

Founding Principles

Drawn from an examination of human nature, these principles and virtues shape the American republic with ordered liberty and help form the conscience of the nation. The American regime is built upon a philosophical foundation that makes an argument for a constitutional republic. The graphic here outlines the logic of this argument.


Principles are fundamental truths, or first things, upon which other ideas are based. The principles listed here define the protections built into the United States Constitution for the purpose of maintaining our fundamental natural rights to life, liberty, and equality. In understanding these principles, We the People are better able to protect and advance liberty and opportunity for all. The list is not comprehensive but provides a starting place for the investigation of the American experiment in self-government.



NATURAL RIGHTS FOUNDATION



CONSENT AND REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT



LIMITED GOVERNMENT



CONSTITUTIONAL/AUXILIARY PRECAUTIONS



BILL OF RIGHTS

✔ **Freedom of Religion**
The right to choose one's religion or form of worship, if any, without interference; freedom of conscience.

✔ **Freedom of Speech, Press, and Assembly**
The right to express one's opinions freely, orally or in writing and the right to gather with others in groups of one's choice without arbitrary or unreasonable restrictions.

✔ **Private Property**
The natural right of all individuals to create, obtain, and control their possessions, beliefs, faculties, and opinions as well as the fruits of their labor.

✔ **Separation of Powers**
Each division of government exercises distinct powers to carry out its functions and to prevent the accumulation of power.

✔ **Checks and Balances**
The branches of government each have powers to limit the powers of the other branches and to prevent any branch from becoming too powerful.

✔ **Federalism**
The national and state governments have a balance of separate and shared powers. The people delegate certain powers to the national government, while the states retain other powers; and the people retain all powers not delegated to the governing bodies.

✔ **Rule of Law**
Government and citizens all abide by the same laws regardless of political power. Those laws must be stable and justly applied.

✔ **Due Process**
The government must apply law and rules equally to all people.

✔ **Majority Rule/Minority Rights**
Laws are made with the consent of the majority but do not infringe on the inalienable rights of the minority.

✔ **Consent of the Governed**
The power of government comes from the people.

✔ **Democracy**
A form of government in which ultimate authority is based directly on the will of the people.

✔ **Republic**
A constitutional form of government with elected representatives who represent and "refine and enlarge" the will of the people.

✔ **Natural/Inalienable Rights**
Rights which belong to humans by nature and can only be justly abridged through due process. Examples are life, liberty, and property.

✔ **Liberty**
The power to think and act as one sees fit without restraint except by the laws of nature and interfering with someone else's rights.

✔ **Equality**
All individuals have the same claim as human beings to natural rights and treatment under the law.

✔ **Justice**
Having a political order that protects the rights of all equally and treats everyone equally under the law.

Civic Virtues & Vices

The maintenance of our republican government requires the people be vigilant, informed, and virtuous, ensuring that governing institutions are directed towards their right ends. Good habits, or virtues, promote self-government and help guarantee that communities orient themselves towards advancing the spirit of a common purpose. A list of those civic virtues is provided here.

Virtues



Courage

The ability to take constructive action in the face of fear or danger. To stand firm as a person of character and do what is right, especially when it is unpopular or puts one at risk.

Honor

Demonstrating good character and being trustworthy.

Humility

A recognition that one's ignorance is far greater than one's knowledge. Putting others ahead of ourselves in thought, word, and deed. A willingness to give others credit and to admit when we are wrong.

Integrity

To tell the truth, expose untruths, and keep one's promises.

Justice

Upholding of what is fair and right. Respecting the rights and dignity of all.

Moderation

The avoidance of excess or extremes.

Prudence

Practical wisdom that applies reason and other virtues to discern right courses of action in specific situations.

Respect

Regard for and defending the equal rights and inherent dignity of all human beings, including oneself.

Responsibility

Acting on good judgment about what is right or wrong even when it is not popular. Individuals must take care of themselves, their families, and their fellow citizens/ others in civil society and a republic and be vigilant to preserve their own liberty and the liberty of others.

Vices



Cowardice

Failing to take constructive action in the face of fear or danger. A lack of firmness or conviction.

Dishonor

Failing to demonstrate good character, integrity, and acting deceptively.

Hubris

To have excessive pride, vanity, and arrogance that usually leads to a tragic fall.

Self-deception

Acting on a belief that a false idea or situation is true. Being deluded or deceived by ideas that endanger the humanity of others and movements that are unjust.

Injustice

To harm others by applying unequal rules and damaging another's inalienable rights and dignity.

Immoderation (Extremism)

Acting in excess or to an extreme. Lacking restraint.

Imprudence

Acting without care or thoughtfulness for consequences. Exercising lack of wisdom appropriate to situations.

Contempt

Showing disregard, disdain, or lack of consideration for someone or something worthy of action or admiration.

Irresponsibility

Acting on poor judgment or failing the trust others place in you.