

IN HIS OWN WORDS: GEORGE WASHINGTON ON THE CONSTITUTION

Excerpts from the Farewell Address (1796)

1. . . . 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.
2. 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.
3. Respect for [the Constitution's] authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty.
4. 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.
5. 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. . . .
6. In a country so extensive as ours, a government of as much vigor 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.

Source: "Washington's Farewell Address 1796." The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.
<<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/washing.htm>>.