FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618) 462-5415

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GEORGE WASHINGTON'S ADVICE

The man who is known to all Americans as "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen" gave us much sound advice which is part of our American heritage. His birthday is a good time to recall George Washington's advice.

When he took his oath as our first President on April 30, 1789, he added this four-word prayer of his own: "So help me God." These words are still used in official oaths by Americans taking public office, in courts of justice, and in other legal proceedings.

Washington believed in asking God's help in every part of our private and public lives. In one of his messages during the Revolutionary War, he said: "The time is now near at hand which must probably determine whether Americans are to be freemen or slaves; whether they are to have any property they can call their own. ... Let us therefore rely on the goodness of the cause and the aid of the Supreme Being, in whose hands victory is, to animate and encourage us to great and noble actions."

After serving as President during our country's crucial first two terms, Washington advised us again that God is the cornerstone of good government. In his Farewell Address on September 19, 1796, he said: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

Washington believed that we as a nation should be bound by the same rules of honor and honesty that should bind individuals. He said, "I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs that honesty is always the best policy."

As part of his belief in national honesty, he urged our country to borrow as little money as necessary. "Avoid likewise the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden which we ourselves ought to bear."

George Washington was not only "first in war," but also "first in peace." He developed the best formula for keeping the peace that has ever been devised by man: the

formula of discouraging the enemy from attack by making sure that he knows beforehand that America is ready for war.

In his Fifth Annual Address to Congress, given on December 3, 1793, he said: "There is a rank due to the United States among nations which will be withheld, if not absolutely lost, by the reputation of weakness. If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure the peace, one of the most powerful instruments of our rising prosperity, it must be known that we are at all times ready for war."

As a schoolboy, Washington wrote in his copybook: "Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire -- conscience." In his Farewell Address, he echoed that same concept that true liberty includes responsibility to conscience -- to God and country. "Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty."

Washington predicted that foreign propaganda would operate inside and outside our Government, and even trick Americans about whom we can trust. He said in his Farewell Address: "Real patriots who may resist the intrigues of the favorite are liable to become suspected and odious, while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people to surrender their interests."

Washington warned us against giving favors to other nations in the hope of receiving favors in return. He said in his Farewell Address: "There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation. It is an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard."

Even though Washington's published writings do not confirm the legend that, the night he crossed the Delaware, he gave the famous command, "Put none but Americans on guard tonight," his Farewell Address echoed the same thought. "The name of AMERICAN, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation."

Washington was well aware how politicians are subjected to political pressures. As President of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, he gave this advice to his fellow Delegates: "If to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterwards defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair; the event is in the hand of God."