A government, on the contrary, always has a sanction, express or implied; and, in our case, it is both necessarily implied and expressly given. An attempt by force of arms to destroy a government is an offense, by whatever means the constitutional compact may have been formed; and such government has the right, by the law of self-defense, to pass acts for punishing the offender, unless that right is modified, restrained, or resumed by the constitutional act. In our system, although it is modified in the case of treason, yet authority is expressly given to pass all laws necessary to carry its powers into effect, and under this grant provision has been made for punishing acts which obstruct the due administration of the laws.

It would seem superfluous to add anything to show the nature of that union which connects us; but as erroneous opinions on this subject are the foundation of doctrines the most destructive to our peace, I must give some further development to my views on this subject. No one, fellow-citizens, has a higher reverence for the reserved rights of the States than the magistrate who now addresses you. No one would make greater personal sacrifices, or official...
exertions, to defend them from violation; but equal care must be taken to prevent, on their part, an improper interference with, or resumption of, the rights they have vested in the nation.

The line has not been so distinctly drawn as to avoid doubts in some cases of the exercise of power. Men of the best intentions and soundest views may differ in their construction of some parts of the Constitution, but there are others on which dispassionate reflection can leave no doubt. Of this nature appears to be the assumed right of secession. It rests, as we have seen, on the alleged undivided sovereignty of the States, and on their having formed in this sovereign capacity a compact which is called the Constitution, from which, because they made it, they have the right to secede. Both of these positions are erroneous, and some of the arguments to prove them so have been anticipated.

The States severally have not retained their entire sovereignty. It has been shown that in becoming parts of a nation, not members of a league, they surrendered many of their essential parts of sovereignty. The right to make treaties, declare war, levy taxes, exercise exclusive judicial and legislative powers, were all functions of sovereign power. The States, then, for all these important purposes, were no longer sovereign. The allegiance of their citizens was transferred in the first instance to the government of the United States; they became American citizens, and owed obedience to the Constitution of the United States, and to laws made in conformity with the powers vested in Congress. This last position has not been, and cannot be, denied. How then, can that State be said to be sovereign and independent whose citizens owe obedience to laws not made by it, and whose magistrates are sworn to disregard those laws, when they come in conflict with those passed by another? What shows conclusively that the States cannot be said to have reserved an undivided sovereignty, is that they expressly ceded the right to punish treason—not treason against their separate power, but treason against the United States. Treason is an offense against sovereignty, and sovereignty must reside with the power to punish it. But the reserved rights of the States are not less sacred because they have for their common interest made the general government the depository of these powers. The unity of our political character (as has been shown for another purpose) commenced with its very existence. Under the royal government we had no separate character; our opposition to its oppression began as UNITED COLONIES. We were the UNITED STATES under the Confederation, and the name was perpetuated and the Union rendered more perfect by the federal Constitution. In none of these stages did we consider ourselves in any other light than as forming one nation. Treaties and alliances were made in the name of all. Troops were raised for the joint defense. How, then, with all these proofs, that under all changes of our position we had, for designated purposes and with defined powers, created national governments—how is it that the most perfect of these several modes of union should now be considered as a mere league that may be dissolved at pleasure? It is from an abuse of terms. Compact is used as synonymous with league, although the true term is not employed, because it would at once show the fallacy of the reasoning. It would not do to say that our Constitution was only a league, but it is labored to prove it a compact (which, in one sense, it is), and then to argue that as a league is a compact, every compact between nations must, of course, be a league, and that from such an engagement every sovereign power has a right to recede. But it has been shown that in this sense the States are not sovereign, and that even if they were, and the national Constitution had been formed by compact, there would be no right in any one State to exonerate itself from the obligation…

This, then, is the position in which we stand. A small majority of the citizens of one State in the Union have elected delegates to a State convention; that convention has ordained that all the revenue laws of the United States must be repealed, or that they are no longer a member of
the Union. The governor of that State has recommended to the legislature the raising of an army to carry the secession into effect, and that he may be empowered to give clearances to vessels in the name of the State. No act of violent opposition to the laws has yet been committed, but such a state of things is hourly apprehended, and it is the intent of this instrument to PROCLAIM, not only that the duty imposed on me by the Constitution, ” to take care that the laws be faithfully executed,” shall be performed to the extent of the powers already vested in me by law or of such others as the wisdom of Congress shall devise and Entrust to me for that purpose; but to warn the citizens of South Carolina, who have been deluded into an opposition to the laws, of the danger they will incur by obedience to the illegal and disorganizing ordinance of the convention-to exhort those who have refused to support it to persevere in their determination to uphold the Constitution and laws of their country, and to point out to all the perilous situation into which the good people of that State have been led, and that the course they are urged to pursue is one of ruin and disgrace to the very State whose rights they affect to support.

Andrew Jackson, Second Inaugural Address

March 4, 1833

Fellow-Citizens...

So many events have occurred within the last four years which have necessarily called forth—sometimes under circumstances the most delicate and painful—my views of the principles and policy which ought to be pursued by the General Government that I need on this occasion but allude to a few leading considerations connected with some of them...

In the domestic policy of this Government there are two objects which especially deserve the attention of the people and their representatives, and which have been and will continue to be the subjects of my increasing solicitude. They are the preservation of the rights of the several States and the integrity of the Union.

These great objects are necessarily connected, and can only be attained by an enlightened exercise of the powers of each within its appropriate sphere in conformity with the public will constitutionally expressed. To this end it becomes the duty of all to yield a ready and patriotic submission to the laws constitutionally enacted, and thereby promote and strengthen a proper confidence in those institutions of the several States and of the United States which the people themselves have ordained for their own government.

My experience in public concerns and the observation of a life somewhat advanced confirm the opinions long since imbibed by me, that the destruction of our State governments or the annihilation of their control over the local concerns of the people would lead directly to revolution and anarchy, and finally to despotism and military domination. In proportion, therefore, as the General Government encroaches upon the rights of the States, in the same proportion does it impair its own power and detract from its ability to fulfill the purposes of its creation. Solemnly impressed with these considerations, my countrymen will ever find me ready to exercise my constitutional powers in arresting measures which may directly or indirectly encroach upon the rights of the States or tend to consolidate all political power in the General Government. But of equal, and, indeed, of incalculable, importance is the union of these States, and the sacred duty of all to contribute to its preservation by a liberal support of the General
Government in the exercise of its just powers. You have been wisely admonished to "accustom yourselves to think and speak of the Union as of the palladium of your political safety and prosperity, watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety, discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned, and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of any attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts." Without union our independence and liberty would never have been achieved; without union they never can be maintained. Divided into twenty-four, or even a smaller number, of separate communities, we shall see our internal trade burdened with numberless restraints and exactions; communication between distant points and sections obstructed or cut off; our sons made soldiers to deluge with blood the fields they now till in peace; the mass of our people borne down and impoverished by taxes to support armies and navies, and military leaders at the head of their victorious legions becoming our lawgivers and judges. The loss of liberty, of all good government, of peace, plenty, and happiness, must inevitably follow a dissolution of the Union. In supporting it, therefore, we support all that is dear to the freeman and the philanthropist…

Deeply impressed with the truth of these observations, and under the obligation of that solemn oath which I am about to take, I shall continue to exert all my faculties to maintain the just powers of the Constitution and to transmit unimpaired to posterity the blessings of our Federal Union. At the same time, it will be my aim to inculcate by my official acts the necessity of exercising by the General Government those powers only that are clearly delegated; to encourage simplicity and economy in the expenditures of the Government; to raise no more money from the people than may be requisite for these objects, and in a manner that will best promote the interests of all classes of the community and of all portions of the Union. Constantly bearing in mind that in entering into society "individuals must give up a share of liberty to preserve the rest," it will be my desire so to discharge my duties as to foster with our brethren in all parts of the country a spirit of liberal concession and compromise, and, by reconciling our fellow-citizens to those partial sacrifices which they must unavoidably make for the preservation of a greater good, to recommend our invaluable Government and Union to the confidence and affections of the American people…
The necessity of watching with jealous anxiety for the preservation of the Union was earnestly pressed upon his fellow citizens by the Father of his Country in his farewell address. He has there told us that "while experience shall not have demonstrated its impracticability, there will always be reason to distrust the patriotism of those who, in any quarter, may endeavor to weaken its bonds;" and he has cautioned us in the strongest terms against the formation of parties on geographical discriminations as one of the means which might disturb our Union, and to which designing men would be likely to resort.

The lessons contained in this invaluable legacy of Washington to his countrymen should be cherished in the heart of every citizen to the latest generation; and perhaps at no period of time could they be more usefully remembered than at the present moment. For when we look upon the scenes that are passing around us, and dwell upon the pages of his parting address, his paternal counsels would seem to be not merely the offspring of wisdom and foresight, but the voice of prophecy foretelling events and warning us of the evil to come. Forty years have passed since that imperishable document was given to his countrymen. The federal Constitution was then regarded by him as an experiment, and he so speaks of it in his address; but an experiment upon the success of which the best hopes of his country depended, and we all know that he was prepared to lay down his life, if necessary, to secure to it a full and fair trial. The trial has been made. It has succeeded beyond the proudest hopes of those who framed it. Every quarter of this widely extended nation has felt its blessings and shared in the general prosperity produced by its adoption.

But amid this general prosperity and splendid success, the dangers of which he warned us are becoming every day more evident, and the signs of evil are sufficiently apparent to awaken the deepest anxiety in the bosom of the patriot. We behold systematic efforts publicly made to sow the seeds of discord between different parts of the United States, and to place party divisions directly upon geographical distinctions; to excite the South against the North, and the North against the South, and to force into the controversy the most delicate and exciting topics upon which it is impossible that a large portion of the Union can ever speak without strong emotions. Appeals, too, are constantly made to sectional interests, in order to influence the election of the chief magistrate, as if it were desired that he should favor a particular quarter of the country instead of fulfilling the duties of his station with impartial justice to all; and the possible dissolution of the Union has at length become an ordinary and familiar subject of discussion.

Has the warning voice of Washington been forgotten? or have designs already been formed to sever the Union? Let it not be supposed that I impute to all of those who have taken an active part in these unwise and unprofitable discussions a want of patriotism or of public virtue. The honorable feeling of State pride and local attachments find a place in the bosoms of the most enlightened and pure. But while such men are conscious of their own integrity and honesty of purpose they ought never to forget that the citizens of other States are their political brethren; and that, however mistaken they may be in their views, the great body of them are equally honest and upright with themselves. Mutual suspicions and reproaches may in time create mutual hostility, and artful and designing men will always be found who are ready to foment these fatal divisions and to inflame the natural jealousies of different sections of the country. The history of the world is full of such examples, and especially the history of republics.
What have you to gain by division and dissension? Delude not yourselves with the belief that a breach once made may be afterward repaired. If the Union is once severed, the line of separation will grow wider and wider, and the controversies which are now debated and settled in the halls of legislation will then be tried in fields of battle and be determined by the sword. Neither should you deceive yourselves with the hope that the first line of separation would be the permanent one, and that nothing but harmony and concord would be found in the new associations formed upon the dissolution of this Union. Local interests would still be found there, and unchastened ambition. And if the recollection of common dangers, in which the people of these United States stood side by side against the common foe; the memory of victories won by their united valor; the prosperity and happiness they have enjoyed under the present Constitution; the proud name they bear as citizens of this great Republic,—if these recollections and proofs of common interest are not strong enough to bind us together as one people, what tie will hold this Union disunited?

The first line of separation would not last for a single generation; new fragments would be torn off; new leaders would spring up; and this great and glorious Republic would soon be broken into a multitude of petty States armed for mutual aggressions, loaded with taxes to pay armies and leaders, seeking aid against each other from foreign powers, insulted and trampled upon by the nations of Europe, until, harassed with conflicts, and humbled and debased in spirit, they would be ready to submit to the absolute dominion of any military adventurer, and to surrender their liberty for the sake of repose. It is impossible to look on the consequences that would inevitably follow the destruction of this government, and not feel indignant when we hear cold calculations about the value of the Union and have so constantly before us a line of conduct so well calculated to weaken its ties.

There is too much at stake to allow pride or passion to influence your decision. Never for a moment believe that the great body of the citizens of any State or States can deliberately intend to do wrong. They may, under the influence of temporary excitement or misguided opinions, commit mistakes; they may be misled for a time by the suggestions of self-interest; but in a community so enlightened and patriotic as the people of the United States, argument will soon make them sensible of their errors, and, when convinced, they will be ready to repair them. If they have no higher or better motives to govern them, they will at least perceive that their own interest requires them to be just to others as they hope to receive justice at their hands.

But in order to maintain the Union unimpaired, it is absolutely necessary that the laws passed by the constituted authorities should be faithfully executed in every part of the country, and that every good citizen should at all times stand ready to put down, with the combined force of the nation, every attempt at unlawful resistance, under whatever pretext it may be made or whatever shape it may assume. Unconstitutional or oppressive laws may no doubt be passed by Congress, either from erroneous views or the want of due consideration; if they are within reach of judicial authority, the remedy is easy and peaceful, and if, from the character of the law, it is an abuse of power not within the control of the judiciary, then free discussion and calm appeals to reason and to the justice of the people will not fail to redress the wrong. But until the law shall be declared void by the courts or repealed by Congress, no individual or combination of individuals can be justified in forcibly resisting its execution. It is impossible that any government can continue to exist upon any other principles. It would cease to be a government, and be unworthy of the name, if it had not the power to enforce the execution for its own laws within its own sphere of action.
It is true that cases may be imagined disclosing such a settled purpose of usurpation and oppression on the part of the government as would justify an appeal to arms. These, however, are extreme cases, which we have no reason to apprehend in a government where the power is in the hands of a patriotic people; and no citizen who loves his country would in any case whatever resort to forcible resistance unless he clearly saw that the time had come when a freeman should prefer death to submission; for if such a struggle is once begun, and the citizens of one section of the country be arrayed in arms against those of another in doubtful conflict, let the battle result as it may, there will be an end of the Union, and with it an end of the hopes of freedom. The victory of the injured would not secure to them the blessings of liberty; it would avenge their wrongs, but they would themselves share in the common ruin.

But the Constitution can not be maintained, nor the Union preserved, in opposition to public feeling, by the mere exertion of the coercive powers confided to the general government. The foundations must be laid in the affections of the people; in the security it gives to life, liberty, character, and property, in every quarter of the country; and in the fraternal attachments which the citizens of the several States bear to one another, as members of one political family mutually contributing to promote the happiness of each other. Hence the citizens of every State should studiously avoid everything calculated to wound the sensibility or offend the just pride of the people of other States; and they should frown upon any proceedings within their own borders likely to disturb the tranquility of their political brethren in other portions of the Union.

You have no longer any cause to fear danger from abroad; your strength and power are well known throughout the civilized world, as well as the high and gallant bearing of your sons. It is from within, among yourselves, from cupidity, from corruption, from disappointed ambition, and inordinate thirst for power, that factions will be formed and liberty endangered. It is against such designs, whatever disguise the actors may assume, that you have especially to guard yourselves. You have the highest of human trusts committed to your care. Providence has showered on this favored land blessings without number, and has chosen you, as the guardians of freedom, to preserve it for the benefit of the human race. May he who holds in his hands the destinies of nations make you worthy of the favors he has bestowed, and enable you, with pure hearts, and pure hands, and sleepless vigilance, to guard and defend to the end of time the great charge he has committed to your keeping.

My own race is nearly run; advanced age and failing health warn me that before long I must pass beyond the reach of human events and cease to feel the vicissitudes of human affairs. I thank God that my life has been spent in a land of liberty, and that he has given me a heart to love my country with the affection of a son. And filled with gratitude for your constant and unwavering kindness, I bid you a last and affectionate farewell.
Abraham Lincoln, Message to Congress in Special Session

July 4, 1861

Having been convened on an extraordinary occasion, as authorized by the Constitution, your attention is not called to any ordinary subject of legislation.

At the beginning of the present Presidential term, four months ago, the functions of the Federal Government were found to be generally suspended within the several States of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Florida, excepting only those of the Post Office Department…

Finding this condition of things, and believing it to be an imperative duty upon the incoming Executive, to prevent, if possible, the consummation of such attempt to destroy the Federal Union, a choice of means to that end became indispensable. This choice was made; and was declared in the Inaugural address. The policy chosen looked to the exhaustion of all peaceful measures, before a resort to any stronger ones. It sought only to hold the public places and property, not already wrested from the Government, and to collect the revenue; relying for the rest, on time, discussion, and the ballot-box. It promised a continuance of the mails, at government expense, to the very people who were resisting the government; and it gave repeated pledges against any disturbance to any of the people, or any of their rights. Of all that which a president might constitutionally, and justifiably, do in such a case, everything was foreborne, without which, it was believed possible to keep the government on foot…

[The assault upon, and reduction of, Fort Sumter, was, in no sense, a matter of self defence on the part of the assailants…[T]hey assailed, and reduced the Fort, for precisely the reverse object---to drive out the visible authority of the Federal Union, and thus force it to immediate dissolution.

That this was their object, the Executive well understood; and having said to them in the inaugural address, "You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors," he took pains, not only to keep this declaration good, but also to keep the case so free from the power of ingenious sophistry, as that the world should not be able to misunderstand it. By the affair at Fort Sumter, with its surrounding circumstances, that point was reached. Then, and thereby, the assailants of the Government, began the conflict of arms, without a gun in sight, or in expectancy, to return their fire, save only the few in the Fort, sent to that harbor, years before, for their own protection, and still ready to give that protection, in whatever was lawful. In this act, discarding all else, they have forced upon the country, the distinct issue: "Immediate dissolution, or blood.''

And this issue embraces more than the fate of these United States. It presents to the whole family of man, the question, whether a constitutional republic, or a democracy---a government of the people, by the same people---can, or cannot, maintain its territorial integrity, against its own domestic foes. It presents the question, whether discontented individuals, too few in numbers to control administration, according to organic law, in any case, can always, upon the pretences made in this case, or on any other pretences, or arbitrarily, without any pretence, break up their Government, and thus practically put an end to free government upon the earth. It forces us to ask: "Is there, in all republics, this inherent, and fatal weakness?" "Must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?"
So viewing the issue, no choice was left but to call out the war power of the Government; and so to resist force, employed for its destruction, by force, for its preservation…

Recurring to the action of the government, it may be stated that, at first, a call was made for seventy-five thousand militia; and rapidly following this, a proclamation was issued for closing the ports of the insurrectionary districts by proceedings in the nature of Blockade. So far all was believed to be strictly legal. At this point the insurrectionists announced their purpose to enter upon the practice of privateering. Other calls were made for volunteers, to serve three years, unless sooner discharged; and also for large additions to the regular Army and Navy. These measures, whether strictly legal or not, were ventured upon, under what appeared to be a popular demand, and a public necessity; trusting, then as now, that Congress would readily ratify them. It is believed that nothing has been done beyond the constitutional competency of Congress.

Soon after the first call for militia, it was considered a duty to authorize the Commanding General, in proper cases, according to his discretion, to suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus; or, in other words, to arrest, and detain, without resort to the ordinary processes and forms of law, such individuals as he might deem dangerous to the public safety. This authority has purposely been exercised but very sparingly. Nevertheless, the legality and propriety of what has been done under it, are questioned; and the attention of the country has been called to the proposition that one who is sworn to “take care that the laws be faithfully executed,” should not himself violate them. Of course some consideration was given to the questions of power, and propriety, before this matter was acted upon. The whole of the laws which were required to be faithfully executed, were being resisted, and failing of execution, in nearly one-third of the States. Must they be allowed to finally fail of execution, even had it been perfectly clear, that by the use of the means necessary to their execution, some single law, made in such extreme tenderness of the citizen’s liberty, that practically, it relieves more of the guilty, than of the innocent, should, to a very limited extent, be violated? To state the question more directly, are all the laws, but one, to go unexecuted, and the government itself go to pieces, lest that one be violated? Even in such a case, would not the official oath be broken, if the government should be overthrown, when it was believed that disregarding the single law, would tend to preserve it? But it was not believed that this question was presented. It was not believed that any law was violated. The provision of the Constitution that “The privilege of the writ of habeas corpus, shall not be suspended unless when, in cases of rebellion or invasion, the public safety may require it,” is equivalent to a provision---is a provision---that such privilege may be suspended when, in cases of rebellion, or invasion, the public safety does require it. It was decided that we have a case of rebellion, and that the public safety does require the qualified suspension of the privilege of the writ which was authorized to be made. Now it is insisted that Congress, and not the Executive, is vested with this power. But the Constitution itself, is silent as to which, or who, is to exercise the power; and as the provision was plainly made for a dangerous emergency, it cannot be believed the framers of the instrument intended, that in every case, the danger should run its course, until Congress could be called together; the very assembling of which might be prevented, as was intended in this case, by the rebellion.

No more extended argument is now offered; as an opinion, at some length, will probably be presented by the Attorney General. Whether there shall be any legislation upon the subject, and if any, what, is submitted entirely to the better judgment of Congress.

The forbearance of this government had been so extraordinary, and so long continued, as to lead some foreign nations to shape their action as if they supposed the early destruction of our
national Union was probable. While this, on discovery, gave the Executive some concern, he is now happy to say that the sovereignty, and rights of the United States, are now everywhere practically respected by foreign powers; and a general sympathy with the country is manifested throughout the world…

It is now recommended that you give the legal means for making this contest a short, and a decisive one; that you place at the control of the government, for the work, at least four hundred thousand men, and four hundred millions of dollars…

Lest there be some uneasiness in the minds of candid men, as to what is to be the course of the government, towards the Southern States, after the rebellion shall have been suppressed, the Executive deems it proper to say, it will be his purpose then, as ever, to be guided by the Constitution, and the laws; and that he probably will have no different understanding of the powers, and duties of the Federal government, relatively to the rights of the States, and the people, under the Constitution, than that expressed in the inaugural address.

He desires to preserve the government, that it may be administered for all, as it was administered by the men who made it. Loyal citizens everywhere, have the right to claim this of their government; and the government has no right to withhold, or neglect it. It is not perceived that, in giving it, there is any coercion, any conquest, or any subjugation, in any just sense of those terms.

The Constitution provides, and all the States have accepted the provision, that "The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a republican form of government."

But, if a State may lawfully go out of the Union, having done so, it may also discard the republican form of government; so that to prevent its going out, is an indispensable means, to the end, of maintaining the guaranty mentioned; and when an end is lawful and obligatory, the indispensable means to it, are also lawful, and obligatory.

It was with the deepest regret that the Executive found the duty of employing the war-power, in defence of the government, forced upon him. He could but perform this duty, or surrender the existence of the government. No compromise, by public servants, could, in this case, be a cure; not that compromises are not often proper, but that no popular government can long survive a marked precedent, that those who carry an election, can only save the government from immediate destruction, by giving up the main point, upon which the people gave the election. The people themselves, and not their servants, can safely reverse their own deliberate decisions. As a private citizen, the Executive could not have consented that these institutions shall perish; much less could he, in betrayal of so vast, and so sacred a trust, as these free people had confided to him. He felt that he had no moral right to shrink; nor even to count the chances of his own life, in what might follow. In full view of his great responsibility, he has, so far, done what he has deemed his duty. You will now, according to your own judgment, perform yours. He sincerely hopes that your views, and your action, may so accord with his, as to assure all faithful citizens, who have been disturbed in their rights, of a certain, and speedy restoration to them, under the Constitution, and the laws. And having thus chosen our course, without guile, and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in God, and go forward without fear, and with manly hearts.
Abraham Lincoln to Albert Hodges, 4 April 1864

I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think, and feel. And yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act official upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power. I understood, too, that in ordinary civil administration this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I had publicly declared this many times, and in many ways. And I aver that, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery. I did understand however, that my oath to preserve the constitution to the best of my ability, imposed upon me the duty of preserving, by every indispensable means, that government – that nation – of which that constitution was the organic law. Was it possible to lose the nation, and yet preserve the constitution? By general law life and limb must be protected; yet often a limb must be amputated to save a life; but a life is never wisely given to save a limb. I felt that measures, otherwise unconstitutional, might become lawful, by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the constitution, through the preservation of the nation. Right or wrong, I assumed this ground, and now avow it. I could not feel that, to the best of my ability, I had even tried to preserve the constitution, if, to save slavery, or any minor matter, I should permit the wreck of government, country, and Constitution all together. When, early in the war, Gen. Fremont attempted military emancipation, I forbade it, because I did not then think it an indispensable necessity. When a little later, Gen. Cameron, then Secretary of War, suggested the arming of the blacks, I objected, because I did not yet think it an indispensable necessity. When, still later, Gen. Hunter attempted military emancipation, I again forbade it, because I did not yet think the indispensable necessity had come. When, in March, and May, and July 1862 I made earnest, and successive appeals to the border states to favor compensated emancipation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation, and arming the blacks would come, unless averted by that measure. They declined the proposition; and I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union, and with it, the Constitution, or of laying strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the latter. In choosing it, I hoped for greater gain than loss; but of this, I was not entirely confident. More than a year of trial now shows no loss by it in our foreign relations, none in our home popular sentiment, none in our white military force, — no loss by it any how or any where. On the contrary, it shows a gain of quite a hundred and thirty thousand soldiers, seamen and laborers. These are palpable facts, about which, as facts, there can be no caviling. We have the men; and we could not have had them without the measure…
For the reasons I have already given in my chapter on the Governorship of New York, the Republican party, which in the days of Abraham Lincoln was founded as the radical progressive party of the Nation, had been obliged during the last decade of the nineteenth century to uphold the interests of popular government against a foolish and illjudged mock-radicalism. It remained the Nationalist as against the particularist or State's rights party, and in so far it remained absolutely sound; for little permanent good can be done by any party which worships the State's rights fetich or which fails to regard the State, like the county or the municipality, as merely a convenient unit for local self-government, while in all National matters, of importance to the whole people, the Nation is to be supreme over State, county, and town alike. But the State's rights fetich, although still effectively used at certain times by both courts and Congress to block needed National legislation directed against the huge corporations or in the interests of workingmen, was not a prime issue at the time of which I speak. In 1896, 1898, and 1900 the campaigns were waged on two great moral issues: (1) the imperative need of a sound and honest currency; (2) the need, after 1898, of meeting in manful and straightforward fashion the extraterritorial problems arising from the Spanish War. On these great moral issues the Republican party was right, and the men who were opposed to it, and who claimed to be the radicals, and their allies among the sentimentalists, were utterly and hopelessly wrong. This had, regrettably but perhaps inevitably, tended to throw the party into the hands not merely of the conservatives but of the reactionaries; of men who, sometimes for personal and improper reasons, but more often with entire sincerity and uprightness of purpose, distrusted anything that was progressive and dreaded radicalism. These men still from force of habit applauded what Lincoln had done in the way of radical dealing with the abuses of his day; but they did not apply the spirit in which Lincoln worked to the abuses of their own day. Both houses of Congress were controlled by these men... The most important factor in getting the right spirit in my Administration, next to the insistence upon courage, honesty, and a genuine democracy of desire to serve the plain people, was my insistence upon the theory that the executive power was limited only by specific restrictions and prohibitions appearing in the Constitution or imposed by the Congress under its Constitutional powers. My view was that every executive officer, and above all every executive officer in high position, was a steward of the people bound actively and affirmatively to do all he could for the people, and not to content himself with the negative merit of keeping his talents undamaged in a napkin. I declined to adopt the view that what was imperatively necessary for the Nation could not be done by the President unless he could find some specific authorization to do it. My belief was that it was not only his right but his duty to do anything that the needs of the Nation demanded unless such action was forbidden by the Constitution or by the laws. Under this interpretation of executive power I did and caused to be done many things not previously done by the President and the heads of the departments. I did not usurp power, but I did greatly broaden the use of executive power. In other words, I acted for the public welfare, I acted for the common well-being of all our people, whenever and in whatever manner was necessary, unless prevented by direct constitutional or legislative prohibition. I did not care a rap for the mere form and show of power; I cared immensely for the use that could be made of the substance. The Senate at one time objected to my communicating with them in printing, preferring the expensive, foolish, and laborious practice of writing out the messages by hand. It was not possible to return to the outworn archaism of hand writing; but we endeavored to have the printing made as pretty as possible.
Whether I communicated with the Congress in writing or by word of mouth, and whether the writing was by a machine, or a pen, were equally, and absolutely, unimportant matters. The importance lay in what I said and in the heed paid to what I said. So as to my meeting and consulting Senators, Congressmen, politicians, financiers, and labor men. I consulted all who wished to see me; and if I wished to see any one, I sent for him; and where the consultation took place was a matter of supreme unimportance. I consulted every man with the sincere hope that I could profit by and follow his advice; I consulted every member of Congress who wished to be consulted, hoping to be able to come to an agreement of action with him; and I always finally acted as my conscience and common sense bade me act.

About appointments I was obliged by the Constitution to consult the Senate; and the long-established custom of the Senate meant that in practice this consultation was with individual Senators and even with big politicians who stood behind the Senators. I was only one-half the appointing power; I nominated; but the Senate confirmed. In practice, by what was called "the courtesy of the Senate," the Senate normally refused to confirm any appointment if the Senator from the State objected to it. In exceptional cases, where I could arouse public attention, I could force through the appointment in spite of the opposition of the Senators; in all ordinary cases this was impossible. On the other hand, the Senator could of course do nothing for any man unless I chose to nominate him. In consequence the Constitution itself forced the President and the Senators from each State to come to a working agreement on the appointments in and from that State.

My course was to insist on absolute fitness, including honesty, as a prerequisite to every appointment; and to remove only for good cause, and, where there was such cause, to refuse even to discuss with the Senator in interest the unfit servant's retention. Subject to these considerations, I normally accepted each Senator's recommendations for offices of a routine kind, such as most post-offices and the like, but insisted on myself choosing the men for the more important positions. I was willing to take any good man for postmaster; but in the case of a Judge or District Attorney or Canal Commissioner or Ambassador, I was apt to insist either on a given man or else on any man with a given class of qualifications. If the Senator deceived me, I took care that he had no opportunity to repeat the deception…

As to all action of this kind there have long been two schools of political thought, upheld with equal sincerity. The division has not normally been along political, but temperamental, lines. The course I followed, of regarding the executive as subject only to the people, and, under the Constitution, bound to serve the people affirmatively in cases where the Constitution does not explicitly forbid him to render the service, was substantially the course followed by both Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln. Other honorable and well-meaning Presidents, such as James Buchanan, took the opposite and, as it seems to me, narrowly legalistic view that the President is the servant of Congress rather than of the people, and can do nothing, no matter how necessary it be to act, unless the Constitution explicitly commands the action. Most able lawyers who are past middle age take this view, and so do large numbers of well-meaning, respectable citizens. My successor in office took this, the Buchanan, view of the President's powers and duties.

Perhaps the sharp difference between what may be called the Lincoln-Jackson and the Buchanan-Taft schools, in their views of the power and duties of the President, may be best illustrated by comparing the attitude of my successor toward his Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Ballinger, when the latter was accused of gross misconduct in office, with my attitude towards my chiefs of department and other subordinate officers. More than once while I was President my officials were attacked by Congress, generally because these officials did their duty well and
fearlessly. In every such case I stood by the official and refused to recognize the right of Congress to interfere with me excepting by impeachment or in other Constitutional manner. On the other hand, wherever I found the officer unfit for his position I promptly removed him, even although the most influential men in Congress fought for his retention. The Jackson-Lincoln view is that a President who is fit to do good work should be able to form his own judgment as to his own subordinates, and, above all, of the subordinates standing highest and in closest and most intimate touch with him. My secretaries and their subordinates were responsible to me, and I accepted the responsibility for all their deeds. As long as they were satisfactory to me I stood by them against every critic or assailant, within or without Congress; and as for getting Congress to make up my mind for me about them, the thought would have been inconceivable to me. My successor took the opposite, or Buchanan, view when he permitted and requested Congress to pass judgment on the charges made against Mr. Ballinger as an executive officer. These charges were made to the President; the President had the facts before him and could get at them at any time, and he alone had power to act if the charges were true. However, he permitted and requested Congress to investigate Mr. Ballinger. The party minority of the committee that investigated him, and one member of the majority, declared that the charges were well founded and that Mr. Ballinger should be removed. The other members of the majority declared the charges ill founded. The President abode by the view of the majority. Of course believers in the Jackson-Lincoln theory of the Presidency would not be content with this town meeting majority and minority method of determining by another branch of the Government what it seems the especial duty of the President himself to determine for himself in dealing with his own subordinate in his own department.

There are many worthy people who reprobate the Buchanan method as a matter of history, but who in actual life reprobate still more strongly the Jackson-Lincoln method when it is put into practice. These persons conscientiously believe that the President should solve every doubt in favor of inaction as against action, that he should construe strictly and narrowly the Constitutional grant of powers both to the National Government, and to the President within the National Government. In addition, however, to the men who conscientiously believe in this course from high, although as I hold misguided, motives, there are many men who affect to believe in it merely because it enables them to attack and to try to hamper, for partisan or personal reasons, an executive whom they dislike. There are other men in whom, especially when they are themselves in office, practical adherence to the Buchanan principle represents not well-thought-out devotion to an unwise course, but simple weakness of character and desire to avoid trouble and responsibility. Unfortunately, in practice it makes little difference which class of ideas actuates the President, who by his action sets a cramping precedent. Whether he is highminded and wrongheaded or merely infirm of purpose, whether he means well feebly or is bound by a mischievous misconception of the powers and duties of the National Government and of the President, the effect of his actions is the same. The President's duty is to act so that he himself and his subordinates shall be able to do efficient work for the people, and this efficient work he and they cannot do if Congress is permitted to undertake the task of making up his mind for him as to how he shall perform what is clearly his sole duty…

In internal affairs I cannot say that I entered the Presidency with any deliberately planned and far-reaching scheme of social betterment. I had, however, certain strong convictions; and I was on the lookout for every opportunity of realizing those convictions. I was bent upon making the Government the most efficient possible instrument in helping the people of the United States to better themselves in every way, politically, socially, and industrially. I believed with all my heart in real and thoroughgoing democracy, and I wished to make this democracy industrial as well as
political, although I had only partially formulated the methods I believed we should follow. I believed in the people's rights, and therefore in National rights and States' rights just exactly to the degree in which they severally secured popular rights. I believed in invoking the National power with absolute freedom for every National need; and I believed that the Constitution should be treated as the greatest document ever devised by the wit of man to aid a people in exercising every power necessary for its own betterment, and not as a straitjacket cunningly fashioned to strangle growth. As for the particular methods of realizing these various beliefs, I was content to wait and see what method might be necessary in each given case as it arose; and I was certain that the cases would arise fast enough.
Theodore Roosevelt, State of the Union Address

December 3, 1901

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

The Congress assembles this year under the shadow of a great calamity. On the sixth of September, President McKinley was shot by an anarchist while attending the Pan—American Exposition at Buffalo, and died in that city on the fourteenth of that month…

The blow was aimed not at this President, but at all Presidents; at every symbol of government. President McKinley was as emphatically the embodiment of the popular will of the Nation expressed through the forms of law as a New England town meeting is in similar fashion the embodiment of the law—abiding purpose and practice of the people of the town. On no conceivable theory could the murder of the President be accepted as due to protest against "inequalities in the social order," save as the murder of all the freemen engaged in a town meeting could be accepted as a protest against that social inequality which puts a malefactor in jail…

During the last five years business confidence has been restored, and the nation is to be congratulated because of its present abounding prosperity. Such prosperity can never be created by law alone, although it is easy enough to destroy it by mischievous laws. If the hand of the Lord is heavy upon any country, if flood or drought comes, human wisdom is powerless to avert the calamity. Moreover, no law can guard us against the consequences of our own folly. The men who are idle or credulous, the men who seek gains not by genuine work with head or hand but by gambling in any form, are always a source of menace not only to themselves but to others. If the business world loses its head, it loses what legislation cannot supply. Fundamentally the welfare of each citizen, and therefore the welfare of the aggregate of citizens which makes the nation, must rest upon individual thrift and energy, resolution, and intelligence. Nothing can take the place of this individual capacity; but wise legislation and honest and intelligent administration can give it the fullest scope, the largest opportunity to work to good effect.

The tremendous and highly complex industrial development which went on with ever accelerated rapidity during the latter half of the nineteenth century brings us face to face, at the beginning of the twentieth, with very serious social problems. The old laws, and the old customs which had almost the binding force of law, were once quite sufficient to regulate the accumulation and distribution of wealth. Since the industrial changes which have so enormously increased the productive power of mankind, they are no longer sufficient…

The captains of industry who have driven the railway systems across this continent, who have built up our commerce, who have developed our manufactures, have on the whole done great good to our people. Without them the material development of which we are so justly proud could never have taken place. Moreover, we should recognize the immense importance of this material development of leaving as unhampered as is compatible with the public good the strong and forceful men upon whom the success of business operations inevitably rests. The slightest study of business conditions will satisfy anyone capable of forming a judgment that the personal equation is the most important factor in a business operation; that the business ability of the man at the head of any business concern, big or little, is usually the factor which fixes the gulf between striking success and hopeless failure…

There is a widespread conviction in the minds of the American people that the great corporations known as trusts are in certain of their features and tendencies hurtful to the general
welfare. This springs from no spirit of envy or uncharitableness, nor lack of pride in the great industrial achievements that have placed this country at the head of the nations struggling for commercial supremacy. It does not rest upon a lack of intelligent appreciation of the necessity of meeting changing and changed conditions of trade with new methods, nor upon ignorance of the fact that combination of capital in the effort to accomplish great things is necessary when the world’s progress demands that great things be done. It is based upon sincere conviction that combination and concentration should be, not prohibited, but supervised and within reasonable limits controlled; and in my judgment this conviction is right.

It is no limitation upon property rights or freedom of contract to require that when men receive from Government the privilege of doing business under corporate form, which frees them from individual responsibility, and enables them to call into their enterprises the capital of the public, they shall do so upon absolutely truthful representations as to the value of the property in which the capital is to be invested. Corporations engaged in interstate commerce should be regulated if they are found to exercise a license working to the public injury. It should be as much the aim of those who seek for social betterment to rid the business world of crimes of cunning as to rid the entire body politic of crimes of violence. Great corporations exist only because they are created and safeguarded by our institutions; and it is therefore our right and our duty to see that they work in harmony with these institutions.

The first essential in determining how to deal with the great industrial combinations is knowledge of the facts——publicity. In the interest of the public, the Government should have the right to inspect and examine the workings of the great corporations engaged in interstate business. Publicity is the only sure remedy which we can now invoke. What further remedies are needed in the way of governmental regulation, or taxation, can only be determined after publicity has been obtained, by process of law, and in the course of administration. The first requisite is knowledge, full and complete——knowledge which may be made public to the world.

Artificial bodies, such as corporations and joint stock or other associations, depending upon any statutory law for their existence or privileges, should be subject to proper governmental supervision, and full and accurate information as to their operations should be made public regularly at reasonable intervals…

When the Constitution was adopted, at the end of the eighteenth century, no human wisdom could foretell the sweeping changes, alike in industrial and political conditions, which were to take place by the beginning of the twentieth century. At that time it was accepted as a matter of course that the several States were the proper authorities to regulate, so far as was then necessary, the comparatively insignificant and strictly localized corporate bodies of the day. The conditions are now wholly different and wholly different action is called for. I believe that a law can be framed which will enable the National Government to exercise control along the lines above indicated; profiting by the experience gained through the passage and administration of the Interstate——Commerce Act. If, however, the judgment of the Congress is that it lacks the constitutional power to pass such an act, then a constitutional amendment should be submitted to confer the power.

There should be created a Cabinet officer, to be known as Secretary of Commerce and Industries, as provided in the bill introduced at the last session of the Congress. It should be his province to deal with commerce in its broadest sense; including among many other things whatever concerns labor and all matters affecting the great business corporations and our merchant marine.
The course proposed is one phase of what should be a comprehensive and far-reaching scheme of constructive statesmanship for the purpose of broadening our markets, securing our business interests on a safe basis, and making firm our new position in the international industrial world; while scrupulously safeguarding the rights of wage—worker and capitalist, of investor and private citizen, so as to secure equity as between man and man in this Republic…

In 1887 a measure was enacted for the regulation of interstate railways, commonly known as the Interstate Commerce Act. The cardinal provisions of that act were that railway rates should be just and reasonable and that all shippers, localities, and commodities should be accorded equal treatment. A commission was created and endowed with what were supposed to be the necessary powers to execute the provisions of this act. That law was largely an experiment. Experience has shown the wisdom of its purposes, but has also shown, possibly that some of its requirements are wrong, certainly that the means devised for the enforcement of its provisions are defective. Those who complain of the management of the railways allege that established rates are not maintained; that rebates and similar devices are habitually resorted to; that these preferences are usually in favor of the large shipper; that they drive out of business the smaller competitor; that while many rates are too low, many others are excessive; and that gross preferences are made, affecting both localities and commodities. Upon the other hand, the railways assert that the law by its very terms tends to produce many of these illegal practices by depriving carriers of that right of concerted action which they claim is necessary to establish and maintain non—discriminating rates.

The act should be amended. The railway is a public servant. Its rates should be just to and open to all shippers alike. The Government should see to it that within its jurisdiction this is so and should provide a speedy, inexpensive, and effective remedy to that end. At the same time it must not be forgotten that our railways are the arteries through which the commercial lifeblood of this Nation flows. Nothing could be more foolish than the enactment of legislation which would unnecessarily interfere with the development and operation of these commercial agencies. The subject is one of great importance and calls for the earnest attention of the Congress...

Theodore Roosevelt, “The Big Stick and the Square Deal,” 1913

ONE of the vital questions with which as President I had to deal was the attitude of the Nation toward the great corporations. Men who understand and practice the deep underlying philosophy of the Lincoln school of American political thought are necessarily Hamiltonian in their belief in a strong and efficient National Government and Jeffersonian in their belief in the people as the ultimate authority, and in the welfare of the people as the end of Government. The men who first applied the extreme Democratic theory in American life were, like Jefferson, ultra individualists, for at that time what was demanded by our people was the largest liberty for the individual. During the century that had elapsed since Jefferson became President the need had been exactly reversed. There had been in our country a riot of individualistic materialism, under which complete freedom for the individual—that ancient license which President Wilson a century after the term was excusable has called the "New" Freedom—turned out in practice to mean perfect freedom for the strong to wrong the weak. The total absence of governmental control had led to a portentous growth in the financial and industrial world both
of natural individuals and of artificial individuals—that is, corporations. In no other country in the world had such enormous fortunes been gained. In no other country in the world was such power held by the men who had gained these fortunes; and these men almost always worked through, and by means of, the giant corporations which they controlled. The power of the mighty industrial overlords of the country had increased with giant strides, while the methods of controlling them, or checking abuses by them, on the part of the people, through the Government, remained archaic and therefore practically impotent. The courts, not unnaturally, but most regrettably, and to the grave detriment of the people and of their own standing, had for a quarter of a century been on the whole the agents of reaction, and by conflicting decisions which, however, in their sum were hostile to the interests of the people, had left both the nation and the several States well-nigh impotent to deal with the great business combinations.

Sometimes they forbade the Nation to interfere, because such interference trespassed on the rights of the States; sometimes they forbade the States to interfere (and often they were wise in this), because to do so would trespass on the rights of the Nation; but always, or well-nigh always, their action was negative action against the interests of the people, ingeniously devised to limit their power against wrong, instead of affirmative action giving to the people power to right wrong. They had rendered these decisions sometimes as upholders of property rights against human rights, being especially zealous in securing the rights of the very men who were most competent to take care of themselves; and sometimes in the name of liberty, in the name of the so-called "new freedom," in reality the old, old "freedom," which secured to the powerful the freedom to prey on the poor and the helpless.

One of the main troubles was the fact that the men who saw the evils and who tried to remedy them attempted to work in two wholly different ways, and the great majority of them in a way that offered little promise of real betterment. They tried (by the Sherman law method) to bolster up an individualism already proved to be both futile and mischievous; to remedy by more individualism the concentration that was the inevitable result of the already existing individualism. They saw the evil done by the big combinations, and sought to remedy it by destroying them and restoring the country to the economic conditions of the middle of the nineteenth century. This was a hopeless effort, and those who went into it, although they regarded themselves as radical progressives, really represented a form of sincere rural toryism. They confounded monopolies with big business combinations, and in the effort to prohibit both alike, instead of where possible prohibiting one and drastically controlling the other, they succeeded merely in preventing any effective control of either.

On the other hand, a few men recognized that corporations and combinations had become indispensable in the business world, that it was folly to try to prohibit them, but that it was also folly to leave them without thoroughgoing control. These men realized that the doctrines of the old laissez faire economists, of the believers in unlimited competition, unlimited individualism, were in the actual state of affairs false and mischievous. They realized that the Government must now interfere to protect labor, to subordinate the big corporation to the public welfare, and to shackle cunning and fraud exactly as centuries before it had interfered to shackle the physical force which does wrong by violence.

The big reactionaries of the business world and their allies and instruments among politicians and newspaper editors took advantage of this division of opinion, and especially of the fact that most of their opponents were on the wrong path; and fought to keep matters absolutely unchanged. These men demanded for themselves an immunity from governmental control which, if granted, would have been as wicked and as foolish as immunity to the barons
of the twelfth century. Many of them were evil men. Many others were just as good men as
were some of these same barons; but they were as utterly unable as any medieval castle-owner
to understand what the public interest really was. There have been aristocracies which have
played a great and beneficent part at stages in the growth of mankind; but we had come to the
stage where for our people what was needed was a real democracy; and of all forms of tyranny
the least attractive and the most vulgar is the tyranny of mere wealth, the tyranny of a
plutocracy.

When I became President, the question as to the method by which the United States
Government was to control the corporations was not yet important. The absolutely vital
question was whether the Government had power to control them at all. This question had not
yet been decided in favor of the United States Government. It was useless to discuss methods of
controlling big business by the National Government until it was definitely settled that the
National Government had the power to control it. A decision of the Supreme Court had, with
seeming definiteness, settled that the National Government had not the power.

This decision I caused to be annulled by the court that had rendered it; and the present
power of the National Government to deal effectively with the trusts is due solely to the success
of the Administration in securing this reversal of its former decision by the Supreme Court…

The true way of dealing with monopoly is to prevent it by administrative action before it
grows so powerful that even when courts condemn it they shrink from destroying it. The
Supreme Court in the Tobacco and Standard Oil cases, for instance, used very vigorous
language in condemning these trusts; but the net result of the decision was of positive
advantage to the wrongdoers, and this has tended to bring the whole body of our law into
disrepute in quarters where it is of the very highest importance that the law be held in respect
and even in reverence. My effort was to secure the creation of a Federal Commission which
should neither excuse nor tolerate monopoly, but prevent it when possible and unroot it when
discovered; and which should in addition effectively control and regulate all big combinations,
and should give honest business certainty as to what the law was and security as long as the law
was obeyed. Such a Commission would furnish a steady expert control, a control adapted to the
problem; and dissolution is neither control nor regulation, but is purely negative; and negative
remedies are of little permanent avail. Such a Commission would have complete power to
examine into every big corporation engaged or proposing to engage in business between the
States. It would have the power to discriminate sharply between corporations that are doing
well and those that are doing ill; and the distinction between those who do well and those who
do ill would be defined in terms so clear and unmistakable that no one could misapprehend
them. Where a company is found seeking its profits through serving the community by
stimulating production, lowering prices, or improving service, while scrupulously respecting
the rights of others (including its rivals, its employees, its customers, and the general public),
and strictly obeying the law, then no matter how large its capital, or how great the volume of its
business it would be encouraged to still more abundant production, or better service, by the
fullest protection that the Government could afford it. On the other hand, if a corporation were
found seeking profit through injury or oppression of the community, by restricting production
through trick or device, by plot or conspiracy against competitors, or by oppression of wage-
workers, and then extorting high prices for the commodity it had made artificially scarce, it
would be prevented from organizing if its nefarious purpose could be discovered in time, or
pursued and suppressed by all the power of Government whenever found in actual operation.
Such a commission, with the power I advocate, would put a stop to abuses of big corporations
and small corporations alike; it would draw the line on conduct and not on size; it would destroy monopoly, and make the biggest business man in the country conform squarely to the principles laid down by the American people, while at the same time giving fair play to the little man and certainty of knowledge as to what was wrong and what was right both to big man and little man…

We have no quarrel with the individuals, whether public men, lawyers or editors, to whom I refer. These men derive their sole power from the great, sinister offenders who stand behind them. They are but puppets who move as the strings are pulled by those who control the enormous masses of corporate wealth which if itself left uncontrolled threatens dire evil to the Republic. It is not the puppets, but the strong, cunning men and the mighty forces working for evil behind, and to a certain extent through, the puppets, with whom we have to deal. We seek to control law-defying wealth, in the first place to prevent its doing evil, and in the next place to avoid the vindictive and dreadful radicalism which if left uncontrolled it is certain in the end to arouse. Sweeping attacks upon all property, upon all men of means, without regard to whether they do well or ill, would sound the death knell of the Republic; and such attacks become inevitable if decent citizens permit rich men whose lives are corrupt and evil to domineer in swollen pride, unchecked and unhindered, over the destinies of this country. We act in no vindictive spirit, and we are no respecters of persons. If a labor union does what is wrong, we oppose it as fearlessly as we oppose a corporation that does wrong; and we stand with equal stoutness for the rights of the man of wealth and for the rights of the wage-workers; just as much so for one as for the other. We seek to stop wrongdoing; and we desire to punish the wrongdoer only so far as is necessary in order to achieve this end. We are the stanch upholders of every honest man, whether business man or wage-worker.

I do not for a moment believe that our actions have brought on business distress; so far as this is due to local and not world-wide causes, and to the actions of any particular individuals, it is due to the speculative folly and flagrant dishonesty of a few men of great wealth, who now seek to shield themselves from the effects of their own wrongdoings by ascribing its results to the actions of those who have sought to put a stop to the wrongdoing. But if it were true that to cut out rottenness from the body politic meant a momentary check to an unhealthy seeming prosperity, I should not for one moment hesitate to put the knife to the cancer. On behalf of all our people, on behalf no less of the honest man of means than of the honest man who earns each day's livelihood by that day's sweat of his brow, it is necessary to insist upon honesty in business and politics alike, in all walks of life, in big things and in little things; upon just and fair dealing as between man and man. We are striving for the right in the spirit of Abraham Lincoln when he said:

"Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsmen's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

"With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in."
Platt Amendment to Cuban Constitution, 1901

[The United States occupied Cuba for five years after 1898. In 1901 Secretary of War Elihu Root drafted a set of articles (later known as the Platt Amendment) as guidelines for future United States-Cuban relations. Despite considerable Cuban resistance, they became a part of the 1902 Cuban Constitution. In following years the United States used the amendment several times to send troops to maintain or place friendly governments in power and to protect investments. The amendment was abrogated in 1934.]

Whereas the Congress of the United States of America, by an Act approved March 2, 1901, provided as follows:

Provided further, That in fulfillment of the declaration contained in the joint resolution approved April twentieth, eighteen hundred and ninety-eight, entitled "For the recognition of the independence of the people of Cuba, demanding that the Government of Spain relinquish its authority and government in the island of Cuba, and withdraw its land and naval forces from Cuba and Cuban waters, and directing the President of the United States to use the land and naval forces of the United States to carry these resolutions into effect," the President is hereby authorized to "leave the government and control of the island of Cuba to its people" so soon as a government shall have been established in said island under a constitution which, either as a part thereof or in an ordinance appended thereto, shall define the future relations of the United States with Cuba, substantially as follows:

"I. That the government of Cuba shall never enter into any treaty or other compact with any foreign power or powers which will impair or tend to impair the independence of Cuba, nor in any manner authorize or permit any foreign power or powers to obtain by colonization or for military or naval purposes or otherwise, lodgement in or control over any portion of said island."

"II. That said government shall not assume or contract any public debt, to pay the interest upon which, and to make reasonable sinking fund provision for the ultimate discharge of which, the ordinary revenues of the island, after defraying the current expenses of government shall be inadequate."

"III. That the government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the treaty of Paris on the United States, now to be assumed and undertaken by the government of Cuba."

"IV. That all Acts of the United States in Cuba during its military occupancy thereof are ratified and validated, and all lawful rights acquired thereunder shall be maintained and protected."

"V. That the government of Cuba will execute, and as far as necessary extend, the plans already devised or other plans to be mutually agreed upon, for the sanitation of the cities of the island, to the end that a recurrence of epidemic and infectious diseases may be prevented, thereby assuring protection to the people and commerce of Cuba, as well as to the commerce of the southern ports of the United States and the people residing therein."

"VI. That the Isle of Pines shall be omitted from the proposed constitutional boundaries of Cuba, the title thereto being left to future adjustment by treaty."

"VII. That to enable the United States to maintain the independence of Cuba, and to protect the people thereof, as well as for its own defense, the government of Cuba will sell or
lease to the United States lands necessary for coaling or naval stations at certain specified points to be agreed upon with the President of the United States."

"VIII. That by way of further assurance the government of Cuba will embody the foregoing provisions in a permanent treaty with the United States."

Theodore Roosevelt, State of the Union Address

December 2, 1902

To the Senate and House of Representatives…

I hope soon to submit to the Senate a reciprocity treaty with Cuba. On May 20 last the United States kept its promise to the island by formally vacating Cuban soil and turning Cuba over to those whom her own people had chosen as the first officials of the new Republic. Cuba lies at our doors, and whatever affects her for good or for ill affects us also. So much have our people felt this that in the Platt amendment we definitely took the ground that Cuba must hereafter have closer political relations with us than with any other power. Thus in a sense Cuba has become a part of our international political system. This makes it necessary that in return she should be given some of the benefits of becoming part of our economic system. It is, from our own standpoint, a short—sighted and mischievous policy to fail to recognize this need. Moreover, it is unworthy of a mighty and generous nation, itself the greatest and most successful republic in history, to refuse to stretch out a helping hand to a young and weak sister republic just entering upon its career of independence. We should always fearlessly insist upon our rights in the face of the strong, and we should with ungrudging hand do our generous duty by the weak. I urge the adoption of reciprocity with Cuba not only because it is eminently for our own interests to control the Cuban market and by every means to foster our supremacy in the tropical lands and waters south of us, but also because we, of the giant republic of the north, should make all our sister nations of the American Continent feel that whenever they will permit it we desire to show ourselves disinterestedly and effectively their friend…

As civilization grows warfare becomes less and less the normal condition of foreign relations. The last century has seen a marked diminution of wars between civilized powers; wars with uncivilized powers are largely mere matters of international police duty, essential for the welfare of the world. Wherever possible, arbitration or some similar method should be employed in lieu of war to settle difficulties between civilized nations, although as yet the world has not progressed sufficiently to render it possible, or necessarily desirable, to invoke arbitration in every case. The formation of the international tribunal which sits at The Hague is an event of good omen from which great consequences for the welfare of all mankind may flow. It is far better, where possible, to invoke such a permanent tribunal than to create special arbitrators for a given purpose.

It is a matter of sincere congratulation to our country that the United States and Mexico should have been the first to use the good offices of The Hague Court. This was done last summer with most satisfactory results in the case of a claim at issue between us and our sister Republic. It is earnestly to be hoped that this first case will serve as a precedent for others, in which not only the United States but foreign nations may take advantage of the machinery already in existence at The Hague…
The Congress has wisely provided that we shall build at once an isthmian canal, if possible at Panama. The Attorney-General reports that we can undoubtedly acquire good title from the French Panama Canal Company. Negotiations are now pending with Colombia to secure her assent to our building the canal. This canal will be one of the greatest engineering feats of the twentieth century; a greater engineering feat than has yet been accomplished during the history of mankind. The work should be carried out as a continuing policy without regard to change of Administration; and it should be begun under circumstances which will make it a matter of pride for all Administrations to continue the policy.

The canal will be of great benefit to America, and of importance to all the world. It will be of advantage to us industrially and also as improving our military position. It will be of advantage to the countries of tropical America. It is earnestly to be hoped that all of these countries will do as some of them have already done with signal success, and will invite to their shores commerce and improve their material conditions by recognizing that stability and order are the prerequisites of successful development. No independent nation in America need have the slightest fear of aggression from the United States. It behaves each one to maintain order within its own borders and to discharge its just obligations to foreigners. When this is done, they can rest assured that, be they strong or weak, they have nothing to dread from outside interference. More and more the increasing interdependence and complexity of international political and economic relations render it incumbent on all civilized and orderly powers to insist on the proper policing of the world...

On July 4 last, on the one hundred and twenty-sixth anniversary of the declaration of our independence, peace and amnesty were promulgated in the Philippine Islands. Some trouble has since from time to time threatened with the Mohammedan Moros, but with the late insurrectionary Filipinos the war has entirely ceased. Civil government has now been introduced. Not only does each Filipino enjoy such rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as he has never before known during the recorded history of the islands, but the people taken as a whole now enjoy a measure of self-government greater than that granted to any other Orientals by any foreign power and greater than that enjoyed by any other Orientals under their own governments, save the Japanese alone. We have not gone too far in granting these rights of liberty and self-government; but we have certainly gone to the limit that in the interests of the Philippine people themselves it was wise or just to go. To hurry matters, to go faster than we are now going, would entail calamity on the people of the islands. No policy ever entered into by the American people has vindicated itself in more signal manner than the policy of holding the Philippines. The triumph of our arms, above all the triumph of our laws and principles, has come sooner than we had any right to expect. Too much praise can not be given to the Army for what it has done in the Philippines both in warfare and from an administrative standpoint in preparing the way for civil government; and similar credit belongs to the civil authorities for the way in which they have planted the seeds of self-government in the ground thus made ready for them. The courage, the unflinching endurance, the high soldierly efficiency; and the general kind-heartedness and humanity of our troops have been strikingly manifested. There now remain only some fifteen thousand troops in the islands. All told, over one hundred thousand have been sent there. Of course, there have been individual instances of wrongdoing among them. They warred under fearful difficulties of climate and surroundings; and under the strain of the terrible provocations which they continually received from their foes, occasional instances of cruel retaliation occurred. Every effort has been made to prevent such cruelties, and finally these efforts have been completely successful. Every effort has also been made to detect and punish
the wrongdoers. After making all allowance for these misdeeds, it remains true that few indeed have been the instances in which war has been waged by a civilized power against semicivilized or barbarous forces where there has been so little wrongdoing by the victors as in the Philippine Islands. On the other hand, the amount of difficult, important, and beneficent work which has been done is well—nigh incalculable.

Taking the work of the Army and the civil authorities together, it may be questioned whether anywhere else in modern times the world has seen a better example of real constructive statesmanship than our people have given in the Philippine Islands. High praise should also be given those Filipinos, in the aggregate very numerous, who have accepted the new conditions and joined with our representatives to work with hearty good will for the welfare of the islands…

There should be no halt in the work of building up the Navy, providing every year additional fighting craft. We are a very rich country, vast in extent of territory and great in population; a country, moreover, which has an Army diminutive indeed when compared with that of any other first—class power. We have deliberately made our own certain foreign policies which demand the possession of a first—class army. The isthmian canal will greatly increase the efficiency of our Navy if the Navy is of sufficient size; but if we have an inadequate army, then the building of the canal would be merely giving a hostage to any power of superior strength. The Monroe Doctrine should be treated as the cardinal feature of American foreign policy; but it would be worse than idle to assert it unless we intended to back it up, and it can be backed up only by a thoroughly good army. A good army is not a provocative of war. It is the surest guaranty of peace…

**Theodore Roosevelt, State of the Union Address**

December 7, 1903

To the Senate and House of Representatives…

It will be remembered that during the second session of the last Congress Great Britain, Germany, and Italy formed an alliance for the purpose of blockading the ports of Venezuela and using such other means of pressure as would secure a settlement of claims due, as they alleged, to certain of their subjects. Their employment of force for the collection of these claims was terminated by an agreement brought about through the offices of the diplomatic representatives of the United States at Caracas and the Government at Washington, thereby ending a situation which was bound to cause increasing friction, and which jeopardized the peace of the continent. Under this agreement Venezuela agreed to set apart a certain percentage of the customs receipts of two of her ports to be applied to the payment of whatever obligations might be ascertained by mixed commissions appointed for that purpose to be due from her, not only to the three powers already mentioned, whose proceedings against her had resulted in a state of war, but also to the United States, France, Spain, Belgium, the Netherland Sweden and Norway, and Mexico, who had not employed force for the collection of the claims alleged to be due to certain of their citizens.

A demand was then made by the so—called blockading powers that the sums ascertained to be due to their citizens by such mixed commissions should be accorded payment in full before anything was paid upon the claims of any of the so—called peace powers. Venezuela, on the other hand, insisted that all her creditors should be paid upon a basis of exact equality. During
the efforts to adjust this dispute it was suggested by the powers in interest that it should be referred to me for decision, but I was clearly of the opinion that a far wiser course would be to submit the question to the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. It seemed to me to offer an admirable opportunity to advance the practice of the peaceful settlement of disputes between nations and to secure for the Hague Tribunal a memorable increase of its practical importance. The nations interested in the controversy were so numerous and in many instances so powerful as to make it evident that beneficent results would follow from their appearance at the same time before the bar of that august tribunal of peace.

Our hopes in that regard have been realized. Russia and Austria are represented in the persons of the learned and distinguished jurists who compose the Tribunal, while Great Britain, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway, Mexico, the United States, and Venezuela are represented by their respective agents and counsel. Such an imposing concourse of nations presenting their arguments to and invoking the decision of that high court of international justice and international peace can hardly fail to secure a like submission of many future controversies. The nations now appearing there will find it far easier to appear there a second time, while no nation can imagine its just pride will be lessened by following the example now presented. This triumph of the principle of international arbitration is a subject of warm congratulation and offers a happy augury for the peace of the world.

There seems good ground for the belief that there has been a real growth among the civilized nations of a sentiment which will permit a gradual substitution of other methods than the method of war in the settlement of disputes. It is not pretended that as yet we are near a position in which it will be possible wholly to prevent war, or that a just regard for national interest and honor will in all cases permit of the settlement of international disputes by arbitration; but by a mixture of prudence and firmness with wisdom we think it is possible to do away with much of the provocation and excuse for war, and at least in many cases to substitute some other and more rational method for the settlement of disputes. The Hague Court offers so good an example of what can be done in the direction of such settlement that it should be encouraged in every way...

Theodore Roosevelt, State of the Union Address

6 December 1904

…In treating of our foreign policy and of the attitude that this great Nation should assume in the world at large, it is absolutely necessary to consider the Army and the Navy, and the Congress, through which the thought of the Nation finds its expression, should keep ever vividly in mind the fundamental fact that it is impossible to treat our foreign policy, whether this policy takes shape in the effort to secure justice for others or justice for ourselves, save as conditioned upon the attitude we are willing to take toward our Army, and especially toward our Navy. It is not merely unwise, it is contemptible, for a nation, as for an individual, to use high-sounding language to proclaim its purposes, or to take positions which are ridiculous if unsupported by potential force, and then to refuse to provide this force. If there is no intention of providing and of keeping the force necessary to back up a strong attitude, then it is far better not to assume such an attitude.
The steady aim of this Nation, as of all enlightened nations, should be to strive to bring
ever nearer the day when there shall prevail throughout the world the peace of justice. There are
kinds of peace which are highly undesirable, which are in the long run as destructive as any war.
Tyrants and oppressors have many times made a wilderness and called it peace. Many times
peoples who were slothful or timid or shortsighted, who had been enervated by ease or by
luxury, or misled by false teachings, have shrunk in unmanly fashion from doing duty that was
stern and that needed self-sacrifice, and have sought to hide from their own minds their
shortcomings, their ignoble motives, by calling them love of peace. The peace of tyrannous
terror, the peace of craven weakness, the peace of injustice, all these should be shunned as we
shun unrighteous war. The goal to set before us as a nation, the goal which should be set before
all mankind, is the attainment of the peace of justice, of the peace which comes when each nation
is not merely safe-guarded in its own rights, but scrupulously recognizes and performs its duty
toward others. Generally peace tells for righteousness; but if there is conflict between the two,
then our fealty is due—first to the cause of righteousness. Unrighteous wars are common, and
unrighteous peace is rare; but both should be shunned. The right of freedom and the
responsibility for the exercise of that right can not be divorced. One of our great poets has well
and finely said that freedom is not a gift that tarries long in the hands of cowards. Neither does it
tarry long in the hands of those too slothful, too dishonest, or too unintelligent to exercise it. The
eternal vigilance which is the price of liberty must be exercised, sometimes to guard against
outside foes; although of course far more often to guard against our own selfish or thoughtless
shortcomings.

If these self-evident truths are kept before us, and only if they are so kept before us, we
shall have a clear idea of what our foreign policy in its larger aspects should be. It is our duty to
remember that a nation has no more right to do injustice to another nation, strong or weak, than
an individual has to do injustice to another individual; that the same moral law applies in one
case as in the other. But we must also remember that it is as much the duty of the Nation to guard
its own rights and its own interests as it is the duty of the individual so to do. Within the Nation
the individual has now delegated this right to the State, that is, to the representative of all the
individuals, and it is a maxim of the law that for every wrong there is a remedy. But in
international law we have not advanced by any means as far as we have advanced in municipal
law. There is as yet no judicial way of enforcing a right in international law. When one nation
wrongs another or wrongs many others, there is no tribunal before which the wrongdoer can be
brought. Either it is necessary supinely to acquiesce in the wrong, and thus put a premium upon
brutality and aggression, or else it is necessary for the aggrieved nation valiantly to stand up for
its rights. Until some method is devised by which there shall be a degree of international control
over offending nations, it would be a wicked thing for the most civilized powers, for those with
most sense of international obligations and with keenest and most generous appreciation of the
difference between right and wrong, to disarm. If the great civilized nations of the present day
should completely disarm, the result would mean an immediate recrudescence of barbarism in
one form or another. Under any circumstances a sufficient armament would have to be kept up to
serve the purposes of international police; and until international cohesion and the sense of
international duties and rights are far more advanced than at present, a nation desirous both of
securing respect for itself and of doing good to others must have a force adequate for the work
which it feels is allotted to it as its part of the general world duty. Therefore it follows that a self-
respecting, just, and far-seeing nation should on the one hand endeavor by every means to aid in
the development of the various movements which tend to provide substitutes for war, which tend
to render nations in their actions toward one another, and indeed toward their own peoples, more responsive to the general sentiment of humane and civilized mankind; and on the other hand that it should keep prepared, while scrupulously avoiding wrongdoing itself, to repel any wrong, and in exceptional cases to take action which in a more advanced stage of international relations would come under the head of the exercise of the international police. A great free people owes it to itself and to all mankind not to sink into helplessness before the powers of evil.

We are in every way endeavoring to help on, with cordial good will, every movement which will tend to bring us into more friendly relations with the rest of mankind. In pursuance of this policy I shall shortly lay before the Senate treaties of arbitration with all powers which are willing to enter into these treaties with us. It is not possible at this period of the world's development to agree to arbitrate all matters, but there are many matters of possible difference between us and other nations which can be thus arbitrated. Furthermore, at the request of the Interparliamentary Union, an eminent body composed of practical statesmen from all countries, I have asked the Powers to join with this Government in a second Hague conference, at which it is hoped that the work already so happily begun at The Hague may be carried some steps further toward completion. This carries out the desire expressed by the first Hague conference itself. It is not true that the United States feels any land hunger or entertains any projects as regards the other nations of the Western Hemisphere save such as are for their welfare. All that this country desires is to see the neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous. Any country whose people conduct themselves well can count upon our hearty friendship. If a nation shows that it knows how to act with reasonable efficiency and decency in social and political matters, if it keeps order and pays its obligations, it need fear no interference from the United States. Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power. If every country washed by the Caribbean Sea would show the progress in stable and just civilization which with the aid of the Platt amendment Cuba has shown since our troops left the island, and which so many of the republics in both Americas are constantly and brilliantly showing, all question of interference by this Nation with their affairs would be at an end. Our interests and those of our southern neighbors are in reality identical. They have great natural riches, and if within their borders the reign of law and justice obtains, prosperity is sure to come to them. While they thus obey the primary laws of civilized society they may rest assured that they will be treated by us in a spirit of cordial and helpful sympathy. We would interfere with them only in the last resort, and then only if it became evident that their inability or unwillingness to do justice at home and abroad had violated the rights of the United States or had invited foreign aggression to the detriment of the entire body of American nations. It is a mere truism to say that every nation, whether in America or anywhere else, which desires to maintain its freedom, its independence, must ultimately realize that the right of such independence can not be separated from the responsibility of making good use of it.

In asserting the Monroe Doctrine, in taking such steps as we have taken in regard to Cuba, Venezuela, and Panama, and in endeavoring to circumscribe the theater of war in the Far East, and to secure the open door in China, we have acted in our own interest as well as in the interest of humanity at large. There are, however, cases in which, while our own interests are not greatly involved, strong appeal is made to our sympathies. Ordinarily it is very much wiser and more useful for us to concern ourselves with striving for our own moral and material betterment.
here at home than to concern ourselves with trying to better the condition of things in other nations. We have plenty of sins of our own to war against, and under ordinary circumstances we can do more for the general uplifting of humanity by striving with heart and soul to put a stop to civic corruption, to brutal lawlessness and violent race prejudices here at home than by passing resolutions about wrongdoing elsewhere. Nevertheless there are occasional crimes committed on so vast a scale and of such peculiar horror as to make us doubt whether it is not our manifest duty to endeavor at least to show our disapproval of the deed and our sympathy with those who have suffered by it. The cases must be extreme in which such a course is justifiable. There must be no effort made to remove the mote from our brother's eye if we refuse to remove the beam from our own. But in extreme cases action may be justifiable and proper. What form the action shall take must depend upon the circumstances of the case; that is, upon the degree of the atrocity and upon our power to remedy it. The cases in which we could interfere by force of arms as we interfered to put a stop to intolerable conditions in Cuba are necessarily very few. Yet it is not to be expected that a people like ours, which in spite of certain very obvious shortcomings, nevertheless as a whole shows by its consistent practice its belief in the principles of civil and religious liberty and of orderly freedom, a people among whom even the worst crime, like the crime of lynching, is never more than sporadic, so that individuals and not classes are molested in their fundamental rights--it is inevitable that such a nation should desire eagerly to give expression to its horror on an occasion like that of the massacre of the Jews in Kishenef, or when it witnesses such systematic and long-extended cruelty and oppression as the cruelty and oppression of which the Armenians have been the victims, and which have won for them the indignant pity of the civilized world.

Even where it is not possible to secure in other nations the observance of the principles which we accept as axiomatic, it is necessary for us firmly to insist upon the rights of our own citizens without regard to their creed or race; without regard to whether they were born here or born abroad…The strong arm of the Government in enforcing respect for its just rights in international matters is the Navy of the United States. I most earnestly recommend that there be no halt in the work of upbuilding the American Navy. There is no more patriotic duty before us a people than to keep the Navy adequate to the needs of this country's position. We have undertaken to build the Isthmian Canal. We have undertaken to secure for ourselves our just share in the trade of the Orient. We have undertaken to protect our citizens from proper treatment in foreign lands. We continue steadily to insist on the application of the Monroe Doctrine to the Western Hemisphere. Unless our attitude in these and all similar matters is to be a mere boastful sham we can not afford to abandon our naval programme. Our voice is now potent for peace, and is so potent because we are not afraid of war. But our protestations upon behalf of peace would neither receive nor deserve the slightest attention if we were impotent to make them good.
...This renders it proper at this time to say something as to the general attitude of this Government toward peace. More and more war is coming to be looked upon as in itself a lamentable and evil thing. A wanton or useless war, or a war of mere aggression—in short, any war begun or carried on in a conscienceless spirit, is to be condemned as a peculiarly atrocious crime against all humanity. We can, however, do nothing of permanent value for peace unless we keep ever clearly in mind the ethical element which lies at the root of the problem. Our aim is righteousness. Peace is normally the hand-maiden of righteousness; but when peace and righteousness conflict then a great and upright people can never for a moment hesitate to follow the path which leads toward righteousness, even though that path also leads to war. There are persons who advocate peace at any price; there are others who, following a false analogy, think that because it is no longer necessary in civilized countries for individuals to protect their rights with a strong hand, it is therefore unnecessary for nations to be ready to defend their rights. These persons would do irreparable harm to any nation that adopted their principles, and even as it is they seriously hamper the cause which they advocate by tending to render it absurd in the eyes of sensible and patriotic men. There can be no worse foe of mankind in general, and of his own country in particular, than the demagogue of war, the man who in mere folly or to serve his own selfish ends continually rails at and abuses other nations, who seeks to excite his countrymen against foreigners on insufficient pretexts, who excites and inflames a perverse and aggressive national vanity, and who may on occasions wantonly bring on conflict between his nation and some other nation. But there are demagogues of peace just as there are demagogues of war, and in any such movement as this for The Hague conference it is essential not to be misled by one set of extremists any more than by the other. Whenever it is possible for a nation or an individual to work for real peace, assuredly it is failure of duty not so to strive, but if war is necessary and righteous then either the man or the nation shrinking from it forfeits all title to self-respect. We have scant sympathy with the sentimentalist who dreads oppression less than physical suffering, who would prefer a shameful peace to the pain and toil sometimes lamentably necessary in order to secure a righteous peace. As yet there is only a partial and imperfect analogy between international law and internal or municipal law, because there is no sanction of force for executing the former while there is in the case of the latter. The private citizen is protected in his rights by the law, because the law rests in the last resort upon force exercised through the forms of law. A man does not have to defend his rights with his own hand, because he can call upon the police, upon the sheriff's posse, upon the militia, or in certain extreme cases upon the army, to defend him. But there is no such sanction of force for international law. At present there could be no greater calamity than for the free peoples, the enlightened, independent, and peace-loving peoples, to disarm while yet leaving it open to any barbarism or despotism to remain armed. So long as the world is as unorganized as now the armies and navies of those peoples who on the whole stand for justice, offer not only the best, but the only possible, security for a just peace. For instance, if the United States alone, or in company only with the other nations that on the whole tend to act justly, disarmed, we might sometimes avoid bloodshed, but we would cease to be of weight in securing the peace of justice—the real peace for which the most law-abiding and high-minded men must at times be willing to fight. As the world is now, only that nation is equipped for peace that knows how to fight, and that will not shrink.
from fighting if ever the conditions become such that war is demanded in the name of the highest morality.

So much it is emphatically necessary to say in order both that the position of the United States may not be misunderstood, and that a genuine effort to bring nearer the day of the peace of justice among the nations may not be hampered by a folly which, in striving to achieve the impossible, would render it hopeless to attempt the achievement of the practical. But, while recognizing most clearly all above set forth, it remains our clear duty to strive in every practicable way to bring nearer the time when the sword shall not be the arbiter among nations. At present the practical thing to do is to try to minimize the number of cases in which it must be the arbiter, and to offer, at least to all civilized powers, some substitute for war which will be available in at least a considerable number of instances. Very much can be done through another Hague conference in this direction, and I most earnestly urge that this Nation do all in its power to try to further the movement and to make the result of the decisions of The Hague conference effective. I earnestly hope that the conference may be able to devise some way to make arbitration between nations the customary way of settling international disputes in all save a few classes of cases, which should themselves be as sharply defined and rigidly limited as the present governmental and social development of the world will permit. If possible, there should be a general arbitration treaty negotiated among all the nations represented at the conference. Neutral rights and property should be protected at sea as they are protected on land. There should be an international agreement to this purpose and a similar agreement defining contraband of war.

During the last century there has been a distinct diminution in the number of wars between the most civilized nations. International relations have become closer and the development of The Hague tribunal is not only a symptom of this growing closeness of relationship, but is a means by which the growth can be furthered. Our aim should be from time to time to take such steps as may be possible toward creating something like an organization of the civilized nations, because as the world becomes more highly organized the need for navies and armies will diminish. It is not possible to secure anything like an immediate disarmament, because it would first be necessary to settle what peoples are on the whole a menace to the rest of mankind, and to provide against the disarmament of the rest being turned into a movement which would really chiefly benefit these obnoxious peoples; but it may be possible to exercise some check upon the tendency to swell indefinitely the budgets for military expenditure. Of course such an effort could succeed only if it did not attempt to do too much; and if it were undertaken in a spirit of sanity as far removed as possible from a merely hysterical pseudo-philanthropy. It is worth while pointing out that since the end of the insurrection in the Philippines this Nation has shown its practical faith in the policy of disarmament by reducing its little army one-third. But disarmament can never be of prime importance; there is more need to get rid of the causes of war than of the implements of war.

I have dwelt much on the dangers to be avoided by steering clear of any mere foolish sentimentality because my wish for peace is so genuine and earnest; because I have a real and great desire that this second Hague conference may mark a long stride forward in the direction of securing the peace of justice throughout the world. No object is better worthy the attention of enlightened statesmanship than the establishment of a surer method than now exists of securing justice as between nations, both for the protection of the little nations and for the prevention of war between the big nations. To this aim we should endeavor not only to avert bloodshed, but, above all, effectively to strengthen the forces of right. The Golden Rule should be, and as the world grows in morality it will be, the guiding rule of conduct among nations as among
individuals; though the Golden Rule must not be construed, in fantastic manner, as forbidding
the exercise of the police power. This mighty and free Republic should ever deal with all other
States, great or small, on a basis of high honor, respecting their rights as jealously as it
safeguards its own.

One of the most effective instruments for peace is the Monroe Doctrine as it has been and
is being gradually developed by this Nation and accepted by other nations. No other policy could
have been as efficient in promoting peace in the Western Hemisphere and in giving to each
nation thereon the chance to develop along its own lines. If we had refused to apply the doctrine
to changing conditions it would now be completely outworn, would not meet any of the needs of
the present day, and, indeed, would probably by this time have sunk into complete oblivion. It is
useful at home, and is meeting with recognition abroad because we have adapted our application
of it to meet the growing and changing needs of the hemisphere. When we announce a policy
such as the Monroe Doctrine we thereby commit ourselves to the consequences of the policy,
and those consequences from time to time alter. It is out of the question to claim a right and yet
shirk the responsibility for its exercise. Not only we, but all American republics who are
benefitted by the existence of the doctrine, must recognize the obligations each nation is under as
regards foreign peoples no less than its duty to insist upon its own rights.

That our rights and interests are deeply concerned in the maintenance of the doctrine is so
clear as hardly to need argument. This is especially true in view of the construction of the
Panama Canal. As a mere matter of self-defense we must exercise a close watch over the
approaches to this canal; and this means that we must be thoroughly alive to our interests in the
Caribbean Sea.

There are certain essential points which must never be forgotten as regards the Monroe
Doctrine. In the first place we must as a Nation make it evident that we do not intend to treat it in
any shape or way as an excuse for aggrandizement on our part at the expense of the republics to
the south. We must recognize the fact that in some South American countries there has been
much suspicion lest we should interpret the Monroe Doctrine as in some way inimical to their
interests, and we must try to convince all the other nations of this continent once and for all that
no just and orderly Government has anything to fear from us. There are certain republics to the
south of us which have already reached such a point of stability, order, and prosperity that they
themselves, though as yet hardly consciously--are among the guarantors of this doctrine. These
republics we now meet, not only on a basis of entire equality, but in a spirit of frank and
respectful friendship, which we hope is mutual. If all of the republics to the south of us will only
grow as those to which I allude have already grown, all need for us to be the especial champions
of the doctrine will disappear, for no stable and growing American Republic wishes to see some
great non-American military power acquire territory in its neighborhood. All that this country
desires is that the other republics on this continent shall be happy and prosperous; and they
cannot be happy and prosperous unless they maintain order within their boundaries and behave
with a just regard for their obligations toward outsiders. It must be understood that under no
circumstances will the United States use the Monroe Doctrine as a cloak for territorial
aggression. We desire peace with all the world, but perhaps most of all with the other peoples of
the American Continent. There are, of course, limits to the wrongs which any self-respecting
nation can endure. It is always possible that wrong actions toward this Nation, or toward citizens
of this Nation, in some State unable to keep order among its own people, unable to secure justice
from outsiders, and unwilling to do justice to those outsiders who treat it well, may result in our
having to take action to protect our rights; but such action will not be taken with a view to
territorial aggression, and it will be taken at all only with extreme reluctance and when it has become evident that every other resource has been exhausted.

Moreover, we must make it evident that we do not intend to permit the Monroe Doctrine to be used by any nation on this Continent as a shield to protect it from the consequences of its own misdeeds against foreign nations. If a republic to the south of us commits a tort against a foreign nation, such as an outrage against a citizen of that nation, then the Monroe Doctrine does not force us to interfere to prevent punishment of the tort, save to see that the punishment does not assume the form of territorial occupation in any shape. The case is more difficult when it refers to a contractual obligation. Our own Government has always refused to enforce such contractual obligations on behalf of its citizens by an appeal to arms. It is much to be wished that all foreign governments would take the same view. But they do not; and in consequence we are liable at any time to be brought face to face with disagreeable alternatives. On the one hand, this country would certainly decline to go to war to prevent a foreign government from collecting a just debt; on the other hand, it is very inadvisable to permit any foreign power to take possession, even temporarily, of the custom houses of an American Republic in order to enforce the payment of its obligations; for such temporary occupation might turn into a permanent occupation. The only escape from these alternatives may at any time be that we must ourselves undertake to bring about some arrangement by which so much as possible of a just obligation shall be paid. It is far better that this country should put through such an arrangement, rather than allow any foreign country to undertake it. To do so insures the defaulting republic from having to pay debt of an improper character under duress, while it also insures honest creditors of the republic from being passed by in the interest of dishonest or grasping creditors. Moreover, for the United States to take such a position offers the only possible way of insuring us against a clash with some foreign power. The position is, therefore, in the interest of peace as well as in the interest of justice. It is of benefit to our people; it is of benefit to foreign peoples; and most of all it is really of benefit to the people of the country concerned.

This brings me to what should be one of the fundamental objects of the Monroe Doctrine. We must ourselves in good faith try to help upward toward peace and order those of our sister republics which need such help. Just as there has been a gradual growth of the ethical element in the relations of one individual to another, so we are, even though slowly, more and more coming to recognize the duty of bearing one another's burdens, not only as among individuals, but also as among nations.

Santo Domingo, in her turn, has now made an appeal to us to help her, and not only every principle of wisdom but every generous instinct within us bids us respond to the appeal. It is not of the slightest consequence whether we grant the aid needed by Santo Domingo as an incident to the wise development of the Monroe Doctrine or because we regard the case of Santo Domingo as standing wholly by itself, and to be treated as such, and not on general principles or with any reference to the Monroe Doctrine. The important point is to give the needed aid, and the case is certainly sufficiently peculiar to deserve to be judged purely on its own merits. The conditions in Santo Domingo have for a number of years grown from bad to worse until a year ago all society was on the verge of dissolution. Fortunately, just at this time a ruler sprang up in Santo Domingo, who, with his colleagues, saw the dangers threatening their country and appealed to the friendship of the only great and powerful neighbor who possessed the power, and as they hoped also the will to help them. There was imminent danger of foreign intervention. The previous rulers of Santo Domingo had recklessly incurred debts, and owing to her internal disorders she had ceased to be able to provide means of paying the debts. The patience of her
foreign creditors had become exhausted, and at least two foreign nations were on the point of intervention, and were only prevented from intervening by the unofficial assurance of this Government that it would itself strive to help Santo Domingo in her hour of need. In the case of one of these nations, only the actual opening of negotiations to this end by our Government prevented the seizure of territory in Santo Domingo by a European power. Of the debts incurred some were just, while some were not of a character which really renders it obligatory on or proper for Santo Domingo to pay them in full. But she could not pay any of them unless some stability was assured her Government and people.

Accordingly, the Executive Department of our Government negotiated a treaty under which we are to try to help the Dominican people to straighten out their finances. This treaty is pending before the Senate. In the meantime a temporary arrangement has been made which will last until the Senate has had time to take action upon the treaty. Under this arrangement the Dominican Government has appointed Americans to all the important positions in the customs service and they are seeing to the honest collection of the revenues, turning over 45 per cent to the Government for running expenses and putting the other 55 per cent into a safe depository for equitable division in case the treaty shall be ratified, among the various creditors, whether European or American.

The Custom Houses offer well-nigh the only sources of revenue in Santo Domingo, and the different revolutions usually have as their real aim the obtaining of these Custom Houses. The mere fact that the Collectors of Customs are Americans, that they are performing their duties with efficiency and honesty, and that the treaty impending in the Senate gives a certain moral power to the Government of Santo Domingo which it has not had before. This has completely discouraged all revolutionary movement, while it has already produced such an increase in the revenues that the Government is actually getting more from the 45 per cent that the American Collectors turn over to it than it got formerly when it took the entire revenue. It is enabling the poor, harassed people of Santo Domingo once more to turn their attention to industry and to be free from the cure of interminable revolutionary disturbance. It offers to all bona-fide creditors, American and European, the only really good chance to obtain that to which they are justly entitled, while it in return gives to Santo Domingo the only opportunity of defense against claims which it ought not to pay, for now if it meets the views of the Senate we shall ourselves thoroughly examine all these claims, whether American or foreign, and see that none that are improper are paid. There is, of course, opposition to the treaty from dishonest creditors, foreign and American, and from the professional revolutionists of the island itself. We have already reason to believe that some of the creditors who do not dare expose their claims to honest scrutiny are endeavoring to stir up sedition in the island and opposition to the treaty. In the meantime, I have exercised the authority vested in me by the joint resolution of the Congress to prevent the introduction of arms into the island for revolutionary purposes.

Under the course taken, stability and order and all the benefits of peace are at last coming to Santo Domingo, danger of foreign intervention has been suspended and there is at last a prospect that all creditors will get justice, no more and no less. If the arrangement is terminated by the failure of the treaty chaos will follow; and if chaos follows, sooner or later this Government may be involved in serious difficulties with foreign Governments over the island, or else may be forced itself to intervene in the island in some unpleasant fashion. Under the proposed treaty the independence of the island is scrupulously respected, the danger of violation of the Monroe Doctrine by the intervention of foreign powers vanishes, and the interference of our Government is minimized, so that we shall only act in conjunction with the Santo Domingo
authorities to secure the proper administration of the customs, and therefore to secure the payment of just debts and to secure the Dominican Government against demands for unjust debts. The proposed method will give the people of Santo Domingo the same chance to move onward and upward which we have already given to the people of Cuba. It will be doubly to our discredit as a Nation if we fail to take advantage of this chance; for it will be of damage to ourselves, and it will be of incalculable damage to Santo Domingo. Every consideration of wise policy, and, above all, every consideration of large generosity, bids us meet the request of Santo Domingo as we are now trying to meet it.

Theodore Roosevelt, State of the Union Address

3 December 1906

…It is a mistake, and it betrays a spirit of foolish cynicism, to maintain that all international governmental action is, and must ever be, based upon mere selfishness, and that to advance ethical reasons for such action is always a sign of hypocrisy. This is no more necessarily true of the action of governments than of the action of individuals. It is a sure sign of a base nature always to ascribe base motives for the actions of others. Unquestionably no nation can afford to disregard proper considerations of self-interest, any more than a private individual can so do. But it is equally true that the average private individual in any really decent community does many actions with reference to other men in which he is guided, not by self-interest, but by public spirit, by regard for the rights of others, by a disinterested purpose to do good to others, and to raise the tone of the community as a whole. Similarly, a really great nation must often act, and as a matter of fact often does act, toward other nations in a spirit not in the least of mere self-interest, but paying heed chiefly to ethical reasons; and as the centuries go by this disinterestedness in international action, this tendency of the individuals comprising a nation to require that nation to act with justice toward its neighbors, steadily grows and strengthens. It is neither wise nor right for a nation to disregard its own needs, and it is foolish—and may be wicked—to think that other nations will disregard theirs. But it is wicked for a nation only to regard its own interest, and foolish to believe that such is the sole motive that actuates any other nation. It should be our steady aim to raise the ethical standard of national action just as we strive to raise the ethical standard of individual action…

Last August an insurrection broke out in Cuba which it speedily grew evident that the existing Cuban Government was powerless to quell. This Government was repeatedly asked by the then Cuban Government to intervene, and finally was notified by the President of Cuba that he intended to resign; that his decision was irrevocable; that none of the other constitutional officers would consent to carry on the Government, and that he was powerless to maintain order. It was evident that chaos was impending, and there was every probability that if steps were not immediately taken by this Government to try to restore order the representatives of various European nations in the island would apply to their respective governments for armed intervention in order to protect the lives and property of their citizens. Thanks to the preparedness of our Navy, I was able immediately to send enough ships to Cuba to prevent the situation from becoming hopeless…In accordance with the so-called Platt amendment, which was embodied in the constitution of Cuba, I thereupon proclaimed a provisional government for the island…The provisional government has left the personnel of the old government and the old laws, so far as might be, unchanged, and will thus administer the island for a few months until
tranquillity can be restored, a new election properly held, and a new government inaugurated. Peace has come in the island; and the harvesting of the sugar-cane crop, the great crop of the island, is about to proceed.

When the election has been held and the new government inaugurated in peaceful and orderly fashion the provisional government will come to an end. I take this opportunity of expressing upon behalf of the American people, with all possible solemnity, our most earnest hope that the people of Cuba will realize the imperative need of preserving justice and keeping order in the Island. The United States wishes nothing of Cuba except that it shall prosper morally and materially, and wishes nothing of the Cubans save that they shall be able to preserve order among themselves and therefore to preserve their independence. If the elections become a farce, and if the insurrectionary habit becomes confirmed in the Island, it is absolutely out of the question that the Island should continue independent; and the United States, which has assumed the sponsorship before the civilized world for Cuba's career as a nation, would again have to intervene and to see that the government was managed in such orderly fashion as to secure the safety of life and property. The path to be trodden by those who exercise self-government is always hard, and we should have every charity and patience with the Cubans as they tread this difficult path. I have the utmost sympathy with, and regard for, them; but I most earnestly adjure them solemnly to weigh their responsibilities and to see that when their new government is started it shall run smoothly, and with freedom from flagrant denial of right on the one hand, and from insurrectionary disturbances on the other…

It must ever be kept in mind that war is not merely justifiable, but imperative, upon honorable men, upon an honorable nation, where peace can only be obtained by the sacrifice of conscientious conviction or of national welfare. Peace is normally a great good, and normally it coincides with righteousness; but it is righteousness and not peace which should bind the conscience of a nation as it should bind the conscience of an individual; and neither a nation nor an individual can surrender conscience to another's keeping. Neither can a nation, which is an entity, and which does not die as individuals die, refrain from taking thought for the interest of the generations that are to come, no less than for the interest of the generation of to-day; and no public men have a right, whether from shortsightedness, from selfish indifference, or from sentimentiality, to sacrifice national interests which are vital in character. A just war is in the long run far better for a nation's soul than the most prosperous peace obtained by acquiescence in wrong or injustice. Moreover, tho it is criminal for a nation not to prepare for war, so that it may escape the dreadful consequences of being defeated in war, yet it must always be remembered that even to be defeated in war may be far better than not to have fought at all. As has been well and finely said, a beaten nation is not necessarily a disgraced nation; but the nation or man is disgraced if the obligation to defend right is shirked.

We should as a nation do everything in our power for the cause of honorable peace. It is morally as indefensible for a nation to commit a wrong upon another nation, strong or weak, as for an individual thus to wrong his fellows. We should do all in our power to hasten the day when there shall be peace among the nations--a peace based upon justice and not upon cowardly submission to wrong. We can accomplish a good deal in this direction, but we can not accomplish everything, and the penalty of attempting to do too much would almost inevitably be to do worse than nothing; for it must be remembered that fantastic extremists are not in reality leaders of the causes which they espouse, but are ordinarily those who do most to hamper the real leaders of the cause and to damage the cause itself. As yet there is no likelihood of establishing any kind of international power, of whatever sort, which can effectively check
wrongdoing, and in these circumstances it would be both a foolish and an evil thing for a great and free nation to deprive itself of the power to protect its own rights and even in exceptional cases to stand up for the rights of others. Nothing would more promote iniquity, nothing would further defer the reign upon earth of peace and righteousness, than for the free and enlightened peoples which, tho with much stumbling and many shortcomings, nevertheless strive toward justice, deliberately to render themselves powerless while leaving every despotism and barbarism armed and able to work their wicked will. The chance for the settlement of disputes peacefully, by arbitration, now depends mainly upon the possession by the nations that mean to do right of sufficient armed strength to make their purpose effective.

The United States Navy is the surest guarantor of peace which this country possesses. It is earnestly to be wisht that we would profit by the teachings of history in this matter. A strong and wise people will study its own failures no less than its triumphs, for there is wisdom to be learned from the study of both, of the mistake as well as of the success…

Woodrow Wilson, Constitutional Government in the United States, 1908

CHAPTER III: THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

It is difficult to describe any single part of a great governmental system without describing the whole of it. Governments are living things and operate as organic wholes. Moreover, governments have their natural evolution and are one thing in one age, another in another. The makers of the Constitution constructed the federal government upon a theory of checks and balances which was meant to limit the operation of each part and allow to no single part or organ of it a dominating force; but no government can be successfully conducted upon so mechanical a theory. Leadership and control must be lodged somewhere; the whole art of statesmanship is the art of bringing the several parts of government into effective cooperation for the accomplishment of particular common objects,—and party objects at that. Our study of each part of our federal system, if we are to discover our real government as it lives, must be made to disclose to us its operative coördination as a whole: its places of leadership, its method of action, how it operates, what checks it, what gives it energy and effect. Governments are what politicians make them, and it is easier to write of the President than of the presidency…

The makers of our federal Constitution followed the scheme as they found it expounded in Montesquieu, followed it with genuine scientific enthusiasm. The admirable expositions of the Federalist read like thoughtful applications of Montesquieu to the political needs and circumstances of America. They are full of the theory of checks and balances. The President is balanced off against Congress, Congress against the President, and each against the courts. Our statesmen of the earlier generations quoted no one so often as Montesquieu, and they quoted him always as a scientific standard in the field of politics. Politics is turned into mechanics under his touch. The theory of gravitation is supreme.

The trouble with the theory is that government is not a machine, but a living thing. It falls, not under the theory of the universe, but under the theory of organic life. It is accountable to Darwin, not to Newton. It is modified by its environment, necessitated by its tasks, shaped to its functions by the sheer pressure of life. No living thing can have its organs offset against each other as checks, and live. On the contrary, its life is dependent upon their quick coöperation, their
ready response to the commands of instinct or intelligence, their amicable community of purpose. Government is not a body of blind forces; it is a body of men, with highly differentiated functions, no doubt, in our modern day of specialization, but with a common task and purpose. Their coöperation is indispensable, their warfare fatal. There can be no successful government without leadership or without the intimate, almost instinctive, coördination of the organs of life and action. This is not theory, but fact, and displays its force as fact, whatever theories may be thrown across its track. Living political constitutions must be Darwinian in structure and in practice…The government of the United States has had a vital, and normal organic growth and has proved itself eminently adapted to express the changing temper and purposes of the American people from age to age.

That is the reason why it is easier to write of the President than of the presidency. The presidency has been one thing at one time, another at another, varying with the man who occupied the office and with the circumstances that surrounded him. One account must be given of the office during the period 1789 to 1825, when the government was getting its footing both at home and abroad, struggling for its place among the nations and its full credit among its own people; when English precedents and traditions were strongest; and when the men chosen for the office were men bred to leadership in a way that attracted to them the attention and confidence of the whole country. Another account must be given of it during Jackson’s time, when an imperious man, bred not in deliberative assemblies or quiet councils, but in the field and upon a rough frontier, worked his own will upon affairs, with or without formal sanction of law, sustained by a clear undoubting conscience and the love of a people who had grown deeply impatient of the régime he had supplanted. Still another account must be given of it during the years 1836 to 1861, when domestic affairs of many debatable kinds absorbed the country, when Congress necessarily exercised the chief choices of policy, and when the Presidents who followed one another in office lacked the personal force and initiative to make for themselves a leading place in counsel. After that came the Civil War and Mr. Lincoln’s unique task and achievement, when the executive seemed for a little while to become by sheer stress of circumstances the whole government, Congress merely voting supplies and assenting to necessary laws, as Parliament did in the time of the Tudors. From 1865 to 1898 domestic questions, legislative matters in respect of which Congress had naturally to make the initial choice, legislative leaders the chief decisions of policy, came once more to the front, and no President except Mr. Cleveland played a leading and decisive part in the quiet drama of our national life. Even Mr. Cleveland may be said to have owed his great role in affairs rather to his own native force and the confused politics of the time, than to any opportunity of leadership naturally afforded him by a system which had subordinated so many Presidents before him to Congress. The war with Spain again changed the balance of parts. Foreign questions became leading questions again, as they had been in the first days of the government, and in them the President was of necessity leader. Our new place in the affairs of the world has since that year of transformation kept him at the front of our government, where our own thoughts and the attention of men everywhere is centred upon him...

The makers of the Constitution seem to have thought of the President as what the stricter Whig theorists wished the king to be: only the legal executive, the presiding and guiding authority in the application of law and the execution of policy. His veto upon legislation was only his ‘check’ on Congress, — was a power of restraint, not of guidance. He was empowered to prevent bad laws, but he was not to be given an opportunity to make good ones. As a matter of fact he has become very much more. He has become the leader of his party and the guide of the
nation in political purpose, and therefore in legal action. The constitutional structure of the government has hampered and limited his action in these significant rôles, but it has not prevented it. The influence of the President has varied with the men who have been Presidents and with the circumstances of their times, but the tendency has been unmistakably disclosed, and springs out of the very nature of government itself. It is merely the proof that our government is a living, organic thing, and must, like every other government, work out the close synthesis of active parts which can exist only when leadership is lodged in some one man or group of men. You cannot compound a successful government out of antagonisms. Greatly as the practice and influence of Presidents has varied, there can be no mistaking the fact that we have grown more and more inclined from generation to generation to look to the President as the unifying force in our complex system, the leader both of his party and of the nation. To do so is not inconsistent with the actual provisions of the Constitution; it is only inconsistent with a very mechanical theory of its meaning and intention. The Constitution contains no theories. It is as practical a document as Magna Carta.

The rôle of party leader is forced upon the President by the method of his selection. The theory of the makers of the Constitution may have been that the presidential electors would exercise a real choice, but it is hard to understand how, as experienced politicians, they can have expected anything of the kind. They did not provide that the electors should meet as one body for consultation and make deliberate choice of a President and Vice-President, but that they should meet “in their respective states” and cast their ballots in separate groups, without the possibility of consulting and without the least likelihood of agreeing, unless some such means as have actually been used were employed to suggest and determine their choice beforehand. It was the practice at first to make party nominations for the presidency by congressional caucus. Since the Democratic upheaval of General Jackson’s time nominating conventions have taken the place of congressional caucuses; and the choice of Presidents by party conventions has had some very interesting results...

And it must be remembered also that our political system is not so coördinated as to supply a training for presidential aspirants or even to make it absolutely necessary that they should have had extended experience in public affairs. Certainly the country has never thought of members of Congress as in any particular degree fitted for the presidency. Even the Vice President is not afforded an opportunity to learn the duties of the office. The men best prepared, no doubt, are those who have been governors of states or members of cabinets. And yet even they are chosen for their respective offices generally by reason of a kind of fitness and availability which does not necessarily argue in them the size and power that would fit them for the greater office. In our earlier practice cabinet officers were regarded as in the natural line of succession to the presidency. Mr. Jefferson had been in General Washington’s cabinet, Mr. Madison in Mr. Jefferson’s, Mr. Monroe in Mr. Madison’s; and generally it was the Secretary of State who was taken. But those were days when English precedent was strong upon us, when cabinets were expected to be made up of the political leaders of the party in power; and from their ranks subsequent candidates for the presidency were most likely to be selected. The practice, as we look back to it, seems eminently sensible, and we wonder why it should have been so soon departed from and apparently forgotten. We wonder, too, why eminent senators have not sometimes been chosen; why members of the House have so seldom commanded the attention of nominating conventions; why public life has never offered itself in any definite way as a preparation for the presidential office.
If the matter be looked at a little more closely, it will be seen that the office of President, as we have used and developed it, really does not demand actual experience in affairs so much as particular qualities of mind and character which we are at least as likely to find outside the ranks of our public men as within them. What is it that a nominating convention wants in the man it is to present to the country for its suffrages? A man who will be and who will seem to the country in some sort an embodiment of the character and purpose it wishes its government to have, — a man who understands his own day and the needs of the country, and who has the personality and the initiative to enforce his views both upon the people and upon Congress. It may seem an odd way to get such a man. It is even possible that nominating conventions and those who guide them do not realize entirely what it is that they do. But in simple fact the convention picks out a party leader from the body of the nation. Not that it expects its nominee to direct the interior government of the party and to supplant its already accredited and experienced spokesmen in Congress and in its state and national committees; but it does of necessity expect him to represent it before public opinion and to stand before the country as its representative man, as a true type of what the country may expect of the party itself in purpose and principle. It cannot but be led by him in the campaign; if he be elected, it cannot but acquiesce in his leadership of the government itself. What the country will demand of the candidate will be, not that he be an astute politician, skilled and practised in affairs, but that he be a man such as it can trust, in character, in intention, in knowledge of its needs, in perception of the best means by which those needs may be met, in capacity to prevail by reason of his own weight and integrity. Sometimes the country believes in a party, but more often it believes in a man; and conventions have often shown the instinct to perceive which it is that the country needs in a particular presidential year, a mere representative partisan, a military hero, or some one who will genuinely speak for the country itself, whatever be his training and antecedents. It is in this sense that the President has the rôle of party leader thrust upon him by the very method by which he is chosen.

As legal executive, his constitutional aspect, the President cannot be thought of alone. He cannot execute laws. Their actual daily execution must be taken care of by the several executive departments and by the now innumerable body of federal officials throughout the country. In respect of the strictly executive duties of his office the President may be said to administer the presidency in conjunction with the members of his cabinet, like the chairman of a commission. He is even of necessity much less active in the actual carrying out of the law than are his colleagues and advisers. It is therefore becoming more and more true, as the business of the government becomes more and more complex and extended, that the President is becoming more and more a political and less and less an executive officer. His executive powers are in commission, while his political powers more and more centre and accumulate upon him and are in their very nature personal and inalienable.

Only the larger sort of executive questions are brought to him. Departments which run with easy routine and whose transactions bring few questions of general policy to the surface may proceed with their business for months and even years together without demanding his attention; and no department is in any sense under his direct charge. Cabinet meetings do not discuss detail: they are concerned only with the larger matters of policy or expediency which important business is constantly disclosing. There are no more hours in the President’s day than in another man’s. If he is indeed the executive, he must act almost entirely by delegation, and is in the hands of his colleagues. He is likely to be praised if things go well, and blamed if they go wrong; but his only real control is of the persons to whom he deputes the performance of executive duties. It is through no fault or neglect of his that the duties apparently assigned to him
by the Constitution have come to be his less conspicuous, less important duties, and that duties apparently not assigned to him at all chiefly occupy his time and energy. The one set of duties it has proved practically impossible for him to perform; the other it has proved impossible for him to escape.

He cannot escape being the leader of his party except by incapacity and lack of personal force, because he is at once the choice of the party and of the nation. He is the party nominee, and the only party nominee for whom the whole nation votes. Members of the House and Senate are representatives of localities, are voted for only by sections of voters, or by local bodies of electors like the members of the state legislatures. There is no national party choice except that of President. No one else represents the people as a whole, exercising a national choice; and inasmuch as his strictly executive duties are in fact subordinated, so far at any rate as all detail is concerned, the President represents not so much the party’s governing efficiency as its controlling ideals and principles. He is not so much part of its organization as its vital link of connection with the thinking nation. He can dominate his party by being spokesman for the real sentiment and purpose of the country, by giving direction to opinion, by giving the country at once the information and the statements of policy which will enable it to form its judgments alike of parties and of men.

For he is also the political leader of the nation, or has it in his choice to be. The nation as a whole has chosen him, and is conscious that it has no other political spokesman. His is the only national voice in affairs. Let him once win the admiration and confidence of the country, and no other single force can withstand him, no combination of forces will easily overpower him. His position takes the imagination of the country. He is the representative of no constituency, but of the whole people. When he speaks in his true character, he speaks for no special interest. If he rightly interpret the national thought and boldly insist upon it, he is irresistible; and the country never feels the zest of action so much as when its President is of such insight and calibre. Its instinct is for unified action, and it craves a single leader. It is for this reason that it will often prefer to choose a man rather than a party. A President whom it trusts can not only lead it, but form it to his own views.

It is the extraordinary isolation imposed upon the President by our system that makes the character and opportunity of his office so extraordinary. In him are centred both opinion and party. He may stand, if he will, a little outside party and insist as if it were upon the general opinion. It is with the instinctive feeling that it is upon occasion such a man that the country wants that nominating conventions will often nominate men who are not their acknowledged leaders, but only such men as the country would like to see lead both its parties. The President may also, if he will, stand within the party counsels and use the advantage of his power and personal force to control its actual programs. He may be both the leader of his party and the leader of the nation, or he may be one or the other. If he lead the nation, his party can hardly resist him. His office is anything he has the sagacity and force to make it.

That is the reason why it has been one thing at one time, another at another. The Presidents who have not made themselves leaders have lived no more truly on that account in the spirit of the Constitution than those whose force has told in the determination of law and policy. No doubt Andrew Jackson overstepped the bounds meant to be set to the authority of his office. It was certainly in direct contravention of the spirit of the Constitution that he should have refused to respect and execute decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States, and no serious student of our history can righteously condone what he did in such matters on the ground that his intentions were upright and his principles pure. But the Constitution of the United States
is not a mere lawyers’ document: it is a vehicle of life, and its spirit is always the spirit of the age. Its prescriptions are clear and we know what they are; a written document makes lawyers of us all, and our duty as citizens should make us conscientious lawyers, reading the text of the Constitution without subtlety or sophistication; but life is always your last and most authoritative critic.

Some of our Presidents have deliberately held themselves off from using the full power they might legitimately have used, because of conscientious scruples, because they were more theorists than statesmen. They have held the strict literary theory of the Constitution, the Whig theory, the Newtonian theory, and have acted as if they thought that Pennsylvania Avenue should have been even longer than it is; that there should be no intimate communication of any kind between the Capitol and the White House; that the President as a man was no more at liberty to lead the houses of Congress by persuasion than he was at liberty as President to dominate them by authority, — supposing that he had, what he has not, authority enough to dominate them. But the makers of the Constitution were not enacting Whig theory, they were not making laws with the expectation that, not the laws themselves, but their opinions, known by future historians to lie back of them, should govern the constitutional action of the country. They were statesmen, not pedants, and their laws are sufficient to keep us to the paths they set us upon. The President is at liberty, both in law and conscience, to be as big a man as he can. His capacity will set the limit; and if Congress be overborne by him, it will be no fault of the makers of the Constitution, — it will be from no lack of constitutional powers on its part, but only because the President has the nation behind him, and Congress has not. He has no means of compelling Congress except through public opinion.

That I say he has no means of compelling Congress will show what I mean, and that my meaning has no touch of radicalism or iconoclasm in it. There are illegitimate means by which the President may influence the action of Congress. He may bargain with members, not only with regard to appointments, but also with regard to legislative measures. He may use his local patronage to assist members to get or retain their seats. He may interpose his powerful influence, in one covert way or another, in contests for places in the Senate. He may also overbear Congress by arbitrary acts which ignore the laws or virtually override them. He may even substitute his own orders for acts of Congress which he wants but cannot get. Such things are not only deeply immoral, they are destructive of the fundamental understandings of constitutional government and, therefore, of constitutional government itself. They are sure, moreover, in a country of free public opinion, to bring their own punishment, to destroy both the fame and the power of the man who dares to practise them. No honorable man includes such agencies in a sober exposition of the Constitution or allows himself to think of them when he speaks of the influences of “life” which govern each generation’s use and interpretation of that great instrument, our sovereign guide and the object of our deepest reverence. Nothing in a system like ours can be constitutional which is immoral or which touches the good faith of those who have sworn to obey the fundamental law. The reprobation of all good men will always overwhelm such influences with shame and failure. But the personal force of the President is perfectly constitutional to any extent to which he chooses to exercise it, and it is by the clear logic of our constitutional practice that he has become alike the leader of his party and the leader of the nation.

The political powers of the President are not quite so obvious in their scope and character when we consider his relations with Congress as when we consider his relations to his party and to the nation. They need, therefore, a somewhat more critical examination. Leadership in
government naturally belongs to its executive officers, who are daily in contact with practical conditions and exigencies and whose reputations alike for good judgment and for fidelity are at stake much more than are those of the members of the legislative body at every turn of the law’s application. The law-making part of the government ought certainly to be very hospitable to the suggestions of the planning and acting part of it. Those Presidents who have felt themselves bound to adhere to the strict literary theory of the Constitution have scrupulously refrained from attempting to determine either the subjects or the character of legislation, except so far as they were obliged to decide for themselves, after Congress had acted, whether they should acquiesce in it or not. And yet the Constitution explicitly authorizes the President to recommend to Congress “such measures as he shall deem necessary and expedient,” and it is not necessary to the integrity of even the literary theory of the Constitution to insist that such recommendations should be merely perfunctory. Certainly General Washington did not so regard them, and he stood much nearer the Whig theory than we do. A President’s messages to Congress have no more weight or authority than their intrinsic reasonableness and importance give them: but that is their only constitutional limitation. The Constitution certainly does not forbid the President to back them up, as General Washington did, with such personal force and influence as he may possess. Some of our Presidents have felt the need, which unquestionably exists in our system, for some spokesman of the nation as a whole, in matters of legislation no less than in other matters, and have tried to supply Congress with the leadership of suggestion, backed by argument and by iteration and by every legitimate appeal to public opinion. Cabinet officers are shut out from Congress; the President himself has, by custom, no access to its floor; many long-established barriers of precedent, though not of law, hinder him from exercising any direct influence upon its deliberations; and yet he is undoubtedly the only spokesman of the whole people. They have again and again, as often as they were afforded the opportunity, manifested their satisfaction when he has boldly accepted the rôle of leader, to which the peculiar origin and character of his authority entitle him. The Constitution bids him speak, and times of stress and change must more and more thrust upon him the attitude of originator of policies.

His is the vital place of action in the system, whether he accept it as such or not, and the office is the measure of the man, — of his wisdom as well as of his force. His veto abundantly equips him to stay the hand of Congress when he will. It is seldom possible to pass a measure over his veto, and no President has hesitated to use the veto when his own judgment of the public good was seriously at issue with that of the houses. The veto has never been suffered to fall into even temporary disuse with us. In England it has ceased to exist, with the change in the character of the executive. There has been no veto since Anne’s day, because ever since the reign of Anne the laws of England have been originated either by ministers who spoke the king’s own will or by ministers whom the king did not dare gainsay; and in our own time the ministers who formulate the laws are themselves the executive of the nation; a veto would be a negative upon their own power. If bills pass of which they disapprove, they resign and give place to the leaders of those who approve them. The framers of the Constitution made in our President a more powerful, because a more isolated, king than the one they were imitating; and because the Constitution gave them their veto in such explicit terms, our Presidents have not hesitated to use it, even when it put their mere individual judgment against that of large majorities in both houses of Congress. And yet in the exercise of the power to suggest legislation, quite as explicitly conferred upon them by the Constitution, some of our Presidents have seemed to have a timid fear that they might offend some law of taste which had become a constitutional principle.
In one sense their messages to Congress have no more authority than the letters of any other citizen would have. Congress can heed or ignore them as it pleases; and there have been periods of our history when presidential messages were utterly without practical significance, perfunctory documents which few persons except the editors of newspapers took the trouble to read. But if the President has personal force and cares to exercise it, there is this tremendous difference between his messages and the views of any other citizen, either outside Congress or in it: that the whole country reads them and feels that the writer speaks with an authority and a responsibility which the people themselves have given him…

It may with a great deal of plausibility be argued that the Constitution looks upon the President himself in the same way. It does not seem to make him a prime minister or the leader of the nation’s counsels. Some Presidents are, therefore, and some are not. It depends upon the man and his gifts. He may be like his cabinet, or he may be more than his cabinet. His office is a mere vantage ground from which he may be sure that effective words of advice and timely efforts at reform will gain telling momentum. He has the ear of the nation as of course, and a great person may use such an advantage greatly. If he use the opportunity, he may take his cabinet into partnership or not, as he pleases; and so its character may vary with his. Self-reliant men will regard their cabinets as executive councils; men less self-reliant or more prudent will regard them as also political councils, and will wish to call into them men who have earned the confidence of their party. The character of the cabinet may be made a nice index of the theory of the presidential office, as well as of the President’s theory of party government; but the one view is, so far as I can see, as constitutional as the other.

One of the greatest of the President’s powers I have not yet spoken of at all: his control, which is very absolute, of the foreign relations of the nation. The initiative in foreign affairs, which the President possesses without any restriction whatever, is virtually the power to control them absolutely. The President cannot conclude a treaty with a foreign power without the consent of the Senate, but he may guide every step of diplomacy, and to guide diplomacy is to determine what treaties must be made, if the faith and prestige of the government are to be maintained. He need disclose no step of negotiation until it is complete, and when in any critical matter it is completed the government is virtually committed. Whatever its disinclination, the Senate may feel itself committed also.

I have not dwelt upon this power of the President, because it has been decisively influential in determining the character and influence of the office at only two periods in our history; at the very first, when the government was young and had so to use its incipient force as to win the respect of the nations into whose family it had thrust itself, and in our own day when the results of the Spanish War, the ownership of distant possessions, and many sharp struggles for foreign trade make it necessary that we should turn our best talents to the task of dealing firmly, wisely, and justly with political and commercial rivals. The President can never again be the mere domestic figure he has been throughout so large a part of our history. The nation has risen to the first rank in power and resources. The other nations of the world look askance upon her, half in envy, half in fear, and wonder with a deep anxiety what she will do with her vast strength. They receive the frank professions of men like Mr. John Hay, whom we wholly trusted, with a grain of salt, and doubt what we were sure of, their truthfulness and sincerity, suspecting a hidden design under every utterance he makes. Our President must always, henceforth, be one of the great powers of the world, whether he act greatly and wisely or not, and the best statesmen we can produce will be needed to fill the office of Secretary of State. We have but begun to see the presidential office in this light; but it is the light which will more and more beat upon it, and
more and more determine its character and its effect upon the politics of the nation. We can never hide our President again as a mere domestic officer. We can never again see him the mere executive he was in the thirties and forties. He must stand always at the front of our affairs, and the office will be as big and as influential as the man who occupies it.

How is it possible to sum up the duties and influence of such an office in such a system in comprehensive terms which will cover all its changeful aspects? In the view of the makers of the Constitution the President was to be legal executive; perhaps the leader of the nation; certainly not the leader of the party, at any rate while in office. But by the operation of forces inherent in the very nature of government he has become all three, and by inevitable consequence the most heavily burdened officer in the world. No other man’s day is so full as his, so full of the responsibilities which tax mind and conscience alike and demand an inexhaustible vitality. The mere task of making appointments to office, which the Constitution imposes upon the President, has come near to breaking some of our Presidents down, because it is a never-ending task in a civil service not yet put upon a professional footing, confused with short terms of office, always forming and dissolving. And in proportion as the President ventures to use his opportunity to lead opinion and act as spokesman of the people in affairs the people stand ready to overwhelm him by running to him with every question, great and small. They are as eager to have him settle a literary question as a political; hear him as acquiescently with regard to matters of special expert knowledge as with regard to public affairs, and call upon him to quiet all troubles by his personal intervention…

Calvin Coolidge, Destiny of America speech, 1923

…The authority of law here is not something which is imposed upon the people; it is the will of the people themselves. The decision of the court here is not something which is apart from the people; it is the judgment of the people themselves. The right of the ownership of property here is not something withheld from the people; it is the privilege of the people themselves. Their sovereignty is absolute and complete. A definition of the relationship between the institutions of our government and the American people entirely justifies the assertion that: "All things were made by them; and without them was not anything made that was made." It is because the American government is the sole creation and possession of the people that they have always cherished it and defended it, and always will…

The main characteristics of those principles [of government] from which all others are deduced is a government of limited and defined powers, leaving the people supreme. The executive has sole command of the military forces, but he cannot raise a dollar of revenue. The legislature has the sole authority to levy taxes, but it cannot issue a command to a single private soldier. The judiciary interprets and declares the law and the Constitution, but it can neither create nor destroy the right of a single individual. Freedom of action is complete, within moral bounds, under the law which the people themselves have prescribed. The individual is supported in his right to follow his own choice, live his own life, and reap the rewards of his own effort. Justice is administered by impartial courts. It is a maxim of our law that there is no wrong without a remedy. All the power and authority of the whole national government cannot convict the most humble individual of a crime, save on the verdict of an impartial jury composed of
twelve of his peers. Opportunity is denied to none, every place is open, and every position yields to the humblest in accordance with ability and application.

The chief repository of power is in the legislature, chosen directly by the people at frequent elections. It is this body, which is particularly responsive to the public will, and yet, as in the Congress, is representative of the whole nation. It does not perform an executive function. It is not, therefore, charged with the necessity of expedition. It is a legislative body and is, therefore, charged with the necessity for deliberation. Sometimes this privilege may be abused, for this great power has been given as the main safeguard of liberty, and wherever power is bestowed it may be used unwisely. But whenever a legislative body ceases to deliberate, then it ceases to act with due consideration.

That fact in itself is conclusive that it has ceased to be independent, has become subservient to a single directing influence or a small group, either without or within itself, and is no longer representative of the people. Such a condition would not be a rule of the people, but a rule of some unconstitutional power. It is my own observation and belief than the American Congress is the most efficient and effective deliberative body, more untrammled, more independent, more advised, more representative of the will of the people than any body which legislates for any of the great powers. An independent legislature never deprived the people of their liberty…

But if our republic is to be maintained and improved it will be through the efforts and character of the individual. It will be, first of all, because of the influences which exist in the home, for it is the ideals which prevail in the homelife which make up the strength of the nation. The homely virtues must continue to be cultivated. The real dignity, the real nobility of work must be cherished. It is only through industry that there is any hope for individual development. The viciousness of waste and the value of thrift must continue to be learned and understood. Civilization rests on conservation. To these there must be added religion, education, and obedience to law. These are the foundation of all character in the individual and all hope in the nation…

Another necessity of the utmost urgency in this day, a necessity which is worldwide, is economy in government expenditures. This may seem the antithesis of military preparation, but, as a matter of fact, our present great debt is due, in a considerable extent, to creating our last military establishment under the condition of war haste and war prices, which added enormously to its cost. There is no end of the things which the government could do, seemingly, in the way of public welfare, if it had the money. Everything we want cannot be had at once. It must be earned by toilsome labor. There is a very decided limit to the amount which can be raised by taxation without ruinously affecting the people of the country by virtual confiscation of a part of their past savings.

The business of the country, as a whole, is transacted on a small margin of profit. The economic structure is one of great delicacy and sensitiveness. When taxes become too burdensome, either the price of commodities has to be raised to a point at which consumption is so diminished as greatly to curtail production, or so much of the returns from industry is required by the government that production becomes unprofitable and ceases for that reason. In either case there is depression, lack of employment, idleness of investment and of wage earner, with the long line of attendant want and suffering on the part of the people. After order and liberty, economy is one of the highest essentials of a free government. It was in no small degree the unendurable burden of taxation which drove Europe into the Great War. Economy is always a guarantee of peace.
It is the great economic question of government finances which is burdening the people of Europe at the present time. How to meet obligations is the chief problem on continental Europe and in the British Isles. It cannot be doubted that high taxes are the chief cause for the extended condition of unemployment which has required millions to subsist on the public treasury in Great Britain for a long period of time, though the number of these unfortunate people has been declining. A government which requires of the people the contribution of the bulk of their substance and rewards cannot be classed as a free government, or long remain as such. It is gratifying to observe, in our own national government, that there has been an enormous decrease in expenditures, a large reduction of the debt, and a revision of taxation affording great relief.

But it is in peace that there lies the greatest opportunity for relief from burdensome taxation. Our country is at peace, not only legal but actual, with all other peoples. We cherish peace and goodwill toward all the earth, with a sentiment of friendship and a desire for universal well-being. If we want peace it is our business to cultivate goodwill. It was for the promotion of peace that the Washington Conference on the Limitation of Armaments and Pacific Questions was called. For the first time in history the great powers of the earth have agreed to a limitation of naval armaments. This was brought about by American initiative in accordance with an American plan, and executed by American statesmanship. Out of regard for a similar principle is the proposal to participate in the establishment of a World Court. These are in accordance with a desire to adjust differences between nations, not by an overpowering display or use of force but by mutual conference and understanding in harmony with the requirement of justice and of honor.

Our country does not want war, it wants peace. It has not decreed this memorial season as an honor to war, with its terrible waste and attendant train of suffering and hardship which reaches onward into the years of peace. Yet war is not the worst of evils, and these days have been set apart to do honor to all those, now gone, who made the cause of America their supreme choice. Some fell with the word of Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty, or give me death," almost ringing in their ears. Some heard that word across the intervening generations and were still obedient to its call. It is to the spirit of those men, exhibited in all our wars, to the spirit that places the devotion to freedom and truth above the devotion to life, that the nation pays its ever enduring mark of reverence and respect…

**Calvin Coolidge, Speech at the Convention of the National Education Association**

4 July 1924

For almost a century and a half the Fourth of July has been marked as Independence Day. It has been given over to the contemplation of those principles and those institutions which America peculiarly represents. In times gone by the exuberance of youth and the consciousness of power recently gained has often made it an occasion for boastfulness. Long orations have been made, which consisted for the most part of a reassurance to ourselves and a notice to the world that we were a great Nation. Those days are past. Our own people need no reassurance, the world needs no notice, of this long self evident conclusion. Our country has not ceased to glory in its strength, but it has come to a realization that it must have something more than numbers and wealth, something more than a fleet and an army, to satisfy the longing of the soul. It knows that
to power must be added wisdom, and to greatness must be added morality. It is no longer so
solicitous to catalogue the powers which it possesses, as to direct those great forces for the
spiritual advancement of the American people at home and the discharge of the obligations to
humanity abroad. America is turning from the things that are seen to the things that are unseen.

By this I do not mean that there is in contemplation, or required, any change in our
fundamental institutions. I mean, rather, that we are beginning to reap the rewards which accrue
from the existence of those institutions and our devotion and loyalty to them. Some principles are
so constant and so obvious that we do not need to change them, but we need rather to observe
them. The world is fairly well agreed on the probable permanence of the first four tables of the
arithmetic with which I struggled when I attended the district school. It is not thought that they
need to be changed, or that we can make any progress by refusing to apply them. Those who
seek to evade them in the ordinary business and procedure of life would undoubtedly find that
such action would work either to the ruin of any commercial enterprise, or if it did not, the
beneficiaries of such a disregard of the commonly accepted rules of addition would undoubtedly
find that a very large majority of people would be old fashioned enough to charge them with
fraud. The institutions of the Government and society may not always be susceptible of a
demonstration which is as exact as those of mathematics, but nevertheless political relationship is
a very old science which has been set out in theory and wrought out in practice through very
many centuries. Its fundamental principles are fairly well established. That there could have been
gathered together a body of men so learned in that science, so experienced in its application, so
talented and so wise in its statement and demonstration, as those who prepared, formulated, and
secured the adoption of the American Constitution, will never cease to be the wonder and
admiration of the profoundest students of Government. After making every allowance for a
fortunate combination of circumstances and the accomplishments of human ingenuity, they have
been nearly all forced to come to the belief that it can be accounted for only by the addition
of another element, which we must recognize as the guiding hand of Providence. As we can make
progress in science not by the disregard, but by the application of the laws of mathematics, so in
my firm conviction we can make progress politically and socially, not by a disregard of those
fundamental principles which are the recognized, ratified and established American institutions,
but by their scrupulous support and observance. American ideals do not require to be changed so
much as they require to be understood and applied.

The return of this day quite naturally invites us to a reconsideration of those principles set
out in the Declaration of Independence, which were for the first time fully established in a form
of government by the adoption of the American Constitution. Such a consideration presents
many angles, for it touches the entire life of the Nation. To deal with so large a subject
adequately, it is obvious would require extensive treatment. On this occasion it is possible only
to touch on one phase of it.

It can not be too often pointed out that the fundamental conception of American
institutions is regard for the individual. The rights which are so clearly asserted in the
Declaration of Independence are the rights of the individual. The wrongs of which that
instrument complains, and which it asserts it is the purpose of its signers to redress, are the
wrongs of the individual. Through it all runs the recognition of the dignity and worth of the
individual, because of his possession of those qualities which are revealed to us by religion. It is
this conception alone which warrants the assertion of the universal right to freedom. America has
been the working out of the modern effort to provide a system of government and society which
would give to the individual that freedom which his nature requires.
It is easy to appreciate both the soundness and the grandeur of such a vision. Its magnitude implies that it was a conception not to be accomplished in a day or a year, but by the slow and toilsome experience of generations. The foundations of the structure have been laid, the rules of action have been stated. It is for us to make such contribution as we are able toward its completion and adoption. The end sought has been to create a nation wherein the individual might rise to the full stature of manhood and womanhood.

It needed but little contemplation to determine that the greatest obstacle to freedom was ignorance. If there was to be self government, if there was to be popular sovereignty, if there was to be an almost unlimited privilege to vote and hold office, if the people were going to maintain themselves and administer their own political and social affairs, it was necessary as a purely practical matter that they should have a sufficiently trained and enlightened intelligence to accomplish that end. Popular government could only be predicated on popular education.

In addition to this, the very conception of the value and responsibility of the individual, which made him worthy to be entrusted with this high estate, required that he should be furnished the opportunity to develop the spiritual nature with which he was endowed, through adequate education.

Merely to state the American ideal is to perceive not only how far we still are from its realization, but to comprehend with what patience we must view many seeming failures, while we contemplate with great satisfaction much assured success.

We can see the early beginnings of our country and understand the situation in those days better than it was understood by its own contemporaries. It was a time of great toil and hardship. The entire settled area could be described as little more than a frontier. Everything in the way of modern convenience was wanting, and save where a sea going commerce was beginning, there was an entire absence of wealth. The America which we know had yet to be made. But the land was blessed with a great people and with great leaders. Washington and Jefferson, Franklin and Mason, Hamilton and Madison, Adams and Marshall, suggest a type of citizenship and leadership, of scholarship and statesmanship, of wisdom and character, of ability and patriotism, unsurpassed by any group of men ever brought together to direct the political destinies of a nation. They did what they could in their time for the advancement of the public welfare, and they were not discontented because they could not immediately secure perfection. They had a vision and they worked toward it. They knew that in their day it was not to be fully realized. They did not lack the courage to have faith in the future.

They started the country on that long road of stupendous achievement with which you are all so familiar. To provide for that human welfare which was the cherished hope of the Declaration of Independence and the well wrought out plan of the Federal Constitution, it was necessary to develop the material resources of our country. There had to be created the instruments with which to minister to the well being of the people. National poverty had to be replaced with national possessions. Transportation had to be provided by land and water. Manufacturing plants had to be erected. Great agricultural resources had to be brought under cultivation. The news service of the press had to be established. The schoolhouse, the university, the place of religious worship, all had to be built. All of these mighty agencies had to be created, that they might contribute to a unified national life where freedom might reign and where the citizen might be his own sovereign.

It was only as this work was accomplished, as these instruments were provided, these properties built, and these possessions accumulated, that there could be a reduction in the hours of labor, an increase in the rewards of employment, and a general betterment in those material
conditions which result in a higher standard of living. The leisure for culture had to be secured in this way. Servitude of all kinds is scarcely ever abolished unless there is created economic opportunity for freedom. We are beginning to see that the economic development of our country was not only necessary for advancing the welfare of the people, but that we must maintain an expanding power of production if that welfare is to be increased. Business makes a most valuable contribution to human progress.

As we look back upon all this development, while we know that it was absolutely dependent upon a reign of law, nevertheless some of us can not help thinking how little of it has been dependent on acts of legislation. Given their institutions, the people themselves have in the past, as they must in the future, to a very large degree worked out their own salvation without the interposition of the Government. It is always possible to regulate and supervise by legislation what has already been created, but while legislation can stimulate and encourage, the real creative ability which builds up and develops the country, and in general makes human existence more tolerable and life more complete, has to be supplied by the genius of the people themselves. The Government can supply no substitute for enterprise…

As already indicated, America is turning from the mere thought of the material advantage to a greater appreciation of the cultural advantage of learning. It is coming to be valued more and more for its own sake. People desire not only the intelligence to comprehend economic and social problems, but they are finding increased leisure is little more than time wasted in indulgence, unless an opportunity for self development and self expression has been provided in youth by the cultivation of a taste for literature, history, and the fine arts.

It is necessary also that education should be the handmaid of citizenship. Our institutions are constantly and very properly the subject of critical inquiry. Unless their nature is comprehended, and their origin is understood, unless their value be properly assessed, the citizen falls ready prey to those selfish agitators who would exploit his prejudices to promote their own advantage. On this day, of all days, it ought to be made clear that America has had its revolution and placed the power of Government squarely, securely, and entirely in the hands of the people. For all changes which they may desire, for all grievances which they may suffer, the ballot box furnishes a complete method and remedy. Into their hands has been committed complete jurisdiction and control over all the functions of Government. For the most part our institutions are attacked in the name of social and economic reform. Unless there be some teaching of sound economics in the schools, the voter and taxpayer are in danger of accepting vague theories which lead only to social discontent and public disaster. The body politic has little chance of choosing patriotic of ficials who can administer its financial affairs with wisdom and safety, unless there is a general diffusion of knowledge and information on elementary economic subjects sufficient to create and adequately to support public opinion. Every one ought to realize that the sole source of national wealth is thrift and industry, and that the sole supply of the public treasury is the toil of the people. Of course, patriotism is always to be taught. National defense is a necessity and a virtue, but peace with honor is the normal, natural condition of mankind, and must be made the chief end to be sought in human relationship.

Another element must be secured in the training of citizenship, or all else will be in vain. All of our learning and science, our culture and our arts, will be of little avail, unless they are supported by high character, unless there be honor, truth, and justice. Unless our material resources are supported by moral and spiritual resources, there is no foundation for progress. A trained intelligence can do much, but there is no substitute for morality, character, and religious convictions. Unless these abide, American citizenship will be found unequal to its task.
A new importance is attaching to the cause of education. A new realization of its urgent necessity is taking hold of the Nation. A new comprehension that the problem is only beginning to be solved is upon the people. A new determination to meet the requirements of the situation is everywhere apparent. The economic and moral waste of ignorance will little longer be tolerated. This awakening is one of the most significant developments of the times. It indicates that our national spirit is reasserting itself. It is a most reassuring evidence that the country is recovering from the natural exhaustion of the war, and that it is rising to a new life and starting on a new course. It is intent, as never before, upon listening to the word of the teacher, whether it comes from the platform, the school house, or the pulpit. The power of evil is being broken. The power of the truth is reasserting itself. The Declaration of Independence is continuing to justify itself.

Calvin Coolidge, State of the Union Address

December 6, 1923

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

For us peace reigns everywhere. We desire to perpetuate it always by granting full justice to others and requiring of others full justice to ourselves.

Our country has one cardinal principle to maintain in its foreign policy. It is an American principle. It must be an American policy. We attend to our own affairs, conserve our own strength, and protect the interests of our own citizens; but we recognize thoroughly our obligation to help others, reserving to the decision of our own judgment the time, the place, and the method. We realize the common bond of humanity. We know the inescapable law of service.

Our country has definitely refused to adopt and ratify the covenant of the League of Nations. We have not felt warranted in assuming the responsibilities which its members have assumed. I am not proposing any change in this policy; neither is the Senate. The incident, so far as we are concerned, is closed. The League exists as a foreign agency. We hope it will be helpful. But the United States sees no reason to limit its own freedom and independence of action by joining it. We shall do well to recognize this basic fact in all national affairs and govern ourselves accordingly.

WORLD COURT

Our foreign policy has always been guided by two principles. The one is the avoidance of permanent political alliances which would sacrifice our proper independence. The other is the peaceful settlement of controversies between nations. By example and by treaty we have advocated arbitration. For nearly 25 years we have been a member of The Hague Tribunal, and have long sought the creation of a permanent World Court of Justice. I am in full accord with both of these policies. I favor the establishment of such a court intended to include the whole world. That is, and has long been, an American policy.

Pending before the Senate is a proposal that this Government give its support to the Permanent Court of International Justice, which is a new and somewhat different plan. This is not a partisan question. It should not assume an artificial importance. The court is merely a convenient instrument of adjustment to which we could go, but to which we could not be brought. It should be discussed with entire candor, not by a political but by a judicial method, without pressure and without prejudice. Partisanship has no place in our foreign relations. As I wish to see a court established, and as the proposal presents the only practical plan on which
many nations have ever agreed, though it may not meet every desire, I therefore commend it to
the favorable consideration of the Senate, with the proposed reservations clearly indicating our
refusal to adhere to the League of Nations.

RUSSIA

Our diplomatic relations, lately so largely interrupted, are now being resumed, but Russia
presents notable difficulties. We have every desire to see that great people, who are our
traditional friends, restored to their position among the nations of the earth. We have relieved
their pitiable destitution with an enormous charity. Our Government offers no objection to the
carrying on of commerce by our citizens with the people of Russia. Our Government does not
propose, however, to enter into relations with another regime which refuses to recognize the
sanctity of international obligations. I do not propose to barter away for the privilege of trade any
of the cherished rights of humanity. I do not propose to make merchandise of any American
principles. These rights and principles must go wherever the sanctions of our Government go.

But while the favor of America is not for sale, I am willing to make very large
concessions for the purpose of rescuing the people of Russia. Already encouraging evidences of
returning to the ancient ways of society can be detected. But more are needed. Whenever there
appears any disposition to compensate our citizens who were despoiled, and to recognize that
debt contracted with our Government, not by the Czar, but by the newly formed Republic of
Russia; whenever the active spirit of enmity to our institutions is abated; whenever there appear
works mete for repentance; our country ought to be the first to go to the economic and moral
rescue of Russia. We have every desire to help and no desire to injure. We hope the time is near
at hand when we can act…

FISCAL CONDITION

Our main problems are domestic problems. Financial stability is the first requisite of
sound government. We can not escape the effect of world conditions. We can not avoid the
inevitable results of the economic disorders which have reached all nations. But we shall
diminish their harm to us in proportion as we continue to restore our Government finances to a
secure and endurable position. This we can and must do. Upon that firm foundation rests the only
hope of progress and prosperity. From that source must come relief for the people.

This is being, accomplished by a drastic but orderly retrenchment, which is bringing our
expenses within our means. The origin of this has been the determination of the American
people, the main support has been the courage of those in authority, and the effective method has
been the Budget System. The result has involved real sacrifice by department heads, but it has
been made without flinching. This system is a law of the Congress. It represents your will. It
must be maintained, and ought to be strengthened by the example of your observance. Without a
Budget System there can be no fixed responsibility and no constructive scientific economy.

This great concentration of effort by the administration and Congress has brought the
expenditures, exclusive of the self—supporting Post Office Department, down to three billion
dollars. It is possible, in consequence, to make a large reduction in the taxes of the people, which
is the sole object of all curtailment. This is treated at greater length in the Budget message, and a
proposed plan has been presented in detail in a statement by the Secretary of the Treasury which
has my unqualified approval. I especially commend a decrease on earned incomes, and further
abolition of admission, message, and nuisance taxes. The amusement and educational value of
moving pictures ought not to be taxed. Diminishing charges against moderate incomes from
investment will afford immense relief, while a revision of the surtaxes will not only provide
additional money for capital investment, thus stimulating industry and employing more but will not greatly reduce the revenue from that source, and may in the future actually increase it.

Being opposed to war taxes in time of peace, I am not in favor of excess—profits taxes. A very great service could be rendered through immediate enactment of legislation relieving the people of some of the burden of taxation. To reduce war taxes is to give every home a better chance...

THE NEGRO

Numbered among our population are some 12,000,000 colored people. Under our Constitution their rights are just as sacred as those of any other citizen. It is both a public and a private duty to protect those rights. The Congress ought to exercise all its powers of prevention and punishment against the hideous crime of lynching, of which the negroes are by no means the sole sufferers, but for which they furnish a majority of the victims.

Already a considerable sum is appropriated to give the negroes vocational training in agriculture. About half a million dollars is recommended for medical courses at Howard University to help contribute to the education of 500 colored doctors needed each year. On account of the integration of large numbers into industrial centers, it has been proposed that a commission be created, composed of members from both races, to formulate a better policy for mutual understanding and confidence. Such an effort is to be commended. Everyone would rejoice in the accomplishment of the results which it seeks. But it is well to recognize that these difficulties are to a large extent local problems which must be worked out by the mutual forbearance and human kindness of each community. Such a method gives much more promise of a real remedy than outside interference...

REGULATORY LEGISLATION

Cooperation with other maritime powers is necessary for complete protection of our coast waters from pollution. Plans for this are under way, but await certain experiments for refuse disposal. Meantime laws prohibiting spreading oil and oil refuse from vessels in our own territorial waters would be most helpful against this menace and should be speedily enacted.

   Laws should be passed regulating aviation.
   Revision is needed of the laws regulating radio interference...

   If our Alaskan fisheries are to be saved from destruction, there must be further legislation declaring a general policy and delegating the authority to make rules and regulations to an administrative body...

EDUCATION AND WELFARE

Our National Government is not doing as much as it legitimately can do to promote the welfare of the people. Our enormous material wealth, our institutions, our whole form of society, can not be considered fully successful until their benefits reach the merit of every individual. This is not a suggestion that the Government should, or could, assume for the people the inevitable burdens of existence. There is no method by which we can either be relieved of the results of our own folly or be guaranteed a successful life. There is an inescapable personal responsibility for the development of character, of industry, of thrift, and of self—control. These do not come from the Government, but from the people themselves. But the Government can and should always be expressive of steadfast determination, always vigilant, to maintain conditions under which these virtues are most likely to develop and secure recognition and reward. This is the American policy.

   It is in accordance with this principle that we have enacted laws for the protection of the public health and have adopted prohibition in narcotic drugs and intoxicating liquors. For
purposes of national uniformity we ought to provide, by constitutional amendment and appropriate legislation, for a limitation of child labor, and in all cases under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Federal Government a minimum wage law for women, which would undoubtedly find sufficient power of enforcement in the influence of public opinion.

Having in mind that education is peculiarly a local problem, and that it should always be pursued with the largest freedom of choice by students and parents, nevertheless, the Federal Government might well give the benefit of its counsel and encouragement more freely in this direction. If anyone doubts the need of concerted action by the States of the Nation for this purpose, it is only necessary to consider the appalling figures of illiteracy representing a condition which does not vary much in all parts of the Union…The humanitarian side of government should not be repressed, but should be cultivated.

Mere intelligence, however, is not enough. Enlightenment must be accompanied by that moral power which is the product of the home and of rebellion. Real education and true welfare for the people rest inevitably on this foundation, which the Government can approve and commend, but which the people themselves must create…

HIGHWAYS AND FORESTS

Highways and reforestation should continue to have the interest and support of the Government. Everyone is anxious for good highways. I have made a liberal proposal in the Budget for the continuing payment to the States by the Federal Government of its share for this necessary public improvement. No expenditure of public money contributes so much to the national wealth as for building good roads.

Reforestation has an importance far above the attention it usually secures. A special committee of the Senate is investigating this need, and I shall welcome a constructive policy based on their report.

CONCLUSION

It is 100 years since our country announced the Monroe doctrine. This principle has been ever since, and is now, one of the main foundations of our foreign relations. It must be maintained. But in maintaining it we must not be forgetful that a great change has taken place. We are no longer a weak Nation, thinking mainly of defense, dreading foreign imposition. We are great and powerful. New powers bring new responsibilities. Our duty then was to protect ourselves. Added to that, our duty now is to help give stability to the world. We want idealism. We want that vision which lifts men and nations above themselves. These are virtues by reason of their own merit. But they must not be cloistered; they must not be impractical; they must not be ineffective.

The world has had enough of the curse of hatred and selfishness, of destruction and war. It has had enough of the wrongful use of material power. For the healing of the nations there must be good will and charity, confidence and peace. The time has come for a more practical use of moral power, and more reliance upon the principle that right makes its own might. Our authority among the nations must be represented by justice and mercy. It is necessary not only to have faith, but to make sacrifices for our faith. The spiritual forces of the world make all its final determinations. It is with these voices that America should speak. Whenever they declare a righteous purpose there need be no doubt that they will be heard. America has taken her place in the world as a Republic——free, independent, powerful. The best service that can be rendered to humanity is the assurance that this place will be maintained.
Calvin Coolidge, Address at Gettysburg Battlefield

May 30, 1928

This returning Decoration Day brings our entire Nation in reverence and respect to the graves of our departed soldiers…

To express our devotion we have come to the field of Gettysburg. It ranks as one of the great historic battle grounds of this continent. In the magnitude of its importance it compares with the Plains of Abraham, with Saratoga, and with Yorktown. It is associated with a great battle between the Union and Confederate forces and with one of the greatest addresses ever delivered by one of the greatest men ever in the world, Abraham Lincoln…

[O]ur military force is exceedingly moderate. Our standing army is small, our National Guard and Reserve represent little more than a supplementary police force, when we consider our great area at home and our obligations in our the protection of our commerce, which is world wide and not exceeded in importance by that of any other country, while of very respectable proportions, needs to be strengthened in cruisers and other auxiliary craft. Such construction is already under way and plans are maturing for the necessary increases. Our air forces are being steadily improved and enlarged.

While we are maintaining these moderate forces, we are especially anxious for the world to know that they are purely for defensive purposes and to promote general peace and tranquility. No other nation has anything which we would think of taking by force. Our restrictive immigration law is a declaration of national policy against the acquisition of the territory of any foreign people. Though we have at this time some of our forces in Haiti, Nicaragua, and China, they are in none of these places for the purpose of making war, but for the purpose of insuring peaceful conditions under which the rights of our nationals and their property may receive that protection to which they are entitled under the terms of international law. Our further purpose in Haiti and Nicaragua is to assist the peoples and governments of those two countries in establishing stability, in maintaining orderly and peaceful institutions in harmony with civilized society. We are there at their express invitation and in accordance with explicit agreements.

The world-wide interests of the United States aside from the dictates of humanity make us view with peculiar disfavour not only any danger of being involved in war ourselves, but any danger of war among other nations. Our investments and trade relations are such that it is almost impossible to conceive of any conflict anywhere on earth which would not affect us injuriously. The one thing that we want above all else for ourselves and for other nations is a continuance of peace. Whether so intended or not, any nations engaging in war would thereby necessarily be engaged in a course prejudicial to us.

The strength of this Nation, however, is not expressed merely in terms of an Army and Navy. A yet greater power is derived from the happiness and contentment of the people. During recent years this has been our national position to a greater extent than ever experienced by any other people. A realization of the benefits derived from our political and economic institutions naturally results in patriotic devotion. The efforts made to establish a government free from tyranny, in which the fullest freedom consistent with order and justice would be granted, and where opportunity would be open and industry attended with the largest rewards, all have an important bearing on the subject of national defense.
But to the contentment and patriotism of the people there must be added the resources that are derived from prosperous industry, agriculture, and commerce. Good credit, which is derived from sound financial conditions, is the principal foundation of national defense. That country which has so ordered its finances as to be in a position to furnish the largest amount of money will always be in the best position to protect itself. Reduction of our national debt, permitting a reduction of taxes which stimulates private enterprise and increases our credit, is an important addition to our national strength. The industrial advance, the agricultural development, the financial resources, strengthened by wise policies in time of peace are of inestimable value in time of war.

A people which gives itself over to great armaments and military display runs great danger of creating within itself a quarrelsome war spirit. But these other elements of power, although their importance is usually ignored, by contributing to the happiness and contentment of the people, are important influences for peace. Those who seek for vast military establishments requiring enormous expenditures of money are not necessarily contributing so much to national defense as those who would apply more of our revenue to the payment of our debt and a corresponding reduction of our taxes, which would be reflected in increased prosperity. With this method of preparedness, the more we have of it the more peaceful we become.

It can be said of our country that in all its history it has never made preparations to attack any other country. Whenever it has been engaged in conflict it has entered it in such a state of unpreparedness as to demonstrate that it was not sought or even expected. While others have felt that they were forced to prepare for war, our situation has been such that we have always been preparing for peace.

It is our theory that while the Army and Navy are an important and necessary part, they are by no means the only agency of national security. We know that there are times when race antagonisms and national animosities break out in the world in the most unexpected way. At other times, all nations are subjected to more or less domestic-tumult. In such cases, the presence of adequate armed forces is the only practical method of protection for life and property. But the world has advanced far enough now in civilization and experience, so that a great conflict is not likely to arise so much from design as from accident. It is realized that war can not be profitable. The trend of civilization is undoubtedly toward peace.

The reason for this is not far to seek. War means the application of force. Peace means the application of reason. War is complete lawlessness. Peace is the rule of law. The principal effort of civilization, after all is to bring the world under obedience to law. The great conflict which raged upon this battlefield had for its ultimate decision the question of whether the power of the sword or the power of the Constitution was to be supreme. Under republican institutions an industrious and law-abiding people will make a peaceful nation, while a lawless and riotous people will make a warlike nation. Like many other of our problems, the solution runs back to the individual and the home. If around the Nation's fireside respect for authority, reverence for holy things, and obedience to parental discipline are taught, the surest foundation for peace will be laid. Where these home influences are lacking, the danger of conflict increases...

The same necessity for being law abiding at home applies to our citizens when they are abroad. Our people are granted free access on the same basis as others into all the countries of the world. As a general policy they go with the encouragement of our government to engage in all kinds of enterprise. But when once they have set foot in foreign land, it is their duty to render obedience to the domestic and international law which is applicable to their proposed actions. Our government necessarily has rights over its citizens and their property in whatever country
they may be. While we do not and can not undertake to interfere in the application of domestic law to our nationals, unless it contravenes the rights of our government and people under international law, nevertheless the carelessness of some of our citizens abroad in violating domestic law and in assuming an arrogant attitude toward the local inhabitants tends to bring our country into disrepute and endangers the continuance of friendly relations.

A government of the United States that failed in its duty to protect the lives and property of its citizens would be justly condemned at home and covered with derision abroad. But our citizens ought to remember that it is their duty so to conduct themselves in their relations with foreign interests that they are worthy of whatever protection they may need from their home government.

Obedience to international law, however, is a reciprocal duty. It is necessary not only that we scrupulously observe it ourselves, but that it be known that we shall require such observance from others. When we make agreements with other nations we must see that they are performed. If they are ever to be abrogated, it must be only in accordance with their terms. For us to insist at all times and places on the observance of international law is to strengthen the main foundation of peace. By our influence and by our example we can do much to discourage all acts of international lawlessness.

After all, peace is a spiritual attainment. We can set up material safeguards like fortifications and armaments, which will afford us much protection against attack, but unless we cultivate and cherish sentiments of friendship and understanding they are no guaranty of peace. One method of arriving at a better state of understanding, so that friendship may be preserved, is to provide before the event for methods of negotiating and adjudicating matters in dispute. In furtherance of the plan of this government to settle international controversies by pacific means and thereby lessen the causes of war, the United States is now negotiating new arbitration treaties and additional conciliation treaties with the principal nations of the world.

The Pan American Conference which met at Havana in January, 1928, passed a resolution calling a conference of all the American States to meet in Washington within a year to draft treaties of arbitration and conciliation. For that purpose, such a conference probably will be held in Washington the latter part of this year. The peace of the world can not, of course, be obtained by any one single act but every treaty of arbitration and conciliation and every agreement against resorting to war adds another barrier against those conflicts which from time to time have recurred in the history of nations, and it is the hope of mankind that these repeated steps may in time establish a mode of thought and a custom of action that will do much to prevent war.

As is well known, we are also engaged in conversations with different powers for putting peace on a new basis and making it still more permanent. In June, 1927, M. Briand, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, made an historic proposal to this government. He suggested that France and the United States sign a treaty condemning recourse to war and renouncing it as an instrument of national policy in their mutual relations. During the 11 months that have since elapsed, this suggestion has been developed into one of the most impressive peace movements that the world has ever seen. The United States has accepted the principle underlying M. Briand's suggestion and has advocated its extension so as to include within the scope of the proposed treaty not only France and the United States, but also Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and Japan, and any other nations of the world that might care to join with these six powers in a common renunciation of war.
In order to facilitate discussion and to demonstrate that a treaty such as that desired by the United States could be short, simple, and straightforward, Mr. Kellogg, Secretary of State submitted on April 13, 1928, for the consideration of the other interested powers, a preliminary draft of a treaty representing in a general way the form of treaty which he suggested we were prepared to conclude. This draft treaty has met with very favorable reception. Not only has the idea of a multilateral treaty for the renunciation of war been endorsed by public opinion here and abroad but the governments themselves have approached the matter with an interest and a sympathy which is most encouraging.

We have gathered to pay tribute to our soldier dead. This day is consecrated to their memory. It seems to me that the greatest honor that we can do to those who have died on the field of battle that this Republic might live is soberly to pledge ourselves to bend our every effort to prevent any recurrence of war. The government of the people, by the people, for the people, which Lincoln described in his immortal address, is a government of peace, not of war, and our dead will not have died in vain if, inspired by their sacrifice, we endeavour by every means within our power to prevent the shedding of human blood in the attempted settlement of international controversies. It is my earnest hope that success may crown the negotiations now in progress, and that the ideals which have inspired the French Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State of the United States in their joint efforts to find a solution of the problem of peace may find a practical realization in the early making of a multilateral treaty limiting future resort to war.

**Calvin Coolidge, Address Before the Pan American Conference**

Havana, Cuba, January 16, 1928

Mr. President and members of the Pan American Conference…

In the spirit of Christopher Columbus all of the Americans have an eternal bond of unity, a common heritage bequeathed to us alone. Unless we together redeem the promise which his voyage held for humanity, it must remain forever void. This is the destiny which Pan America has been chosen to fulfill.

As we look back over the accomplishments of the past four centuries we can see that we are warranted in asserting that the Western Hemisphere has not failed in the service that it seemed destined to render to humanity. Progress does not go forward in a straight line. It is a succession of waves. We can not always ride on their crest, but among our republics the main tide of human advancement has been steadily rising. The people have taken charge of their own affairs. In spite of some temporary discouragements, they have on the whole been successful. The fertility of a virgin soil, a wealth of mineral deposits, an abundance of water power, a multitude of navigable rivers, all at the command of a resourceful people, have produced a material prosperity greater in amount and more widely distributed than ever before fell to the lot of the human race. The arts and sciences have flourished, the advantages of education are widespread, devotion to religion is marked by its sincerity. The spirit of liberty is universal. An attitude of peace and good will prevails among our nations. A determination to adjust differences among ourselves, not by a resort to force, but by the application of the principles of justice and equity, is one of our strongest characteristics. The sovereignty of small nations is respected. It is
for the purpose of giving stronger guaranties to the principles, of increasing the amount and extending the breadth of these blessings, that this conference has been assembled.

The very place where we are meeting is a complete demonstration of the progress we are making. Thirty years ago Cuba ranked as a foreign possession, torn by revolution and devastated by hostile forces. Such government as existed rested on military force. Today Cuba is her own sovereign. Her people are independent, free, and prosperous, peaceful, and enjoying the advantages of self-government. The last important area has taken her place among the republics of the New World. Our fair hostess has raised herself to a high and honorable position among the nations of the earth. The intellectual qualities of the Cuban people have won for them a permanent place in science, art, and literature, and their production of staple commodities has made them an important factor in the economic structure of the world. They have reached a position in the stability of their government, in the genuine expression of their public opinion at the ballot box, and in the recognized soundness of their public credit that has commanded universal respect and admiration. What Cuba has done, others have done and are doing.

It is a heavy responsibility which rests upon the people and the governments represented at this conference. Unto them has been given a new land, free from the traditional jealousies and hatreds of the Old World, where the people might come into the fullest state of development. It is among the republics of this hemisphere that the principle of human rights has had its broadest application; where political freedom and equality and economic opportunity have made their greatest advance. Our most sacred trust has been, and is, the establishment and expansion of the spirit of democracy. No doubt we shall make some false starts and experience some disappointing reactions. But we have put our confidence in the ultimate wisdom of the people. We believe we can rely on their intelligence, their honesty, and their character. We are thoroughly committed to the principle that they are better fitted to govern themselves than anyone else is to govern them. We do not claim immediate perfection. But we do expect continual progress. Our history reveals that in such expectation we have not been disappointed. It is better for the people to make their own mistakes than to have some one else make their mistakes for them.

Next to our attachment to the principle of self-government has been our attachment to the policy of peace. When the republics of the Western Hemisphere gained their independence, they were compelled to fight for it. They have always been a brave, resolute, and determined people, willing to make any sacrifice to defend what they believed to be their rights. But when once their rights have been secured, they have been almost equally solicitous to respect the rights of others. Their chief efforts have been devoted to the arts of peace. They have never come under the delusion of military grandeur. Nowhere among these republics have great military establishments ever been maintained for the purpose of overawing or subjugating other nations. We have all nourished a commendable sentiment of moderate preparation for national defense, believing that for a nation to be unnecessarily neglectful of the military art, even if it did not invite and cause such aggression as to result either in war or in abject humiliation, it must finally lead to a disastrous disintegration of the very moral fiber of the nation. But it is one thing to be prepared to defend our rights as a last extremity and quite another to rely on force where reason ought to prevail. The form of our governments guarantees us against the Old World dynastic wars. It is scarcely too much to say that the conflicts which have been waged by our republics for 150 years have been almost entirely for the purpose of securing independence and extending the domain of human freedom. When these have been accomplished, we have not failed to heed the admonition to beat our swords into plowshares.
We have kept the peace so largely among our Republics because democracies are peace loving. They are founded on the desire to promote the general welfare of the people, which is seldom accomplished by warfare. In addition to this, we have adopted a spirit of accommodation, good will, confidence, and mutual helpfulness. We have been slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. When this attitude prevails it is not difficult to find practical means of adjusting differences. The statesmanship of the southern American Republics has shown a peculiar skill and aptitude in this field. It began with mutual consultation. The first Pan American Congress assembled at Panama City about 100 years ago. The purpose of that gathering has never been forgotten, and it may be said to have marked the beginning of a permanent institution. The Republics south of the Rio Grande have produced a most impressive record of a resort to mediation, arbitration, and other peaceful methods of the adjustment and adjudication of their international differences. A study of their treaties will disclose some of the finest examples of mutual covenants for the limitation of armaments and the avoidance of hostile conflict. In the discovery of the true principles of international relations, and in the practical ability of putting them into effect, they have demonstrated a moral power and strength of character for which the whole world should be profoundly grateful...

Like the subjects which have occupied the attention of your predecessors, the topics contained in the agenda of the present conference call for cooperative international action. They belong to the class of inquiries that produce closer international relations, promoting the good of all in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres. Your predecessors have shown great wisdom in directing their attention to the matters that unite and strengthen us in friendly collaboration -- subjects that develop an inter-American unity of sentiment which alone can make our common endeavors fruitful...

It is not desirable that we should attempt to be all alike. Progress is not secured through uniformity and similarity but rather through multiplicity and diversity. We should all be intent on maintaining our own institutions and customs, preserving the purity of our own language and literature, fostering the ideals of our own culture and society. In a territory reaching from the north temperate zone through the Tropics to the South Pole, there is room enough to carry worthy activity which is profitable and every ideal which is good. Our geographical location, as well as our political ideals, has endowed us with a self-contained unity and independence. Instead of considering our variations as an obstacle, we ought to realize that they are a contribution to harmonious political and economic relations.

The light which Columbus followed has not failed. The courage that carried him on still lives. They are the heritage of the people of Bolivar and of Washington. We must lay our voyage of exploration toward complete understanding and friendship. Having taken that course, we must not be turned aside by the fears of the timid, the counsels of the ignorant, or the designs of the malevolent. With law and charity as our guides, with that ancient faith which is only strengthened when it requires sacrifices, we shall anchor at last in the harbor of justice and truth. The same Pilot which stood by the side of the great discoverer, and the same wisdom which instructed the founding fathers of our Republics, will continue to abide with us.
Franklin Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address

March 4, 1933

I AM certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

In such a spirit on my part and on yours we face our common difficulties. They concern, thank God, only material things. Values have shrunken to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone.

More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.

Yet our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. Compared with the perils which our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for. Nature still offers her bounty and human efforts have multiplied it. Plenty is at our doorstep, but a generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily this is because the rulers of the exchange of mankind’s goods have failed, through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure, and abdicated. Practices of the unscrupulous money changers stand indicted in the court of public opinion, rejected by the hearts and minds of men.

The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths. The measure of the restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit…

Restoration calls, however, not for changes in ethics alone. This Nation asks for action, and action now.

Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. It can be accomplished in part by direct recruiting by the Government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of a war, but at the same
time, through this employment, accomplishing greatly needed projects to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources.

Hand in hand with this we must frankly recognize the overbalance of population in our industrial centers and, by engaging on a national scale in a redistribution, endeavor to provide a better use of the land for those best fitted for the land. The task can be helped by definite efforts to raise the values of agricultural products and with this the power to purchase the output of our cities. It can be helped by preventing realistically the tragedy of the growing loss through foreclosure of our small homes and our farms. It can be helped by insistence that the Federal, State, and local governments act forthwith on the demand that their cost be drastically reduced. It can be helped by the unifying of relief activities which today are often scattered, uneconomical, and unequal. It can be helped by national planning for and supervision of all forms of transportation and of communications and other utilities which have a definitely public character. There are many ways in which it can be helped, but it can never be helped merely by talking about it. We must act and act quickly.

Finally, in our progress toward a resumption of work we require two safeguards against a return of the evils of the old order; there must be a strict supervision of all banking and credits and investments; there must be an end to speculation with other people’s money, and there must be provision for an adequate but sound currency.

There are the lines of attack. I shall presently urge upon a new Congress in special session detailed measures for their fulfillment, and I shall seek the immediate assistance of the several States.

Through this program of action we address ourselves to putting our own national house in order and making income balance outgo. Our international trade relations, though vastly important, are in point of time and necessity secondary to the establishment of a sound national economy. I favor as a practical policy the putting of first things first. I shall spare no effort to restore world trade by international economic readjustment, but the emergency at home cannot wait on that accomplishment…

If I read the temper of our people correctly, we now realize as we have never realized before our interdependence on each other; that we can not merely take but we must give as well; that if we are to go forward, we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of a common discipline, because without such discipline no progress is made, no leadership becomes effective. We are, I know, ready and willing to sacrifice our lives and property to such discipline, because it makes possible a leadership which aims at a larger good. This I propose to offer, pledging that the larger purposes will bind upon us all as a sacred obligation with a unity of duty hitherto evoked only in time of armed strife.

With this pledge taken, I assume unhesitatingly the leadership of this great army of our people dedicated to a disciplined attack upon our common problems.

Action in this image and to this end is feasible under the form of government which we have inherited from our ancestors. Our Constitution is so simple and practical that it is possible always to meet extraordinary needs by changes in emphasis and arrangement without loss of essential form. That is why our constitutional system has proved itself the most superbly enduring political mechanism the modern world has produced. It has met every stress of vast expansion of territory, of foreign wars, of bitter internal strife, of world relations.

It is to be hoped that the normal balance of executive and legislative authority may be wholly adequate to meet the unprecedented task before us. But it may be that an unprecedented
demand and need for undelayed action may call for temporary departure from that normal balance of public procedure.

I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world may require. These measures, or such other measures as the Congress may build out of its experience and wisdom, I shall seek, within my constitutional authority, to bring to speedy adoption.

But in the event that the Congress shall fail to take one of these two courses, and in the event that the national emergency is still critical, I shall not evade the clear course of duty that will then confront me. I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis—broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.

For the trust reposed in me I will return the courage and the devotion that befit the time. I can do no less.

We face the arduous days that lie before us in the warm courage of the national unity; with the clear consciousness of seeking old and precious moral values; with the clean satisfaction that comes from the stern performance of duty by old and young alike. We aim at the assurance of a rounded and permanent national life.

We do not distrust the future of essential democracy. The people of the United States have not failed. In their need they have registered a mandate that they want direct, vigorous action. They have asked for discipline and direction under leadership. They have made me the present instrument of their wishes. In the spirit of the gift I take it.

In this dedication of a Nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May He protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come.

Franklin Roosevelt, Fireside Chat Outlining the New Deal Program

May 7, 1933

On a Sunday night a week after my Inauguration I used the radio to tell you about the banking crisis and the measures we were taking to meet it. I think that in that way I made clear to the country various facts that might otherwise have been misunderstood and in general provided a means of understanding which did much to restore confidence.

Tonight, eight weeks later, I come for the second time to give you my report -- in the same spirit and by the same means to tell you about what we have been doing and what we are planning to do.

Two months ago we were facing serious problems. The country was dying by inches. It was dying because trade and commerce had declined to dangerously low levels; prices for basic commodities were such as to destroy the value of the assets of national institutions such as banks, savings banks, insurance companies, and others. These institutions, because of their great needs, were foreclosing mortgages, calling loans, refusing credit. Thus there was actually in process of destruction the property of millions of people who had borrowed money on that property in terms of dollars which had had an entirely different value from the level of March, 1933. That situation in that crisis did not call for any complicated consideration of economic panaceas or fancy plans. We were faced by a condition and not a theory.
There were just two alternatives: The first was to allow the foreclosures to continue, credit to be withheld and money to go into hiding, and thus forcing liquidation and bankruptcy of banks, railroads and insurance companies and a recapitalizing of all business and all property on a lower level. This alternative meant a continuation of what is loosely called “deflation”, the net result of which would have been extraordinary hardship on all property owners and, incidentally, extraordinary hardships on all persons working for wages through an increase in unemployment and a further reduction of the wage scale.

It is easy to see that the result of this course would have not only economic effects of a very serious nature but social results that might bring incalculable harm. Even before I was inaugurated I came to the conclusion that such a policy was too much to ask the American people to bear. It involved not only a further loss of homes, farms, savings and wages but also a loss of spiritual values -- the loss of that sense of security for the present and the future so necessary to the peace and contentment of the individual and of his family. When you destroy these things you will find it difficult to establish confidence of any sort in the future. It was clear that mere appeals from Washington for confidence and the mere lending of more money to shaky institutions could not stop this downward course. A prompt program applied as quickly as possible seemed to me not only justified but imperative to our national security. The Congress, and when I say Congress I mean the members of both political parties, fully understood this and gave me generous and intelligent support. The members of Congress realized that the methods of normal times had to be replaced in the emergency by measures which were suited to the serious and pressing requirements of the moment. There was no actual surrender of power, Congress still retained its constitutional authority and no one has the slightest desire to change the balance of these powers. The function of Congress is to decide what has to be done and to select the appropriate agency to carry out its will. This policy it has strictly adhered to. The only thing that has been happening has been to designate the President as the agency to carry out certain of the purposes of the Congress. This was constitutional and in keeping with the past American tradition.

The legislation which has been passed or in the process of enactment can properly be considered as part of a well-grounded plan.

First, we are giving opportunity of employment to one-quarter of a million of the unemployed, especially the young men who have dependents, to go into the forestry and flood prevention work. This is a big task because it means feeding, clothing and caring for nearly twice as many men as we have in the regular army itself. In creating this civilian conservation corps we are killing two birds with one stone. We are clearly enhancing the value of our natural resources and second, we are relieving an appreciable amount of actual distress. This great group of men have entered upon their work on a purely voluntary basis, no military training is involved and we are conserving not only our natural resources but our human resources. One of the great values to this work is the fact that it is direct and requires the intervention of very little machinery…

We are planning to ask the Congress for legislation to enable the Government to undertake public works, thus stimulating directly and indirectly the employment of many others in well-considered projects.

Further legislation has been taken up which goes much more fundamentally into our economic problems. The Farm Relief Bill seeks by the use of several methods, alone or together, to bring about an increased return to farmers for their major farm products, seeking at the same time to prevent in the days to come disastrous over-production which so often in the past has
kept farm commodity prices far below a reasonable return. This measure provides wide powers for emergencies. The extent of its use will depend entirely upon what the future has in store.

Well-considered and conservative measures will likewise be proposed which will attempt to give to the industrial workers of the country a more fair wage return, prevent cut-throat competition and unduly long hours for labor, and at the same time to encourage each industry to prevent over-production…

I am certain that the people of this country understand and approve the broad purposes behind these new governmental policies relating to agriculture and industry and transportation. We found ourselves faced with more agricultural products than we could possibly consume ourselves and surpluses which other nations did not have the cash to buy from us except at prices ruinously low. We have found our factories able to turn out more goods than we could possibly consume, and at the same time we were faced with a falling export demand. We found ourselves with more facilities to transport goods and crops than there were goods and crops to be transported. All of this has been caused in large part by a complete lack of planning and a complete failure to understand the danger signals that have been flying ever since the close of the World War. The people of this country have been erroneously encouraged to believe that they could keep on increasing the output of farm and factory indefinitely and that some magician would find ways and means for that increased output to be consumed with reasonable profit to the producer.

Today we have reason to believe that things are a little better than they were two months ago. Industry has picked up, railroads are carrying more freight, farm prices are better, but I am not going to indulge in issuing proclamations of over enthusiastic assurance. We cannot bally-ho ourselves back to prosperity. I am going to be honest at all times with the people of the country. I do not want the people of this country to take the foolish course of letting this improvement come back on another speculative wave. I do not want the people to believe that because of unjustified optimism we can resume the ruinous practice of increasing our crop output and our factory output in the hope that a kind providence will find buyers at high prices. Such a course may bring us immediate and false prosperity but it will be the kind of prosperity that will lead us into another tailspin.

It is wholly wrong to call the measure that we have taken Government control of farming, control of industry, and control of transportation. It is rather a partnership between Government and farming and industry and transportation, not partnership in profits, for the profits would still go to the citizens, but rather a partnership in planning and partnership to see that the plans are carried out…

We are working toward a definite goal, which is to prevent the return of conditions which came very close to destroying what we call modern civilization. The actual accomplishment of our purpose cannot be attained in a day. Our policies are wholly within purposes for which our American Constitutional Government was established 150 years ago…

To you, the people of this country, all of us, the Members of the Congress and the members of this Administration owe a profound debt of gratitude. Throughout the depression you have been patient. You have granted us wide powers, you have encouraged us with a widespread approval of our purposes. Every ounce of strength and every resource at our command we have devoted to the end of justifying your confidence. We are encouraged to believe that a wise and sensible beginning has been made. In the present spirit of mutual confidence and mutual encouragement we go forward.
Franklin Roosevelt, State of the Union Address

January 6, 1937
Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Congress of the United States…

[C]ircumstances of the moment compel me to ask your immediate consideration of: First, measures extending the life of certain authorizations and powers which, under present statutes, expire within a few weeks; second, an addition to the existing Neutrality Act to cover specific points raised by the unfortunate civil strife in Spain; and, third, a deficiency appropriation bill for which I shall submit estimates this week.

In March, 1933, the problems which faced our Nation and which only our national Government had the resources to meet were more serious even than appeared on the surface.

It was not only that the visible mechanism of economic life had broken down. More disturbing was the fact that long neglect of the needs of the underprivileged had brought too many of our people to the verge of doubt as to the successful adaptation of our historic traditions to the complex modern world. In that lay a challenge to our democratic form of Government itself.

Ours was the task to prove that democracy could be made to function in the world of today as effectively as in the simpler world of a hundred years ago. Ours was the task to do more than to argue a theory. The times required the confident answer of performance to those whose instinctive faith in humanity made them want to believe that in the long run democracy would prove superior to more extreme forms of Government as a process of getting action when action was wisdom, without the spiritual sacrifices which those other forms of Government exact.

That challenge we met. To meet it required unprecedented activities under Federal leadership to end abuses, to restore a large measure of material prosperity, to give new faith to millions of our citizens who had been traditionally taught to expect that democracy would provide continuously wider opportunity and continuously greater security in a world where science was continuously making material riches more available to man.

In the many methods of attack with which we met these problems, you and I, by mutual understanding and by determination to cooperate, helped to make democracy succeed by refusing to permit unnecessary disagreement to arise between two of our branches of Government. That spirit of cooperation was able to solve difficulties of extraordinary magnitude and ramification with few important errors, and at a cost cheap when measured by the immediate necessities and the eventual results.

I look forward to a continuance of that cooperation in the next four years. I look forward also to a continuance of the basis of that cooperation—— mutual respect for each other’s proper sphere of functioning in a democracy which is working well, and a common—sense realization of the need for play in the joints of the machine.

On that basis, it is within the right of the Congress to determine which of the many new activities shall be continued or abandoned, increased or curtailed.

On that same basis, the President alone has the responsibility for their administration. I find that this task of Executive management has reached the point where our administrative machinery needs comprehensive overhauling. I shall, therefore, shortly address the Congress more fully in regard to modernizing and improving the Executive branch of the Government.

That cooperation of the past four years between the Congress and the President has aimed at the fulfillment of a twofold policy: first, economic recovery through many kinds of assistance
to agriculture, industry and banking; and, second, deliberate improvement in the personal security and opportunity of the great mass of our people.

The recovery we sought was not to be merely temporary. It was to be a recovery protected from the causes of previous disasters. With that aim in view——to prevent a future similar crisis——you and I joined in a series of enactments——safe banking and sound currency, the guarantee of bank deposits, protection for the investor in securities, the removal of the threat of agricultural surpluses, insistence on collective bargaining, the outlawing of sweat shops, child labor and unfair trade practices, and the beginnings of security for the aged and the worker.

Nor was the recovery we sought merely a purposeless whirring of machinery. It is important, of course, that every man and woman in the country be able to find work, that every factory run, that business and farming as a whole earn profits. But Government in a democratic Nation does not exist solely, or even primarily, for that purpose.

It is not enough that the wheels turn. They must carry us in the direction of a greater satisfaction in life for the average man. The deeper purpose of democratic government is to assist as many of its citizens as possible, especially those who need it most, to improve their conditions of life, to retain all personal liberty which does not adversely affect their neighbors, and to pursue the happiness which comes with security and an opportunity for recreation and culture.

Even with our present recovery we are far from the goal of that deeper purpose. There are far-reaching problems still with us for which democracy must find solutions if it is to consider itself successful.

For example, many millions of Americans still live in habitations which not only fail to provide the physical benefits of modern civilization but breed disease and impair the health of future generations. The menace exists not only in the slum areas of the very large cities, but in many smaller cities as well. It exists on tens of thousands of farms, in varying degrees, in every part of the country...

Another national problem is the intelligent development of our social security system, the broadening of the services it renders, and practical improvement in its operation. In many Nations where such laws are in effect, success in meeting the expectations of the community has come through frequent amendment of the original statute.

And, of course, the most far-reaching and the most inclusive problem of all is that of unemployment and the lack of economic balance of which unemployment is at once the result and the symptom. The immediate question of adequate relief for the needy unemployed who are capable of performing useful work, I shall discuss with the Congress during the coming months. The broader task of preventing unemployment is a matter of long—range evolutionary policy. To that we must continue to give our best thought and effort. We cannot assume that immediate industrial and commercial activity which mitigates present pressures justifies the national Government at this time in placing the unemployment problem in a filing cabinet of finished business...

Overproduction, underproduction and speculation are three evil sisters who distill the troubles of unsound inflation and disastrous deflation. It is to the interest of the Nation to have Government help private enterprise to gain sound general price levels and to protect those levels from wide perilous fluctuations. We know now that if early in 1931 Government had taken the steps which were taken two and three years later, the depression would never have reached the depths of the beginning of 1933.
Sober second thought confirms most of us in the belief that the broad objectives of the National Recovery Act were sound. We know now that its difficulties arose from the fact that it tried to do too much. For example, it was unwise to expect the same agency to regulate the length of working hours, minimum wages, child labor and collective bargaining on the one hand and the complicated questions of unfair trade practices and business controls on the other.

The statute of N.R.A. has been outlawed. The problems have not. They are still with us.

That decent conditions and adequate pay for labor, and just return for agriculture, can be secured through parallel and simultaneous action by forty-eight States is a proven impossibility. It is equally impossible to obtain curbs on monopoly, unfair trade practices and speculation by State action alone. There are those who, sincerely or insincerely, still cling to State action as a theoretical hope. But experience with actualities makes it clear that Federal laws supplementing State laws are needed to help solve the problems which result from modern invention applied in an industrialized Nation which conducts its business with scant regard to State lines.

During the past year there has been a growing belief that there is little fault to be found with the Constitution of the United States as it stands today. The vital need is not an alteration of our fundamental law, but an increasingly enlightened view with reference to it. Difficulties have grown out of its interpretation; but rightly considered, it can be used as an instrument of progress, and not as a device for prevention of action…

With a better understanding of our purposes, and a more intelligent recognition of our needs as a Nation, it is not to be assumed that there will be prolonged failure to bring legislative and judicial action into closer harmony. Means must be found to adapt our legal forms and our judicial interpretation to the actual present national needs of the largest progressive democracy in the modern world…

Because all of us believe that our democratic form of government can cope adequately with modern problems as they arise, it is patriotic as well as logical for us to prove that we can meet new national needs with new laws consistent with an historic constitutional framework clearly intended to receive liberal and not narrow interpretation.

The process of our democracy must not be imperiled by the denial of essential powers of free government…

Franklin Roosevelt, Fireside Chat on Reorganization of the Judiciary

March 9, 1937

…The American people have learned from the depression. For in the last three national elections an overwhelming majority of them voted a mandate that the Congress and the President begin the task of providing that protection - not after long years of debate, but now.

The Courts, however, have cast doubts on the ability of the elected Congress to protect us against catastrophe by meeting squarely our modern social and economic conditions…

[S]ince the rise of the modern movement for social and economic progress through legislation, the Court has more and more often and more and more boldly asserted a power to veto laws passed by the Congress and State Legislatures…
In the last four years the sound rule of giving statutes the benefit of all reasonable doubt has been cast aside. The Court has been acting not as a judicial body, but as a policy-making body.

When the Congress has sought to stabilize national agriculture, to improve the conditions of labor, to safeguard business against unfair competition, to protect our national resources, and in many other ways, to serve our clearly national needs, the majority of the Court has been assuming the power to pass on the wisdom of these acts of the Congress - and to approve or disapprove the public policy written into these laws...

The Court in addition to the proper use of its judicial functions has improperly set itself up as a third house of the Congress - a super-legislature, as one of the justices has called it - reading into the Constitution words and implications which are not there, and which were never intended to be there.

We have, therefore, reached the point as a nation where we must take action to save the Constitution from the Court and the Court from itself. We must find a way to take an appeal from the Supreme Court to the Constitution itself. We want a Supreme Court which will do justice under the Constitution and not over it. In our courts we want a government of laws and not of men...

What is my proposal? It is simply this: whenever a Judge or Justice of any Federal Court has reached the age of seventy and does not avail himself of the opportunity to retire on a pension, a new member shall be appointed by the President then in office, with the approval, as required by the Constitution, of the Senate of the United States.

That plan has two chief purposes. By bringing into the judicial system a steady and continuing stream of new and younger blood, I hope, first, to make the administration of all Federal justice speedier and, therefore, less costly; secondly, to bring to the decision of social and economic problems younger men who have had personal experience and contact with modern facts and circumstances under which average men have to live and work. This plan will save our national Constitution from hardening of the judicial arteries.

The number of Judges to be appointed would depend wholly on the decision of present Judges now over seventy, or those who would subsequently reach the age of seventy.

If, for instance, any one of the six Justices of the Supreme Court now over the age of seventy should retire as provided under the plan, no additional place would be created. Consequently, although there never can be more than fifteen, there may be only fourteen, or thirteen, or twelve. And there may be only nine...

Why was the age fixed at seventy? Because the laws of many States, the practice of the Civil Service, the regulations of the Army and Navy, and the rules of many of our Universities and of almost every great private business enterprise, commonly fix the retirement age at seventy years or less.

The statute would apply to all the courts in the Federal system. There is general approval so far as the lower Federal courts are concerned. The plan has met opposition only so far as the Supreme Court of the United States itself is concerned. If such a plan is good for the lower courts it certainly ought to be equally good for the highest Court from which there is no appeal.

Those opposing this plan have sought to arouse prejudice and fear by crying that I am seeking to "pack" the Supreme Court and that a baneful precedent will be established.

What do they mean by the words "packing the Court"?

Let me answer this question with a bluntness that will end all honest misunderstanding of my purposes.
If by that phrase "packing the Court" it is charged that I wish to place on the bench spineless puppets who would disregard the law and would decide specific cases as I wished them to be decided, I make this answer: that no President fit for his office would appoint, and no Senate of honorable men fit for their office would confirm, that kind of appointees to the Supreme Court.

But if by that phrase the charge is made that I would appoint and the Senate would confirm Justices worthy to sit beside present members of the Court who understand those modern conditions, that I will appoint Justices who will not undertake to override the judgment of the Congress on legislative policy, that I will appoint Justices who will act as Justices and not as legislators - if the appointment of such Justices can be called "packing the Courts," then I say that I and with me the vast majority of the American people favor doing just that thing—now.

Is it a dangerous precedent for the Congress to change the number of the Justices? The Congress has always had, and will have, that power. The number of justices has been changed several times before, in the Administration of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson - both signers of the Declaration of Independence - Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant…

It is the clear intention of our public policy to provide for a constant flow of new and younger blood into the Judiciary. Normally every President appoints a large number of District and Circuit Court Judges and a few members of the Supreme Court. Until my first term practically every President of the United States has appointed at least one member of the Supreme Court. President Taft appointed five members and named a Chief Justice; President Wilson, three; President Harding, four, including a Chief Justice; President Coolidge, one; President Hoover, three, including a Chief Justice.

Such a succession of appointments should have provided a Court well-balanced as to age. But chance and the disinclination of individuals to leave the Supreme bench have now given us a Court in which five Justices will be over seventy-five years of age before next June and one over seventy…I now propose that we establish by law an assurance against any such ill-balanced Court in the future. I propose that hereafter, when a Judge reaches the age of seventy, a new and younger Judge shall be added to the Court automatically. In this way I propose to enforce a sound public policy by law instead of leaving the composition of our Federal Courts, including the highest, to be determined by chance or the personal indecision of individuals…

Like all lawyers, like all Americans, I regret the necessity of this controversy. But the welfare of the United States, and indeed of the Constitution itself, is what we all must think about first. Our difficulty with the Court today rises not from the Court as an institution but from human beings within it. But we cannot yield our constitutional destiny to the personal judgement of a few men who, being fearful of the future, would deny us the necessary means of dealing with the present…

I am in favor of action through legislation…because it will provide a reinvigorated, liberal-minded Judiciary necessary to furnish quicker and cheaper justice from bottom to top….I[.]t will provide a series of Federal Courts willing to enforce the Constitution as written, and unwilling to assert legislative powers by writing into it their own political and economic policies.

During the past half century the balance of power between the three great branches of the Federal Government, has been tipped out of balance by the Courts in direct contradiction of the high purposes of the framers of the Constitution. It is my purpose to restore that balance. You who know me will accept my solemn assurance that in a world in which democracy is under attack, I seek to make American democracy succeed. You and I will do our part.
MY FRIENDS:

I wish that all (the) Americans (people) could read all the citations for various medals recommended for our soldiers and sailors and marines. I am picking out one of these citations which tells of the accomplishments of Lieutenant John James Powers, United States Navy, during three days of the battles with Japanese forces in the Coral Sea.

During the first two days, Lieutenant Powers, flying a dive-bomber in the face of blasting enemy anti-aircraft fire, demolished one large enemy gunboat, put another gunboat out of commission, severely damaged an aircraft tender and a twenty-thousand-ton transport, and scored a direct hit on an aircraft carrier which burst into flames and sank soon after.

The official citation then describes the morning of the third day of battle. As the pilots of his squadron left the ready room to man their planes, Lieutenant Powers said to them, "Remember, the folks back home are counting on us. I am going to get a hit if I have to lay it on their flight deck."

He led his section down to the target from an altitude of 18,000 feet, through a wall of bursting anti-aircraft shells and swarms of enemy planes. He dived almost to the very deck of the enemy carrier, and did not release his bomb until he was sure of a direct hit. He was last seen attempting recovery from his dive at the extremely low altitude of two hundred feet, amid a terrific barrage of shell and bomb fragments, and smoke and flame and debris from the stricken vessel. His own plane was destroyed by the explosion of his own bomb. But he had made good his promise to "lay it on the flight deck."

I have received a recommendation from the Secretary of the Navy that Lieutenant John James Powers of New York City, missing in action, be awarded the Medal of Honor. I hereby and now make this award.

You and I are "the folks back home" for whose protection Lieutenant Powers fought and repeatedly risked his life. He said that we counted on him and his men. We did not count in vain. But have not those men a right to be counting on us? How are we playing our part "back home" in winning this war?

The answer is that we are not doing enough.

Today I sent a message to the Congress, pointing out the overwhelming urgency of the serious domestic economic crisis with which we are threatened. Some call it "inflation," which is a vague sort of term, and others call it a "rise in the cost of living," which is much more easily understood by most families.

That phrase, "the cost of living," means essentially what a dollar can buy.

From January 1, 1941, to May of this year, nearly a year and a half, the cost of living went up about 15%. And at that point last May we undertook to freeze the cost of living. But we could not do a complete job of it, because the Congressional authority at the time exempted a large part of farm products used for food and for making clothing, although several weeks before, I had asked the Congress for legislation to stabilize all farm prices…

I realize that it may seem out of proportion to you to be (worrying about) over-stressing these economic problems at a time like this, when we are all deeply concerned about the news from far distant fields of battle. But I give you the solemn assurance that failure to solve this problem here at home -- and to solve it now -- will make more difficult the winning of this war.
If the vicious spiral of inflation ever gets under way, the whole economic system will stagger. Prices and wages will go up so rapidly that the entire production program will be endangered. The cost of the war, paid by taxpayers, will jump beyond all present calculations. It will mean an uncontrollable rise in prices and in wages, which can result in raising the overall cost of living as high as another 20% soon. That would mean that the purchasing power of every dollar that you have in your pay envelope, or in the bank, or included in your insurance policy or your pension, would be reduced to about eighty cents worth. I need not tell you that this would have a demoralizing effect on our people, soldiers and civilians alike.

Overall stabilization of prices, and salaries, and wages and profits is necessary to the continued increasing production of planes and tanks and ships and guns.

In my Message to Congress today, I have (told the Congress) said that this must be done quickly. If we wait for two or three or four or six months it may well be too late…

Therefore, I have asked the Congress to pass legislation under which the President would be specifically authorized to stabilize the cost of living, including the price of all farm commodities. The purpose should be to hold farm prices at parity, or at levels of a recent date, whichever is higher. The purpose should also be to keep wages at a point stabilized with today's cost of living. Both must be regulated at the same time; and neither one of them can or should be regulated without the other.

At the same time that farm prices are stabilized, I will stabilize wages.

That is plain justice -- and plain common sense.

And so I have asked the Congress to take this action by the first of October. We must now act with the dispatch, which the stern necessities of war require.

I have told the Congress that inaction on their part by that date will leave me with an inescapable responsibility, a responsibility to the people of this country to see to it that the war effort is no longer imperiled by the threat of economic chaos.

As I said in my Message to the Congress:

In the event that the Congress should fail to act, and act adequately, I shall accept the responsibility, and I will act.

The President has the powers, under the Constitution and under Congressional Acts, to take measures necessary to avert a disaster which would interfere with the winning of the war.

I have given the most careful and thoughtful consideration to meeting this issue without further reference to the Congress. I have determined, however, on this vital matter to consult with the Congress.

There may be those who will say that, if the situation is as grave as I have stated it to be, I should use my powers and act now. I can only say that I have approached this problem from every angle, and that I have decided that the course of conduct which I am following in this case is consistent with my sense of responsibility as President in time of war, and with my deep and unalterable devotion to the processes of democracy.

The responsibilities of the President in wartime to protect the Nation are very grave. This total war, with our fighting fronts all over the world, makes the use of the executive power far more essential than in any previous war…

The American people can be sure that I will use my powers with a full sense of responsibility to the Constitution and to my country. The American people can also be sure that I shall not hesitate to use every power vested in me to accomplish the defeat of our enemies in any part of the world where our own safety demands such defeat.
And when the war is won, the powers under which I act will automatically revert to the people of the United States -- to the people to whom those powers belong...

Today I have also advised the Congress of the importance of speeding up the passage of the tax bill. The Federal Treasury is losing millions of dollars (a) each and every day because the bill has not yet been passed. Taxation is the only practical way of preventing the incomes and profits of individuals and corporations from getting too high.

The nation must have more money to run the War. People must stop spending for luxuries. Our country needs a far greater share of our incomes...

All of us here at home are being tested -- for our fortitude, for our selfless devotion to our country and to our cause.

This is the toughest war of all time. We need not leave it to historians of the future to answer the question whether we are tough enough to meet this unprecedented challenge. We can give that answer now. The answer is "Yes."

Franklin Roosevelt, State of the Union Address

January 11, 1944

To the Congress:

This Nation in the past two years has become an active partner in the world’s greatest war against human slavery.

We have joined with like-minded people in order to defend ourselves in a world that has been gravely threatened with gangster rule.

But I do not think that any of us Americans can be content with mere survival. Sacrifices that we and our allies are making impose upon us all a sacred obligation to see to it that out of this war we and our children will gain something better than mere survival.

We are united in determination that this war shall not be followed by another interim which leads to new disaster- that we shall not repeat the tragic errors of ostrich isolationism— that we shall not repeat the excesses of the wild twenties when this Nation went for a joy ride on a roller coaster which ended in a tragic crash...

And that means not only physical security which provides safety from attacks by aggressors. It means also economic security, social security, moral security—in a family of Nations...

The best interests of each Nation, large and small, demand that all freedom-loving Nations shall join together in a just and durable system of peace. In the present world situation, evidenced by the actions of Germany, Italy, and Japan, unquestioned military control over disturbers of the peace is as necessary among Nations as it is among citizens in a community. And an equally basic essential to peace is a decent standard of living for all individual men and women and children in all Nations. Freedom from fear is eternally linked with freedom from want...

If ever there was a time to subordinate individual or group selfishness to the national good, that time is now. Disunity at home—bickerings, self-seeking partisanship, stoppages of work, inflation, business as usual, politics as usual, luxury as usual these are the influences which can undermine the morale of the brave men ready to die at the front for us here...
That is the way to fight and win a war—all out—and not with half-an-eye on the battlefronts abroad and the other eye-and-a-half on personal, selfish, or political interests here at home.

Therefore, in order to concentrate all our energies and resources on winning the war, and to maintain a fair and stable economy at home, I recommend that the Congress adopt:

1) A realistic tax law—which will tax all unreasonable profits, both individual and corporate, and reduce the ultimate cost of the war to our sons and daughters...

It is our duty now to begin to lay the plans and determine the strategy for the winning of a lasting peace and the establishment of an American standard of living higher than ever before known. We cannot be content, no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people—whether it be one-third or one-fifth or one-tenth— is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill housed, and insecure.

This Republic had its beginning, and grew to its present strength, under the protection of certain inalienable political rights—among them the right of free speech, free press, free worship, trial by jury, freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. They were our rights to life and liberty.

As our Nation has grown in size and stature, however—as our industrial economy expanded—these political rights proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness.

We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. "Necessitous men are not free men." People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.

In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all regardless of station, race, or creed.

Among these are:

- The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the Nation;
- The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;
- The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living;
- The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;
- The right of every family to a decent home;
- The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health;
- The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment;
- The right to a good education.

All of these rights spell security. And after this war is won we must be prepared to move forward, in the implementation of these rights, to new goals of human happiness and well-being.

America’s own rightful place in the world depends in large part upon how fully these and similar rights have been carried into practice for our citizens. For unless there is security here at home there cannot be lasting peace in the world...

If history were to repeat itself and we were to return to the so-called "normalcy" of the 1920’s—then it is certain that even though we shall have conquered our enemies on the battlefields abroad, we shall have yielded to the spirit of Fascism here at home.
Lyndon Johnson, State of the Union Address

January 4, 1965

…We are entering the third century of the pursuit of American union. Two hundred years ago, in 1765, nine assembled colonies first joined together to demand freedom from arbitrary power. For the first century we struggled to hold together the first continental union of democracy in the history of man. One hundred years ago, in 1865, following a terrible test of blood and fire, the compact of union was finally sealed. For a second century we labored to establish a unity of purpose and interest among the many groups which make up the American community.

That struggle has often brought pain and violence. It is not yet over. But we have achieved a unity of interest among our people that is unmatched in the history of freedom.

And so tonight, now, in 1965, we begin a new quest for union. We seek the unity of man with the world that he has built—with the knowledge that can save or destroy him—with the cities which can stimulate or stifle him—with the wealth and the machines which can enrich or menace his spirit.

We seek to establish a harmony between man and society which will allow each of us to enlarge the meaning of his life and all of us to elevate the quality of our civilization. This is the search that we begin tonight.

STATE OF THE WORLD

But the unity we seek cannot realize its full promise in isolation. For today the state of the Union depends, in large measure, upon the state of the world. Our concern and interest, compassion and vigilance, extend to every corner of a dwindling planet.

Yet, it is not merely our concern but the concern of all free men. We will not, and we should not, assume that it is the task of Americans alone to settle all the conflicts of a torn and troubled world. Let the foes of freedom take no comfort from this. For in concert with other nations, we shall help men defend their freedom.

Our first aim remains the safety and the well-being of our own country. We are prepared to live as good neighbors with all, but we cannot be indifferent to acts designed to injure our interests, or our citizens, or our establishments abroad. The community of nations requires mutual respect. We shall extend it—and we shall expect it.

In our relations with the world we shall follow the example of Andrew Jackson who said: "I intend to ask for nothing that is not clearly right and to submit to nothing that is wrong." And he promised, that "the honor of my country shall never be stained by an apology from me for the statement of truth or for the performance of duty." That was this Nation’s policy in the 1830’s and that is this Nation’s policy in the 1960’s.

Our own freedom and growth have never been the final goal of the American dream. We were never meant to be an oasis of liberty and abundance in a worldwide desert of disappointed dreams. Our Nation was created to help strike away the chains of ignorance and misery and tyranny wherever they keep man less than God means him to be…

No longer can anyone wonder whether we are in the grip of historical decay. We know that history is ours to make. And if there is great danger, there is now also the excitement of great expectations.
AMERICA AND THE COMMUNIST NATIONS
...With the Soviet Union we seek peaceful understandings that can lessen the danger to freedom...If we are to live together in peace, we must come to know each other better...I hope the new Soviet leaders can visit America so they can learn about our country at firsthand...

In Asia, communism wears a more aggressive face. We see that in Viet—Nam. Why are we there? We are there, first, because a friendly nation has asked us for help against the Communist aggression. Ten years ago our President pledged our help. Three Presidents have supported that pledge. We will not break it now.

Second, our own security is tied to the peace of Asia. Twice in one generation we have had to fight against aggression in the Far East. To ignore aggression now would only increase the danger of a much larger war. Our goal is peace in southeast Asia. That will come only when aggressors leave their neighbors in peace. What is at stake is the cause of freedom and in that cause America will never be found wanting...

THE NON—COMMUNIST WORLD
But communism is not the only source of trouble and unrest. There are older and deeper sources—in the misery of nations and in man’s irrepressible ambition for liberty and a better life...

We are committed to help those seeking to strengthen their own independence, and to work most closely with those governments dedicated to the welfare of all of their people.

We seek not fidelity to an iron faith, but a diversity of belief as varied as man himself. We seek not to extend the power of America but the progress of humanity. We seek not to dominate others but to strengthen the freedom of all people...

Finally, we renew our commitment to the continued growth and the effectiveness of the United Nations. The frustrations of the United Nations are a product of the world that we live in, and not of the institution which gives them voice. It is far better to throw these differences open to the assembly of nations than to permit them to fester in silent danger.

These are some of the goals of the American Nation in the world in which we live. For ourselves we seek neither praise nor blame, neither gratitude nor obedience. We seek peace. We seek freedom. We seek to enrich the life of man. For that is the world in which we will flourish and that is the world that we mean for all men to ultimately have.

TOWARD THE GREAT SOCIETY
...We are in the midst of the greatest upward surge of economic well—being in the history of any nation...We worked for two centuries to climb this peak of prosperity. But we are only at the beginning of the road to the Great Society. Ahead now is a summit where freedom from the wants of the body can help fulfill the needs of the spirit.

We want to grow and build and create, but we want progress to be the servant and not the master of man...We do not intend to live in the midst of abundance, isolated from neighbors and nature, confined by blighted cities and bleak suburbs, stunted by a poverty of learning and an emptiness of leisure.

The Great Society asks not how much, but how good; not only how to create wealth but how to use it; not only how fast we are going, but where we are headed...

A NATIONAL AGENDA

I propose that we begin a program in education to ensure every American child the fullest development of his mind and skills.

I propose that we begin a massive attack on crippling and killing diseases.
I propose that we launch a national effort to make the American city a better and a more stimulating place to live.

I propose that we increase the beauty of America and end the poisoning of our rivers and the air that we breathe.

I propose that we carry out a new program to develop regions of our country that are now suffering from distress and depression.

I propose that we make new efforts to control and prevent crime and delinquency.

I propose that we eliminate every remaining obstacle to the right and the opportunity to vote.

I propose that we honor and support the achievements of thought and the creations of art.

I propose that we make an all—out campaign against waste and inefficiency…

THE TASK

…We can help insure continued prosperity through:

——a regional recovery program to assist the development of stricken areas left behind by our national progress;

——further efforts to provide our workers with the skills demanded by modern technology, for the laboring—man is an indispensable force in the American system;

——the extension of the minimum wage to more than 2 million unprotected workers;

——the improvement and the modernization of the unemployment compensation system…

Second, we must open opportunity to all our people. Most Americans enjoy a good life. But far too many are still trapped in poverty and idleness and fear.

Let a just nation throw open to them the city of promise:

——to the elderly, by providing hospital care under social security and by raising benefit payments to those struggling to maintain the dignity of their later years;

——to the poor and the unfortunate, through doubling the war against poverty this year;

——to Negro Americans, through enforcement of the civil rights law and elimination of barriers to the right to vote…

Our third goal is to improve the quality of American life.

THROUGH EDUCATION

We begin with learning. Every child must have the best education that this Nation can provide.

In addition to our existing programs, I will recommend a new program for schools and students with a first year authorization of $1,500 million. It will help at every stage along the road to learning. For the preschool years we will help needy children become aware of the excitement of learning. For the primary and secondary school years we will aid public schools serving low—income families and assist students in both public and private schools. For the college years we will provide scholarships to high school students of the greatest promise and the greatest need and we will guarantee low—interest loans to students continuing their college studies. New laboratories and centers will help our schools——help them lift their standards of excellence and explore new methods of teaching. These centers will provide special training for those who need and those who deserve special treatment.

THROUGH BETTER HEALTH

Greatness requires not only an educated people but a healthy people. Our goal is to match the achievements of our medicine to the afflictions of our people. We already carry on a large program in this country for research and health. In addition, regional medical centers can provide
the most advanced diagnosis and treatment for heart disease and cancer and stroke and other major diseases. New support for medical and dental education will provide the trained people to apply our knowledge. Community centers can help the mentally ill and improve health care for school—age children from poor families, including services for the mentally retarded.

THROUGH IMPROVING THE WORLD WE LIVE IN…

An educated and healthy people require surroundings in harmony with their hopes. In our urban areas the central problem today is to protect and restore man’s satisfaction in belonging to a community where he can find security and significance. We must also make some very important changes in our housing programs if we are to pursue these same basic goals. So a Department of Housing and Urban Development will be needed to spearhead this effort in our cities…

For over three centuries the beauty of America has sustained our spirit and has enlarged our vision. We must act now to protect this heritage. In a fruitful new partnership with the States and the cities the next decade should be a conservation milestone. We must make a massive effort to save the countryside and to establish—as a green legacy for tomorrow—more large and small parks, more seashores and open spaces than have been created during any other period in our national history. A new and substantial effort must be made to landscape highways to provide places of relaxation and recreation wherever our roads run. Within our cities imaginative programs are needed to landscape streets and to transform open areas into places of beauty and recreation. We will seek legal power to prevent pollution of our air and water before it happens. We will step up our effort to control harmful wastes, giving first priority to the cleanup of our most contaminated rivers. We will increase research to learn much more about the control of pollution…

We must also recognize and encourage those who can be pathfinders for the Nation’s imagination and understanding. To help promote and honor creative achievements, I will propose a National Foundation on the Arts.

To develop knowledge which will enrich our lives and ensure our progress, I will recommend programs to encourage basic science, particularly in the universities—and to bring closer the day when the oceans will supply our growing need for fresh water…

Many of you in this Chamber are among my oldest friends. We have shared many happy moments and many hours of work, and we have watched many Presidents together. Yet, only in the White House can you finally know the full weight of this Office. The greatest burden is not running the huge operations of government—or meeting daily troubles, large and small—or even working with the Congress. A President’s hardest task is not to do what is right, but to know what is right. Yet the Presidency brings no special gift of prophecy or foresight. You take an oath, you step into an office, and you must then help guide a great democracy…
Ronald Reagan, “A Time for Choosing”

October 27, 1964

...I have spent most of my life as a Democrat. I recently have seen fit to follow another course. I believe that the issues confronting us cross party lines.

...This is the issue of this election. Whether we believe in our capacity for self-government or whether we abandon the American revolution and confess that a little intellectual elite in a far-distant capital can plan our lives for us better than we can plan them ourselves.

You and I are told increasingly that we have to choose between a left or right, but I would like to suggest that there is no such thing as a left or right. There is only an up or down—up to a man’s age-old dream, the ultimate in individual freedom consistent with law and order—or down to the ant heap totalitarianism, and regardless of their sincerity, their humanitarian motives, those who would trade our freedom for security have embarked on this downward course.

In this vote-harvesting time, they use terms like the "Great Society," or as we were told a few days ago by the President, we must accept a "greater government activity in the affairs of the people." But they have been a little more explicit in the past and among themselves—and all of the things that I now will quote have appeared in print. These are not Republican accusations. For example, they have voices that say "the cold war will end through acceptance of a not undemocratic socialism." Another voice says that the profit motive has become outmoded, it must be replaced by the incentives of the welfare state; or our traditional system of individual freedom is incapable of solving the complex problems of the 20th century. Senator Fulbright has said at Stanford University that the Constitution is outmoded. He referred to the president as our moral teacher and our leader, and he said he is hobbled in his task by the restrictions in power imposed on him by this antiquated document. He must be freed so that he can do for us what he knows is best. And Senator Clark of Pennsylvania, another articulate spokesman, defines liberalism as "meeting the material needs of the masses through the full power of centralized government." Well, I for one resent it when a representative of the people refers to you and me—the free man and woman of this country—as "the masses." This is a term we haven’t applied to ourselves in America. But beyond that, "the full power of centralized government"—this was the very thing the Founding Fathers sought to minimize. They knew that governments don’t control things. A government can’t control the economy without controlling people. And they know when a government sets out to do that, it must use force and coercion to achieve its purpose. They also knew, those Founding Fathers, that outside of its legitimate functions, government does nothing as well or as economically as the private sector of the economy...

Somewhere a perversion has taken place. Our natural, inalienable rights are now considered to be a dispensation of government, and freedom has never been so fragile, so close to slipping from our grasp as it is at this moment...

You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We will preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on Earth, or we will sentence them to take the last step into a thousand years of darkness...
Ronald Reagan, Acceptance Speech

Republican National Convention, July 17, 1980

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice President to be, this convention, my fellow citizens of this great nation:

With a deep awareness of the responsibility conferred by your trust, I accept your nomination for the presidency of the United States.

I am very proud of our party tonight. This convention has shown to all America a party united, with positive programs for solving the nation’s problems; a party ready to build a new consensus with all those across the land who share a community of values embodied in these words: family, work, neighborhood, peace and freedom…

Never before in our history have Americans been called upon to face three grave threats to our very existence, any one of which could destroy us. We face a disintegrating economy, a weakened defense and an energy policy based on the sharing of scarcity…

We need rebirth of the American tradition of leadership at every level of government and in private life as well. The United States of America is unique in world history because it has a genius for leaders — many leaders — on many levels. But, back in 1976, Mr. Carter said, "Trust me." And a lot of people did. Now, many of those people are out of work. Many have seen their savings eaten away by inflation. Many others on fixed incomes, especially the elderly, have watched helplessly as the cruel tax of inflation wasted away their purchasing power. And, today, a great many who trusted Mr. Carter wonder if we can survive the Carter policies of national defense.

"Trust me" government asks that we concentrate our hopes and dreams on one man; that we trust him to do what’s best for us. My view of government places trust not in one person or one party, but in those values that transcend persons and parties. The trust is where it belongs—in the people. The responsibility to live up to that trust is where it belongs, in their elected leaders. That kind of relationship, between the people and their elected leaders, is a special kind of compact.

Three hundred and sixty years ago, in 1620, a group of families dared to cross a mighty ocean to build a future for themselves in a new world. When they arrived at Plymouth, Massachusetts, they formed what they called a "compact": an agreement among themselves to build a community and abide by its laws.

The single act—the voluntary binding together of free people to live under the law—set the pattern for what was to come.

A century and a half later, the descendants of those people pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor to found this nation. Some forfeited their fortunes and their lives; none sacrificed honor.

Four score and seven years later, Abraham Lincoln called upon the people of all America to renew their dedication and their commitment to a government of, for and by the people.

Isn’t it once again time to renew our compact of freedom; to pledge to each other all that is best in our lives; all that gives meaning to them—for the sake of this, our beloved and blessed land?

Together, let us make this a new beginning. Let us make a commitment to care for the needy; to teach our children the values and the virtues handed down to us by our families; to have the courage to defend those values and the willingness to sacrifice for them.
Let us pledge to restore, in our time, the American spirit of voluntary service, of cooperation, of private and community initiative; a spirit that flows like a deep and mighty river through the history of our nation...

We must have the clarity of vision to see the difference between what is essential and what is merely desirable, and then the courage to bring our government back under control and make it acceptable to the people.

It is essential that we maintain both the forward momentum of economic growth and the strength of the safety net beneath those in society who need help. We also believe it is essential that the integrity of all aspects of Social Security are preserved.

Beyond these essentials, I believe it is clear our federal government is overgrown and overweight. Indeed, it is time for our government to go on a diet. Therefore, my first act as chief executive will be to impose an immediate and thorough freeze on federal hiring. Then, we are going to enlist the very best minds from business, labor and whatever quarter to conduct a detailed review of every department, bureau and agency that lives by federal appropriations. We are also going to enlist the help and ideas of many dedicated and hard working government employees at all levels who want a more efficient government as much as the rest of us do. I know that many are demoralized by the confusion and waste they confront in their work as a result of failed and failing policies.

Our instructions to the groups we enlist will be simple and direct. We will remind them that government programs exist at the sufferance of the American taxpayer and are paid for with money earned by working men and women. Any program that represents a waste of their money — a theft from their pocketbooks—must have that waste eliminated or the program must go — by executive order where possible; by congressional action where necessary. Everything that can be run more effectively by state and local government we shall turn over to state and local government, along with the funding sources to pay for it. We are going to put an end to the money merry-go-round where our money becomes Washington’s money, to be spent by the states and cities exactly the way the federal bureaucrats tell them to.

I will not accept the excuse that the federal government has grown so big and powerful that it is beyond the control of any president, any administration or Congress. We are going to put an end to the notion that the American taxpayer exists to fund the federal government. The federal government exists to serve the American people. On January 20th, we are going to re-establish that truth.

Also on that date we are going to initiate action to get substantial relief for our taxpaying citizens and action to put people back to work. None of this will be based on any new form of monetary tinkering or fiscal sleight-of-hand. We will simply apply to government the common sense we all use in our daily lives.

Work and family are at the center of our lives; the foundation of our dignity as a free people. When we deprive people of what they have earned, or take away their jobs, we destroy their dignity and undermine their families. We cannot support our families unless there are jobs; and we cannot have jobs unless people have both money to invest and the faith to invest it…

The American people are carrying the heaviest peacetime tax burden in our nation’s history — and it will grow even heavier, under present law, next January. We are taxing ourselves into economic exhaustion and stagnation, crushing our ability and incentive to save, invest and produce.

This must stop. We must halt this fiscal self-destruction and restore sanity to our economic system.
I have long advocated a 30 percent reduction in income tax rates over a period of three years. This phased tax reduction would begin with a 10 percent "down payment" tax cut in 1981, which the Republicans and Congress and I have already proposed.

A phased reduction of tax rates would go a long way toward easing the heavy burden on the American people. But, we should not stop here.

Within the context of economic conditions and appropriate budget priorities during each fiscal year of my presidency, I would strive to go further. This would include improvement in business depreciation taxes so we can stimulate investment in order to get plants and equipment replaced, put more Americans back to work and put our nation back on the road to being competitive in world commerce. We will also work to reduce the cost of government as a percentage of our gross national product.

The first task of national leadership is to set honest and realistic priorities in our policies and our budget and I pledge that my administration will do that.

When I talk of tax cuts, I am reminded that every major tax cut in this century has strengthened the economy, generated renewed productivity and ended up yielding new revenues for the government by creating new investment, new jobs and more commerce among our people...

And, the time is now to redeem promises once made to the American people by another candidate, in another time and another place. He said, "For three long years I have been going up and down this country preaching that government—federal, state, and local—costs too much. I shall not stop that preaching. As an immediate program of action, we must abolish useless offices. We must eliminate unnecessary functions of government...we must consolidate subdivisions of government and, like the private citizen, give up luxuries which we can no longer afford."

"I propose to you, my friends, and through you that government of all kinds, big and little be made solvent and that the example be set by the president of the United State and his Cabinet."

So said Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his acceptance speech to the Democratic National Convention in July 1932...

The time is now, my fellow Americans, to recapture our destiny, to take it into our own hands. But, to do this will take many of us, working together...

Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural Address

January 20, 1981

…The business of our nation goes forward. These United States are confronted with an economic affliction of great proportions. We suffer from the longest and one of the worst sustained inflations in our national history. It distorts our economic decisions, penalizes thrift, and crushes the struggling young and the fixed-income elderly alike. It threatens to shatter the lives of millions of our people.

Idle industries have cast workers into unemployment, causing human misery and personal indignity. Those who do work are denied a fair return for their labor by a tax system which penalizes successful achievement and keeps us from maintaining full productivity.
But great as our tax burden is, it has not kept pace with public spending. For decades, we have piled deficit upon deficit, mortgaging our future and our children’s future for the temporary convenience of the present. To continue this long trend is to guarantee tremendous social, cultural, political, and economic upheavals.

You and I, as individuals, can, by borrowing, live beyond our means, but for only a limited period of time. Why, then, should we think that collectively, as a nation, we are not bound by that same limitation?

We must act today in order to preserve tomorrow. And let there be no understanding - we are going to begin to act, beginning today…

In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem.

From time to time, we have been tempted to believe that society has become too complex to be managed by self-rule, that government by an elite group is superior to government for, by, and of the people. But if no one among us is capable of governing himself, then who among us has the capacity to govern someone else? All of us together, in and out of government, must bear the burden. The solutions we seek must be equitable, with no one group singled out to pay a higher price…

Well, this administration’s objective will be a healthy, vigorous, growing economy that provides equal opportunity for all Americans, with no barriers born of bigotry or discrimination. Putting America back to work means putting all Americans back to work. Ending inflation means freeing all Americans from the terror of runaway living costs. All must share in the productive work of this "new beginning" and all must share in the bounty of a revived economy. With the idealism and fair play which are the core of our system and our strength, we can have a strong and prosperous America at peace with itself and the world.

So, as we begin, let us take inventory. We are a nation that has a government - not the other way around. And this makes us special among the nations of the Earth. Our Government has no power except that granted it by the people. It is time to check and reverse the growth of government which shows signs of having grown beyond the consent of the governed.

It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the Federal establishment and to demand recognition of the distinction between the powers granted to the Federal Government and those reserved to the States or to the people. All of us need to be reminded that the Federal Government did not create the States; the States created the Federal Government.

Now, so there will be no misunderstanding, it is not my intention to do away with government. It is, rather, to make it work - work with us, not over us; to stand by our side, not ride on our back. Government can and must provide opportunity, not smother it; foster productivity, not stifle it.

If we look to the answer as to why, for so many years, we achieved so much, prospered as no other people on Earth, it was because here, in this land, we unleashed the energy and individual genius of man to a greater extent than has ever been done before. Freedom and the dignity of the individual have been more available and assured here than in any other place on Earth. The price for this freedom at times has been high, but we have never been unwilling to pay that price.

It is no coincidence that our present troubles parallel and are proportionate to the intervention and intrusion in our lives that result from unnecessary and excessive growth of government. It is time for us to realize that we are too great a nation to limit ourselves to small dreams. We are not, as some would have us believe, doomed to an inevitable decline. I do not
believe in a fate that will fall on us no matter what we do. I do believe in a fate that will fall on us if we do nothing. So, with all the creative energy at our command, let us begin an era of national renewal. Let us renew our determination, our courage, and our strength. And let us renew our faith and our hope…

Ronald Reagan, State of the Union Address

January 25, 1983

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, distinguished Members of the Congress, honored guests, and fellow citizens…

I would like to talk with you this evening about what we can do together—not as Republicans and Democrats, but as Americans—to make tomorrow’s America happy and prosperous at home, strong and respected abroad, and at peace in the world.…

Nearly half a century ago, in this Chamber, another American President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in his second State of the Union message, urged America to look to the future, to meet the challenge of change and the need for leadership that looks forward, not backward.

"Throughout the world," he said, "change is the order of the day. In every nation economic problems long in the making have brought crises to (of) many kinds for which the masters of old practice and theory were unprepared." He also reminded us that "the future lies with those wise political leaders who realize that the great public is interested more in Government than in politics."

So, let us, in these next 2 years—men and women of both parties, every political shade—concentrate on the long—range, bipartisan responsibilities of government, not the short—range or short—term temptations of partisan politics.

The problems we inherited were far worse than most inside and out of government had expected; the recession was deeper than most inside and out of government had predicted. Curing those problems has taken more time and a higher toll than any of us wanted. Unemployment is far too high. Projected Federal spending—if government refuses to tighten its own belt—will also be far too high and could weaken and shorten the economic recovery now underway…

With these guiding principles in mind, let me outline a four—part plan to increase economic growth and reduce deficits.

First, in my budget message, I will recommend a Federal spending freeze. I know this is strong medicine, but so far, we have only cut the rate of increase in Federal spending. The Government has continued to spend more money each year, though not as much more as it did in the past. Taken as a whole, the budget I’m proposing for the fiscal year will increase no more than the rate of inflation. In other words, the Federal Government will hold the line on real spending. Now, that’s far less than many American families have had to do in these difficult times…

Second, I will ask the Congress to adopt specific measures to control the growth of the so—called uncontrollable spending programs. These are the automatic spending programs, such as food stamps, that cannot be simply frozen and that have grown by over 400 percent since 1970. They are the largest single cause of the built—in or structural deficit problem. Our standard here will be fairness, ensuring that the taxpayers’ hard—earned dollars go only to the
truly needy; that none of them are turned away, but that fraud and waste are stamped out. And I’m sorry to say, there’s a lot of it out there. In the food stamp program alone, last year, we identified almost $1.1 billion in overpayments. The taxpayers aren’t the only victims of this kind of abuse. The truly needy suffer as funds intended for them are taken not by the needy, but by the greedy. For everyone’s sake, we must put an end to such waste and corruption.

Third, I will adjust our program to restore America’s defenses by proposing $55 billion in defense savings over the next 5 years. These are savings recommended to me by the Secretary of Defense, who has assured me they can be safely achieved and will not diminish our ability to negotiate arms reductions or endanger America’s security. We will not gamble with our national survival.

And fourth, because we must ensure reduction and eventual elimination of deficits over the next several years, I will propose a standby tax, limited to no more than 1 percent of the gross national product, to start in fiscal 1986...

If we do that, if we care what our children and our children’s children will say of us, if we want them one day to be thankful for what we did here in these temples of freedom, we will work together to make America better for our having been here—not just in this year or this decade but in the next century and beyond.

**Ronald Reagan, Speech to National Association of Evangelicals**

March 8, 1983

[T]here are a great many God-fearing, dedicated, noble men and women in public life, present company included. And yes, we need your help to keep us ever mindful of the ideas and the principles that brought us into the public arena in the first place. The basis of those ideals and principles is a commitment to freedom and personal liberty that, itself, is grounded in the much deeper realization that freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted.

The American experiment in democracy rests on this insight. Its discovery was the great triumph of our Founding Fathers, voiced by William Penn when he said, "If we will not be governed by God, we must be governed by tyrants."

Explaining the inalienable rights of men, Jefferson said, "The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time."

And it was George Washington who said that "of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

And finally, that shrewdest of all observers of American democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville, put it eloquently after he had gone on a search for the secret of America’s greatness and genius -- and he said, "Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the greatness and the genius of America….America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great."

Well, I’m pleased to be here today with you who are keeping America great by keeping her good. Only through your work and prayers and those of millions of others can we hope to survive this perilous century and keep alive this experiment in liberty -- this last, best hope of man.
I want you to know that this administration is motivated by a political philosophy that sees the greatness of America in you, her people, and in your families, churches, neighborhoods, communities -- the institutions that foster and nourish values like concern for others and respect for the rule of law under God…

Now, obviously, much of this new political and social consensus I’ve talked about is based on a positive view of American history, one that takes pride in our country’s accomplishments and record. But we must never forget that no government schemes are going to perfect man. We know that living in this world means dealing with what philosophers would call the phenomenology of evil or, as theologians would put it, the doctrine of sin.

There is sin and evil in the world, and we’re enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might. Our nation, too, has a legacy of evil with which it must deal. The glory of this land has been its capacity for transcending the moral evils of our past. For example, the long struggle of minority citizens for equal rights, once a source of disunity and civil war, is now a point of pride for all Americans. We must never go back. There is no room for racism, anti-Semitism, or other forms of ethnic and racial hatred in this country...

But whatever sad episodes exist in our past, any objective observer must hold a positive view of American history, a history that has been the story of hopes fulfilled and dreams made into reality. Especially in this century, America has kept alight the torch of freedom, but not just for ourselves but for millions of others around the world.

And this brings me to my final point today. During my first press conference as President, in answer to a direct question, I pointed out that, as good Marxist-Leninists, the Soviet leaders have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is that which will further their cause, which is world revolution. I think I should point out I was only quoting Lenin, their guiding spirit, who said in 1920 that they repudiate all morality that proceeds from supernatural ideas -- that’s their name for religion -- or ideas that are outside class conceptions. Morality is entirely subordinate to the interests of class war. And everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old, exploiting social order and for uniting the proletariat…

This doesn’t mean we should isolate ourselves and refuse to seek an understanding with them. I intend to do everything I can to persuade them of our peaceful intent, to remind them that it was the West that refused to use its nuclear monopoly in the forties and fifties for territorial gain and which now proposes 50-percent cut in strategic ballistic missiles and the elimination of an entire class of land-based, intermediate-range nuclear missiles.

At the same time, however, they must be made to understand we will never compromise our principles and standards. We will never give away our freedom. We will never abandon our belief in God. And we will never stop searching for a genuine peace. But we can assure none of these things America stands for through the so-called nuclear freeze solutions proposed by some.

The truth is that a freeze now would be a very dangerous fraud, for that is merely the illusion of peace. The reality is that we must find peace through strength.

I would agree to a freeze if only we could freeze the Soviets’ global desires. A freeze at current levels of weapons would remove any incentive for the Soviets to negotiate seriously in Geneva and virtually end our chances to achieve the major arms reductions which we have proposed. Instead, they would achieve their objectives through the freeze.

A freeze would reward the Soviet Union for its enormous and unparalleled military buildup. It would prevent the essential and long overdue modernization of United States and allied defenses and would leave our aging forces increasingly vulnerable. And an honest freeze would require extensive prior negotiations on the systems and numbers to be limited and on the
measures to ensure effective verification and compliance. And the kind of a freeze that has been suggested would be virtually impossible to verify. Such a major effort would divert us completely from our current negotiations on achieving substantial reductions…

So, I urge you to speak out against those who would place the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority…So, in your discussions of the nuclear freeze proposals, I urge you to beware the temptation of pride -- the temptation of blithely declaring yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.

I believe we shall rise to the challenge. I believe that communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written. I believe this because the source of our strength in the quest for human freedom is not material, but spiritual…

**Ronald Reagan, Address to the Nation on National Security**

March 23, 1983

The subject I want to discuss with you, peace and national security, is both timely and important…

At the beginning of this year, I submitted to the Congress a defense budget which reflects my best judgment of the best understanding of the experts and specialists who advise me about what we and our allies must do to protect our people in the years ahead…The budget request that is now before the Congress has been trimmed to the limits of safety. Further deep cuts cannot be made without seriously endangering the security of the Nation. The choice is up to the men and women you've elected to the Congress, and that means the choice is up to you…

This is why I’m speaking to you tonight—to urge you to tell your Senators and Congressmen that you know we must continue to restore our military strength. If we stop in midstream, we will send a signal of decline, of lessened will, to friends and adversaries alike…

My predecessors in the Oval Office have appeared before you on other occasions to describe the threat posed by Soviet power and have proposed steps to address that threat. But since the advent of nuclear weapons, those steps have been increasingly directed toward deterrence of aggression through the promise of retaliation.

This approach to stability through offensive threat has worked. We and our allies have succeeded in preventing nuclear war for more than three decades. in recent months, however, my advisers, including in particular the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have underscored the necessity to break out of a future that relies solely on offensive retaliation for our security.

Over the course of these discussions, I’ve become more and more deeply convinced that the human spirit must be capable of rising above dealing with other nations and human beings by threatening their existence. Feeling this way, I believe we must thoroughly examine every opportunity for reducing tensions and for introducing greater stability into the strategic calculus on both sides…

After careful consultation with my advisers, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I believe there is a way. Let me share with you a vision of the future which offers hope. It is that we embark on a program to counter the awesome Soviet missile threat with measures that are
defensive. Let us turn to the very strengths in technology that spawned our great industrial base and that have given us the quality of life we enjoy today.

What if free people could live secure in the knowledge that their security did not rest upon the threat of instant U.S. retaliation to deter a Soviet attack, that we could intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reached our own soil or that of our allies?

I know this is a formidable, technical task, one that may not be accomplished before the end of this century. Yet, current technology has attained a level of sophistication where it’s reasonable for us to begin this effort. It will take years, probably decades of effort on many fronts. There will be failures and setbacks, just as there will be successes and breakthroughs. And as we proceed, we must remain constant in preserving the nuclear deterrent and maintaining a solid capability for flexible response. But isn’t it worth every investment necessary to free the world from the threat of nuclear war? We know it is.

In the meantime, we will continue to pursue real reductions in nuclear arms, negotiating from a position of strength that can be ensured only by modernizing our strategic forces. At the same time, we must take steps to reduce the risk of a conventional military conflict escalating to nuclear war by improving our nonnuclear capabilities.

America does possess—now—the technologies to attain very significant improvements in the effectiveness of our conventional, nonnuclear forces. Proceeding boldly with these new technologies, we can significantly reduce any incentive that the Soviet Union may have to threaten attack against the United States or its allies…

I clearly recognize that defensive systems have limitations and raise certain problems and ambiguities. If paired with offensive systems, they can be viewed as fostering an aggressive policy, and no one wants that. But with these considerations firmly in mind, I call upon the scientific community in our country, those who gave us nuclear weapons, to turn their great talents now to the cause of mankind and world peace, to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete.

Tonight, consistent with our obligations of the ABM treaty and recognizing the need for closer consultation with our allies, I’m taking an important first step. I am directing a comprehensive and intensive effort to define a long-term research and development program to begin to achieve our ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by strategic nuclear missiles. This could pave the way for arms control measures to eliminate the weapons themselves. We seek neither military superiority nor political advantage. Our only purpose—one all people share—is to search for ways to reduce the danger of nuclear war.

My fellow Americans, tonight we’re launching an effort which holds the promise of changing the course of human history. There will be risks, and results take time. But I believe we can do it. As we cross this threshold, I ask for your prayers and your support.
George W. Bush, First Inaugural Address

January 20, 2001

...We have a place, all of us, in a long story—a story we continue, but whose end we will not see. It is the story of a new world that became a friend and liberator of the old, a story of a slave-holding society that became a servant of freedom, the story of a power that went into the world to protect but not possess, to defend but not to conquer.

It is the American story—a story of flawed and fallible people, united across the generations by grand and enduring ideals.

The grandest of these ideals is an unfolding American promise that everyone belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born.

Americans are called to enact this promise in our lives and in our laws. And though our nation has sometimes halted, and sometimes delayed, we must follow no other course.

Through much of the last century, America’s faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea. Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations.

Our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of our humanity, an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along. And even after nearly 225 years, we have a long way yet to travel...

And we are confident in principles that unite and lead us onward.

America has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens. Every child must be taught these principles. Every citizen must uphold them. And every immigrant, by embracing these ideals, makes our country more, not less, American.

Today, we affirm a new commitment to live out our nation’s promise through civility, courage, compassion and character.

America, at its best, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for civility. A civil society demands from each of us good will and respect, fair dealing and forgiveness...

America, at its best, is also courageous. Our national courage has been clear in times of depression and war, when defending common dangers defined our common good. Now we must choose if the example of our fathers and mothers will inspire us or condemn us. We must show courage in a time of blessing by confronting problems instead of passing them on to future generations...

The enemies of liberty and our country should make no mistake: America remains engaged in the world by history and by choice, shaping a balance of power that favors freedom. We will defend our allies and our interests. We will show purpose without arrogance. We will meet aggression and bad faith with resolve and strength. And to all nations, we will speak for the values that gave our nation birth.

America, at its best, is compassionate. In the quiet of American conscience, we know that deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation’s promise...

Government has great responsibilities for public safety and public health, for civil rights and common schools. Yet compassion is the work of a nation, not just a government...

Americans are generous and strong and decent, not because we believe in ourselves, but because we hold beliefs beyond ourselves. When this spirit of citizenship is missing, no government program can replace it. When this spirit is present, no wrong can stand against it...
George W. Bush, Graduation Speech at West Point

June 1, 2002

…This war will take many turns we cannot predict. Yet I am certain of this: Wherever we carry it, the American flag will stand not only for our power, but for freedom. Our nation’s cause has always been larger than our nation’s defense. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace — a peace that favors human liberty. We will defend the peace against threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.

Building this just peace is America’s opportunity, and America’s duty…America has no empire to extend or utopia to establish. We wish for others only what we wish for ourselves — safety from violence, the rewards of liberty, and the hope for a better life.

In defending the peace, we face a threat with no precedent…The attacks of September the 11th required a few hundred thousand dollars in the hands of a few dozen evil and deluded men…

For much of the last century, America’s defense relied on the Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases, those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking. Deterrence — the promise of massive retaliation against nations — means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.

We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systemically break them. If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long.

Homeland defense and missile defense are part of stronger security, and they’re essential priorities for America. Yet the war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.

[O]ur security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives…

All nations that decide for aggression and terror will pay a price. We will not leave the safety of America and the peace of the planet at the mercy of a few mad terrorists and tyrants. We will lift this dark threat from our country and from the world…

Some worry that it is somehow undiplomatic or impolite to speak the language of right and wrong. I disagree. Different circumstances require different methods, but not different moralities. Moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time, and in every place. Targeting innocent civilians for murder is always and everywhere wrong. Brutality against women is always and everywhere wrong. There can be no neutrality between justice and cruelty, between the innocent and the guilty. We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name…

As we defend the peace, we also have an historic opportunity to preserve the peace. We have our best chance since the rise of the nation state in the 17th century to build a world where the great powers compete in peace instead of prepare for war…

Today the great powers are also increasingly united by common values, instead of divided by conflicting ideologies. The United States, Japan and our Pacific friends, and now all
of Europe, share a deep commitment to human freedom, embodied in strong alliances such as NATO. And the tide of liberty is rising in many other nations…

And finally, America stands for more than the absence of war. We have a great opportunity to extend a just peace, by replacing poverty, repression, and resentment around the world with hope of a better day…

America has a greater objective than controlling threats and containing resentment. We will work for a just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror…

George W. Bush, Second Inaugural Address

January 20, 2005

…There is only one force of history that can break the reign of hatred and resentment, and expose the pretensions of tyrants, and reward the hopes of the decent and tolerant, and that is the force of human freedom.

We are led, by events and common sense, to one conclusion: The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.

America’s vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one. From the day of our Founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity, and matchless value, because they bear the image of the Maker of Heaven and earth. Across the generations we have proclaimed the imperative of self-government, because no one is fit to be a master, and no one deserves to be a slave. Advancing these ideals is the mission that created our Nation. It is the honorable achievement of our fathers. Now it is the urgent requirement of our nation’s security, and the calling of our time.

So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.

This is not primarily the task of arms, though we will defend ourselves and our friends by force of arms when necessary. Freedom, by its nature, must be chosen, and defended by citizens, and sustained by the rule of law and the protection of minorities. And when the soul of a nation finally speaks, the institutions that arise may reflect customs and traditions very different from our own. America will not impose our own style of government on the unwilling. Our goal instead is to help others find their own voice, attain their own freedom, and make their own way…

My most solemn duty is to protect this nation and its people against further attacks and emerging threats. Some have unwisely chosen to test America’s resolve, and have found it firm. We will persistently clarify the choice before every ruler and every nation: The moral choice between oppression, which is always wrong, and freedom, which is eternally right. America will not pretend that jailed dissidents prefer their chains, or that women welcome humiliation and servitude, or that any human being aspires to live at the mercy of bullies.

We will encourage reform in other governments by making clear that success in our relations will require the decent treatment of their own people. America’s belief in human dignity will guide our policies, yet rights must be more than the grudging concessions of
dictators; they are secured by free dissent and the participation of the governed. In the long run, there is no justice without freedom, and there can be no human rights without human liberty…

America has need of idealism and courage, because we have essential work at home - the unfinished work of American freedom. In a world moving toward liberty, we are determined to show the meaning and promise of liberty…

We go forward with complete confidence in the eventual triumph of freedom. Not because history runs on the wheels of inevitability; it is human choices that move events. Not because we consider ourselves a chosen nation; God moves and chooses as He wills. We have confidence because freedom is the permanent hope of mankind, the hunger in dark places, the longing of the soul. When our Founders declared a new order of the ages; when soldiers died in wave upon wave for a union based on liberty; when citizens marched in peaceful outrage under the banner "Freedom Now" - they were acting on an ancient hope that is meant to be fulfilled. History has an ebb and flow of justice, but history also has a visible direction, set by liberty and the Author of Liberty.

When the Declaration of Independence was first read in public and the Liberty Bell was sounded in celebration, a witness said, "It rang as if it meant something." In our time it means something still. America, in this young century, proclaims liberty throughout all the world, and to all the inhabitants thereof. Renewed in our strength - tested, but not weary - we are ready for the greatest achievements in the history of freedom.

**Barack Obama, Inaugural Address**

21 January 2009

My fellow citizens: I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you've bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors.

I thank President Bush for his service to our nation -- (applause) -- as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath. The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often, the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms. At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because we, the people, have remained faithful to the ideals of our forebears and true to our founding documents.

So it has been; so it must be with this generation of Americans.

That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly, our schools fail too many -- and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable, but no less profound, is a sapping of confidence across our land; a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, that the next generation must lower its sights.
Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this America: They will be met. (Applause.)

On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord. On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn-out dogmas that for far too long have strangled our politics. We remain a young nation. But in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness. (Applause.)

In reaffirming the greatness of our nation we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of short-cuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted, for those that prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things -- some celebrated, but more often men and women obscure in their labor -- who have carried us up the long rugged path towards prosperity and freedom.

For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops, and settled the West, endured the lash of the whip, and plowed the hard earth. For us, they fought and died in places like Concord and Gettysburg, Normandy and Khe Sahn.

Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions, greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.

This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week, or last month, or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions -- that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America. (Applause.)

For everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of our economy calls for action, bold and swift. And we will act, not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth. We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We'll restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost. We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. All this we can do. All this we will do.

Now, there are some who question the scale of our ambitions, who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short, for they have forgotten what this country has already done, what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose, and necessity to courage. What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them, that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long no longer apply.
The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works -- whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified. Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end. And those of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account, to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day, because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government.

Nor is the question before us whether the market is a force for good or ill. Its power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched. But this crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control. The nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous. The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our gross domestic product, but on the reach of our prosperity, on the ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart -- not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good. (Applause.)

As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. Our Founding Fathers -- (applause) -- our Founding Fathers, faced with perils that we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man -- a charter expanded by the blood of generations. Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience sake. (Applause.)

And so, to all the other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born, know that America is a friend of each nation, and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity. And we are ready to lead once more. (Applause.)

Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with the sturdy alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead they knew that our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.

We are the keepers of this legacy. Guided by these principles once more we can meet those new threats that demand even greater effort, even greater cooperation and understanding between nations. We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan. With old friends and former foes, we'll work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat, and roll back the specter of a warming planet.

We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense. And for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken -- you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you. (Applause.)

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.

To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills
on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. (Applause.)

To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist. (Applause.)

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to the suffering outside our borders, nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it.

As we consider the role that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who at this very hour patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains. They have something to tell us, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages. We honor them not only because they are the guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service -- a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves.

And yet at this moment, a moment that will define a generation, it is precisely this spirit that must inhabit us all. For as much as government can do, and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break, the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which sees us through our darkest hours. It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child that finally decides our fate.

Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends -- honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism -- these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history.

What is demanded, then, is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility -- a recognition on the part of every American that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world; duties that we do not grudgingly accept, but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character than giving our all to a difficult task.

This is the price and the promise of citizenship. This is the source of our confidence -- the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny. This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed, why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent mall; and why a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served in a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath. (Applause.)

So let us mark this day with remembrance of who we are and how far we have traveled. In the year of America's birth, in the coldest of months, a small band of patriots huddled by dying campfires on the shores of an icy river. The capital was abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood. At the moment when the outcome of our revolution was most in doubt, the father of our nation ordered these words to be read to the people:

"Let it be told to the future world...that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive... that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet [it]."
America: In the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words. With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come. Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.