RESOURCES ON THE U.S. CONSTITUTION IN THE ONLINE LIBRARY OF LIBERTY

<oll.libertyfund.org>

I. General Resources on the American Revolution and the U.S. Constitution

SUMMARY OF RESOURCES IN THE ONLINE LIBRARY OF LIBERTY

- Collected Works of the Founding Fathers
- Collections of Documents
- Liberty Fund Books on the American Revolution and the U.S. Constitution
- Reading Lists, Images of Liberty, and Quotations about the American Revolution and the U.S. Constitution
II. The Founding Fathers of the Constitution and the Republic

The Collected Works of Key Founding Fathers


**LIBERTY FUND BOOKS BY FOUNDING FATHERS**


III. Documents and Debates about the Constitution

**COLLECTIONS OF DOCUMENTS**

- *Key Documents of Liberty* [on the OLL at The Forum : Resources : Key Documents]

**Key Documents of Liberty**

**LF's edition of The Federalist Papers**

**The Founders' Constitution**
Collections of Documents:


Other Primary Sources:

About the Revolution and the Constitution:


**Reading Lists [The Forum: Reading Lists]**

Images of Liberty [The Forum: Images of Liberty]

- Liberty slaying the Monsters of Tyranny and Oppression
- Thomas Jefferson in the Cyclopaedia
- Washington and Napoleon in their Study
- Thomas Hollis and John Locke

Things to Note

Painting: Gilbert Stuart, George Washington (1796) ("the Lansdowne Portrait").

1. in his left hand he is holding a downward pointing sword
2. his right arm is outstretched in a welcoming gesture
3. behind him to the right is a red upholstered chair with the oval-shaped image of the American stars and stripes, a version of which appears in the Great Seal of the United States (1782)
4. 5 large books on the floor suggesting he has been at work
5. two more books are on the table next to a quill pen and ink, some rolled up papers, and a black feathered hat
6. the table leg in the shape of Roman fascias with what look to be eagles sitting on top
7. there are Roman columns through which one can see some clouds and a rainbow which arches up from just above his right elbow to the top right

[Analysis of Gilbert Stuart, George Washington (1796) ("the Lansdowne Portrait")]

"But the great security against a gradual concentration of the several powers in the same department, consists in giving to those who administer each department, the necessary constitutional means, and personal motives, to resist encroachments of the others.... But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions." [Federalist 51 (1788)]
The following quotations about the American Revolution, the U.S. Constitution, and by the Founding Fathers have appeared as part of the OLL’s weekly “Quotations about Liberty and Power”:

1. The IVth Amendment to the American Constitution states that the people shall be secure in their persons against unreasonable searches and seizures and that no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause (1788) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/134>.

2. The State of New York declares that the people may “reassume” their delegated powers at any time they choose (1788) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/293>.

3. John Adams thought he could see arbitrary power emerging in the American colonies and urged his countrymen to “nip it in the bud” before they lost all their liberties (1774) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/213>.


5. John Adams predicts a glorious future for America under the new constitution and is in “reverence and awe” at its future prospects (1787) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/167>.

6. John Adams argues that the British Empire is not a “true” empire but a form of a “republic” where the rule of law operates (1763) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/127>.


8. Lance Banning argues that within a decade of the creation of the US Constitution the nation was engaged in a bitter battle over the soul of the American Republic (2004) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/86>.

9. James Bryce believed that the Founders intended that the American President would be “a reduced and improved copy of the English king” (1885) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/28>.

10. William Emerson, in his oration to commemorate the Declaration of Independence, reminded his listeners of the “unconquerable sense of liberty” which Americans had (1802) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/45>.


13. Alexander Hamilton denounces the British for imposing “oppressive taxes” on the colonists which amount to tyranny, a form of slavery, and vassalage to the Empire (1774) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/172>.

14. Alexander Hamilton warns of the danger to civil society and liberty from a standing army since “the military state becomes elevated above the civil” (1787) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/192>.

15. Simeon Howard on liberty as the opposition to “external force and constraint” (1773) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/393>.


17. John Jay in the Federalist Papers discussed why nations go to war and concluded that it was not for justice but “whenever they have a prospect of getting any thing by it” (1787) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/82>.

18. Less well known is Thomas Jefferson’s First Draft of the Declaration of Independence in which he denounced the slave trade as an “execrable Commerce” and slavery itself as a “cruel war against nature itself” (1776) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/59>.

20. Thomas Jefferson in a letter to John Taylor condemns the system of banking as “a blot” on the constitution, as corrupt, and that long-term government debt was “swindling” future generations (1816) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/187>.


23. Jefferson on how Congress misuses the inter-state commerce and general welfare clauses to promote the centralization of power (1825) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/268>.

24. Jefferson feared that it would only be a matter of time before the American system of government degenerated into a form of “elective despotism” (1785) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/237>.

25. Thomas Jefferson opposed vehemently the Alien and Sedition Laws of 1798 which granted the President enormous powers showing that the government had become a tyranny which desired to govern with "a rod of iron" (1798) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/80>.


27. Jefferson tells Congress that since tax revenues are increasing faster than population then taxes on all manner of items can be “dispensed with” (i.e. abolished) (1801) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/170>.

28. Thomas Jefferson boasts about having reduced the size of government and eliminated a number of “vexatious” taxes (1805) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/38>.

29. Thomas Jefferson on the Draft as "the last of all oppressions" (1777) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/120>.

30. Bernhard Knollenberg on the Belief of many colonial Americans that Liberty was lost because the Leaders of the People had failed in their Duty (2003) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/257>.


33. James Madison on the “sagacious and monied few” who are able to “harvest” the benefits of government regulations (1787) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/349>.

34. James Madison on the need for the “separation of powers” because “men are not angels,” Federalist 51 (1788) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/180>.


37. James Madison on the necessity of separating the power of “the sword from the purse” (1793) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/396>.

38. Madison argued that war is the major way by which the executive office increases its power, patronage, and taxing power (1793) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/236>.

39. James Madison on the need for the people to declare war and for each generation, not future generations, to bear the costs of the wars they fight (1792) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/144>.

40. James Madison argues that the constitution places war-making powers squarely with the legislative branch; for the president to have these powers is the “the true nurse of executive aggrandizement” (1793) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/136>.


42. During the American Revolution Thomas Paine penned a patriotic song called “Hail Great Republic” which is to be sung to the tune of Rule Britannia (of course!) (1776) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/33>.

43. Thomas Paine responded to one of Burke’s critiques of the French Revolution by cynically arguing that wars are sometimes started in order to increase taxation (“the harvest of war”) (1791) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/123>.


45. Paine on the idea that the law is king (1776) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/308>.


47. Tom Paine asks how it is that established governments came into being, his answer, is "banditti of ruffians" seized control and turned themselves into monarchs (1792) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/112>.


49. Spooner states the importance of the 9th Amendment to the American Constitution which protects the natural rights of the people not enumerated in the 1st 8 Amendments (1886) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/276>.

50. Tiedeman states that the police powers under the constitution are strictly limited to enforcing the maxim: “use your own property in such a manner as not to injure that of another” (1886) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/369>.

51. Mercy Otis Warren asks why people are so willing to obey the government and answers that it is supineness, fear of resisting, and the long habit of obedience (1805) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/197>.

52. George Washington warns that the knee jerk reaction of citizens to problems is to seek a solution in the creation of a “new monarch”(1786) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/161>.


54. George Washington warns the nation in his Farewell Address, that love of power will tend to create a real despotism in America unless proper checks and balances are maintained to limit government power (1796) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/113>.

55. James Wilson argues that it is the people, not the prince, who is superior in matters of legal sovereignty (1790) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/440>.

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