Keeping the Republic American Heritage Discussion Series for Learners with Littles

Essential Question

How can we maintain our constitutional republic?

Civic Virtue in Revolutionary Era State Constitutions

Tocqueville's Habits of the Hearts and Minds of Men (and Women)

Bowling Alone

Love Your Enemies

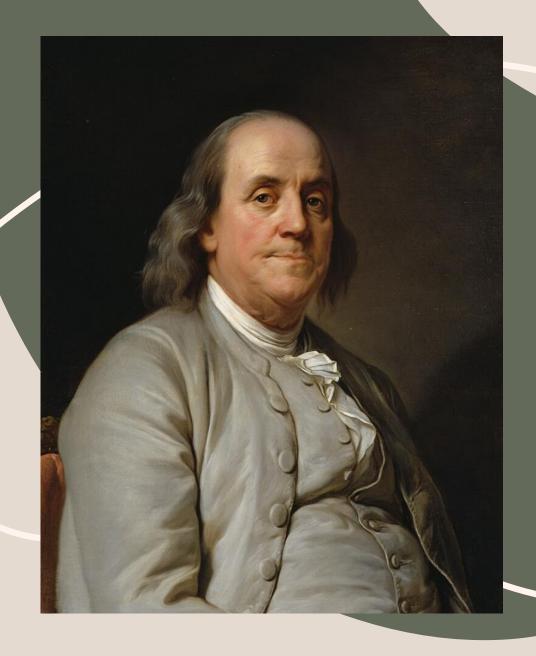
"A republic, madam, if you can keep it."

Mrs. Powell asked Benjamin Franklin as he left the Constitutional Convention:

"What have you given us, Dr. Franklin? A monarchy or a republic?"

Benjamin Franklin replied:

"A republic, Madam, if you can keep it."



Civic Virtue in Revolutionary Era State Constitutions

Essential Question: What is the significance of emphasizing civic virtue at the creation of the new form of self-government?

• The state constitution excerpts identify the blessings of liberty as the product of upholding a variety of virtues. Why?

THE

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

COMMON-WEALTH

OF

PENNSYLVANIA,

AS ESTABLISHED BY

THE GENERAL CONVENTION

ELECTED FOR THAT PURPOSE,

AND WELD AT PHILADELPHIA,
JULY 15th, 1776,

AND CONTINUED BY AD JOURNMENTS
TO SEPTEMBER 28, 1776.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED by JOHN DUNLAP, in MARKET-STREET.

M.D.C.L.XXVI.

Virginia-1776

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Section 1. That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining hampiness and safety.

Sec. 2. That all power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people; that magistrates are their trustees and servants, and at

all times amenable to them.

SEC. 3. That government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security of the people, nation, or community; of all the various modes and forms of government, that is best which is capable of producing the greatest degree of happiness and safety, and is most effectually secured against the danger of maladministration; and that, when any government shall be found inadequate or contrary to these purposes, a majority of the community hath an indubitable, inalienable, and indefeasible right to reform, alter, or abolish it, in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public weal.

Sec. 4. That no man, or set of men, are entitled to exclusive or separate emoluments or privileges from the community, but in consideration of public services; which, not being descendible, neither ought the offices of magistrate, legislator, or judge to be hereditary.

Sec. 5. That the legislative and executive powers of the State should be separate and distinct from the judiciarry; and that the members of the two first may be restrained from oppression, by feeling and participating the burdens of the people, they should, at fixed periods, be reduced to a private station, return into that body from which they were originally taken, and the vacancies be supplied by frequent, certain, and regular elections, in which all, or any part of the former members, to be again eligible, or ineligible, as the laws shall direct.

SEC. 6. That elections of members to serve as representatives of the people, in assembly, ought to be free; and that all men, having sufficient evidence of permanent common interest with, and attachment to, the community, have the right of suffrage, and cannot be taxed or deprived of their property for public uses, without their own consent, or that of their representives so elected, nor bound by any law to which they have not, in like manner, assembled, for the public good.

Sec. 7. That all power of suspending laws, or the execution of laws, by any authority, without consent of the representatives of the people, is injurious to their rights, and ought not be exercised.

Sic. 8. That in all capital or criminal prosecutions a man hath a right to demand the cause and nature of his accusation, to be confronted with the accusers and witnesses, to call for evidence in his favor, and to a speedy trial by an impartial jury of twelve men of his vicinage, without whose unanimous consent he cannot be found guilty; nor can he be compelled to give evidence against himself; that no man be deprived of his liberty, except by the law of the land or the judgment of his peers.

Sec. 9. That excessive bail ought not to be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

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Tocqueville to Corcelle, September 17, 1853

Essential Question: According to Tocqueville, how is democracy maintained?

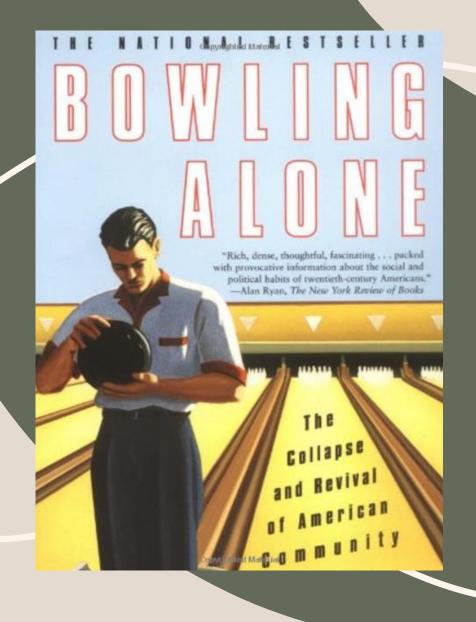
- Tocqueville, the author of *Democracy in America*, writes to his peer 20 years after the publication of his work, saying that democratic societies are not created by laws, but by sentiments, beliefs, ideas, and habits of the hearts and minds of men. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, how important are laws in maintaining democratic government compared to beliefs, ideas, and habits of the hearts and minds of men (and women)?
- What are the habits of the hearts and minds of men Tocqueville observed among Americans in 1831 that he believed fostered democracy?
- How can we foster these habits of heart and the mind today both collectively and personally?



Summary of Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*

Essential Question: Why is social capital important for maintaining a republic?

- What is social capital? How does it relate to maintaining a constitutional republic?
- What are the benefits and draw backs of bonding communities? What are the benefits of bridging communities? Why are both important?
- Why has social capital declined in recent decades? Why is this concerning?
- How can we increase social capital today? How does this help keep our republic?



Excerpt on contempt in American society from Arthur Brooks' *Love Your Enemies*

Essential Question: How can we improve our public discourse across our differences? Why is this important?

- Why is widespread contempt dangerous?
- What are the five rules the author proposes? What are some ways to get outside of our bubbles?
- How can improving our public discourse help keep our republic?

HOW DECENT PEOPLE CAN SAVE AMERICA
FROM THE CULTURE OF CONTEMPT

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

