

George Washington - Our Country's First "No Party Preference" president

I hear from a lot of people who believe the direction of today's Federal and State policies is not what the founding fathers envisioned. None of us can know what any of those giants really had in mind for our young country, but their unwavering bipartisan efforts created the most powerful and thoughtful document in human history. That document, the Constitution of the United States, has guided our nation to unparalleled heights of respect that much of the world looks up to and tries to emulate.

Led by George Washington, 39 of the 55 members of the Continental Congress signed the Constitution. Only three refused to sign it and strongly opposed its adoption. Those who did not sign initially either posed no opposition or later supported its adoption. That is an acceptance rate of over 90 percent. Washington's tremendous popularity and his ability to stay neutral on the most extreme issues of the day made it possible for our founding fathers to put aside their ideological differences for the wellbeing of their young nation. Imagine if we had that bipartisan cooperation in today's U.S. Congress.

Our first president was not affiliated with any political party. In Washington's farewell address he urged fellow countrymen not to accept such partisanship knowing it would not serve the nation's greater good. As arguably our greatest president, Washington was also the first No Party Preference official.

During Washington's presidency, political parties became a mainstay of America's political landscape and even included some of his good friends. These parties soon became divisive, bitter and focused mainly on serving short term purposes for candidates seeking elected office. Political party ideology in the past and to the present day serves only a part of the total population.

Governing a country or state should not be about promoting political ideology. To succeed it is imperative to reach agreement between opposing sides, and yes, compromise. Our elected representatives can learn a lot from our first President. As regular, garden variety Americans, we can also learn to appreciate Washington's style of governing. He was not only our first and greatest political leader, George Washington was a true visionary.

Author's note:

Upon his death, Washington had ordered all 123 slaves he owned to be freed. He was the only founding father to do so. Later in life he had questioned the morality of slavery. This was over a half century before the Emancipation Proclamation. I wonder if President Washington, the visionary that he was, foresaw the enviable abolishment of slavery.