

**The Preamble:
What did the Fathers Intend?**
By Jesse Sullivan

Background

On May 25, 1787, the 13 states in the Union (with the exception of Rhode Island) sent a select few delegates to Philadelphia for a Constitutional Convention. The “American Experiment” was rapidly declining and there was great need of a system that would unite the states without giving up their state rights and freedoms. The need was a stronger national government to protect them, but not to hinder them. The Articles of Confederation had proven to be unacceptable in meeting this dilemma.

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.”¹ Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States of America, said this many years after the signing of the Constitution; but even at the inception of the Constitution the concept was true of America. The states were beginning to turn on each other and thus, the Constitution was created to help resolve the disagreements between the states and keep peace and unity. On September 17, 1787 our Founding Fathers completed and signed the Constitution in the Pennsylvania State House. The Preamble to this great work is as follows:

“We the people of the United States, In Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Purpose

¹ Abraham Lincoln Online, Speeches & Writings, [House Divided Speech](http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/house.htm), <http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/house.htm>

According to the Founding Fathers perception, the federal government was to be limited in its power. By examining the preamble, we can survey the intent of the Founding Fathers.

We the people -The preamble affirms the *people* of the United States of America to govern. This federal government was established with limitations and was put forth for the people and by the people. Thomas Jefferson proclaimed, “When the people fear the government you have tyranny. When the government fears the people, you have liberty.”² Our Constitution recognizes states sovereignty; while establishing limited duties for the federal government. The people were to rule under representative government; America was not to be a dictatorship.

In order to form a more perfect Union - Before the Constitution, the states were fighting amongst each other and were on the verge of war, which was ruining our country. There was no unity anymore and the Convention was necessary to attempt to save this country. We were in need of a stronger federal government to form this “more perfect union”. Thomas Jefferson said, “A wise and frugal government, which shall leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned - this is the sum of good government.”³ The Constitution was miraculously devised and offered the people their rights while building a stronger central government system. Benjamin Franklin thought it was near perfect in its completed state.

To insure domestic Tranquility – The Founding Fathers’ intent was to proclaim with all certainty the people of the nation would be safe and at peace. One of the concerns of the Framers was that the government prior to that under the Constitution was unable, by force or persuasion, to quell rebellion or quarrels amongst the states. The government watched in horror

² BrainyQuote.com, Thomas Jefferson Quotes, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/t/thomasjeff169586.html>

³ BrainyQuote.com, Thomas Jefferson Quotes, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/t/thomasjeff130495.html>

as Shay's Rebellion transpired just before the Convention, and some states had very nearly gone to war with each other over territory (such as between Pennsylvania and Connecticut over Wilkes-Barre). One of the main goals of the Convention, then, was to ensure the federal government had powers to squash rebellion and to smooth tensions between states.⁴

Provide for common defense (or defense in today's grammar) - This statement in the preamble requires the safety of the people. If there are ever any hazards or threats presented to our country, it is the government's responsibility to take charge and protect the people. This provision gives the people the right to defend themselves against a threat as well. For this reason, the people's rights to protect their property and families cannot be thwarted. An example of such an unconstitutional practice is the forbidding of the right to bear firearms; Amendment II clearly defends our right to defend ourselves. George Washington said, "Firearms are second only to the Constitution in importance; they are the peoples' liberty's teeth."⁵ Also James Madison said, "Americans have the right and advantage of being armed - unlike the citizens of other countries whose governments are afraid to trust the people with arms."⁶ These two quotes show that it was the Founding Fathers' intent for everyone to be able to bear arms freely.

To promote the general Welfare - Promoting the general welfare allows the government to legislate law that is for the common good of all. The general welfare of the people is meant to keep with the general needs of the nation as a whole and can be found in the prior points of domestic tranquility and common defense. The intention of the Framers was in no way to promote a welfare program that would take from some and give to others. Instead, its intention

⁴ US Constitution Online, *The Constitutional Dictionary*, <http://www.usconstitution.net/glossary.html>

⁵ BrainyQuote.com, George Washington, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/g/georgewash386652.html>

⁶ BrainyQuote.com, James Madison, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/j/jamesmadis399790.html>

was to work for the common good as the nation became industrious and richer through investment and land ownership.

Today's leadership would contest this would include the happiness of all individuals and promote the government's right to make each individual equal for the sake of happiness.

However, the happiness of the people doesn't mean the government should do everything for them while deeming the people "ignorant" or unable of making decisions on their own. Instead, everyone has the opportunity for happiness through the "Pursuit of Happiness". Referring to the preamble of the Constitution, James Madison said, **"All power is originally vested in, and consequently derived from, the people. That government is instituted and ought to be exercised for the benefit of the people; which consists in the enjoyment of life and liberty and the right of acquiring property, and generally of pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety. That the people have an indubitable, unalienable, and inalienable right to reform or change their government whenever it be found adverse or inadequate to the purpose of its institution."**⁷ James Madison believed the people should have a voice and the government's power needs to be limited to keep from complete and total control over the country.

And secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity – The duties in securing the blessings of liberty actually limited the government's abilities to burden the people with unconstitutional laws, taxes, and other burdens. We are a free nation, a Republic and not a dictatorship or other version of government. The federal government is to ensure our liberties as free people, as well as, continue to secure these blessings for our future generations.

⁷ Consource.org, **Madisons Resolution for Amendments to the Constitution (June 8, 1789)**, <http://www.consource.org/index.asp?bid=582&documentid=9506>

One burden not to be placed on future generations was the burden of debt. Each generation should manage and claim their debt. How sad to realize this security has been so grievously neglected by our government today as the debt of our government has risen to even my future children's generation.

Conclusion_

Do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America - The Founding Fathers agreed with this document and wanted to insure that the people would have rule in the government, not the government over the people. However, the very opposite is happening today in America. It seems that each day we grow closer and closer to a dictatorship. We are a country that has turned from its roots of following God, the Bible, and the rights of the people; to giving the government complete control of our lives. The more we let the Government take every little thing from us, the closer we come to communism.

The other day my parents were talking about an upcoming interview with President Barack Obama. They were discussing how every public school in America is being flagged to show this interview to all the children, yet the kids and their parents are not being given the choice whether they want to watch it or not. This is a sign of a dictatorship, and one the national government of America is turning towards. If we do not get the concept of our freedoms established in our Constitution through to the thickheaded liberals that are in office, America will decline into a country of communism. We must make Samuel Adam's words known; "If you love wealth more than liberty, the tranquility of servitude better than the animating contest of freedom, depart from us in peace. We ask not your counsel nor your arms. Crouch down and lick the hand that feeds you. May your chains rest lightly upon you and may posterity forget that you were our countrymen."⁸

⁸ Nortonnews.com, Educating all Parents to Ensure the Future of our Republic, <http://www.oaknorton.com/foundingfatherquotes.cfm>

Resources

The 5000 Year Leap-Principles of Freedom 101, W. Cleon Skousen, (Malta, Idaho: National Center for Constitutional Studies, 1981)

Betrayed by the Bench, John A. Stormer, (Florissant, MO: Liberty Bell Press, 2007)

The Making of America, W. Cleon Scousen, (Malta, Idaho: National Center for Constitutional Studies, 1985)

Internet sources as sited in footnotes