

Founding Principles

Checks and Balances: Constitutional powers are distributed among the branches of government allowing each to limit the application of power of the other branches and to prevent expansion of power of any branch.

Consent of the Governed/Popular Sovereignty: The power of government comes from the people.

Due Process: The government must interact with all people according to the duly-enacted laws and apply these rules equally with respect to all people.

Equality: Every individual is equal to every other person with respect to natural rights and treatment before the law.

Federalism: The people delegate certain powers to the national government, while the states retain other powers; and the people, who authorize the states and national government, retain all freedoms not delegated to the governing bodies.

Freedom of contract: Freedom of individuals and corporations to make legally binding mutual agreements without arbitrary or unreasonable legal restrictions

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 legal 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.

Liberty: Except where authorized by citizens through the Constitution, government does not have the authority to limit freedom.

Limited Government: Citizens are best able to pursue happiness when government is confined to those powers which protect their life, liberty, and property.

Majority Rule/Minority Rights: Laws may be made with the consent of the majority, but only to the point where they do not infringe on the inalienable rights of the minority.

Natural/Inalienable Rights: Rights which belong to us by nature and can only be justly taken away through due process. Examples are life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness.

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

Representative/Republican Government: Form of government in which the people are sovereign (ultimate source of power) and authorize representatives to make and carry out laws.

Rule of Law: Government and citizens all abide by the same laws regardless of political power. Those laws are justly applied, consistent with an ethos of liberty, and stable.

Separation of Powers: A system of distinct powers built into the Constitution, to prevent an accumulation of power in one branch.

Virtues and Vices

Virtue is conduct that reflects universal principles of moral and ethical excellence essential to living a worthwhile life and to effective self-government. For many leading Founders, attributes of character such as justice, responsibility, perseverance, respect, and others were thought to flow from an understanding of the rights and obligations of human beings. Virtue is compatible with, but does not require, religious belief. One's thoughts and words alone do not make a person virtuous. According to Aristotle, virtue must be based on a just objective, it requires action, and it must become a habit.

Private Virtue: The idea that, in order to sustain liberty, individuals must be knowledgeable and must conduct themselves according to principles of moral and ethical excellence, consistent with their rights and obligations.

Civic Virtue: A set of actions and habits necessary for the safe, effective, and mutually beneficial participation in a society

Vice: Immoral or wicked behavior

Virtues

Civil Discourse: Reasoned and respectful sharing of ideas between individuals is the primary way people influence change in society/government, and is essential to maintain self-government.

Contribution: To discover your passions and talents, and use them to create what is beautiful and needed. To work hard to take care of yourself and those who depend on you.

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 you at risk.

Honor: Demonstrating good character, integrity, and acting honestly.

Humility: To remember that your ignorance is far greater than your knowledge. To give praise to those who earn it.

Integrity: To tell the truth, expose untruths, and keep your promises.

Initiative: Exercising the power, energy, or ability to organize or accomplish something.

Justice: Upholding of what is fair, just, and right. To stand for equally applied rules that respect the rights and dignity of all, and make sure everyone obeys them.

Moderation: The avoidance of excesses or extremes.

Perseverance: To continue in a task or course of action or hold to a belief or commitment, in spite of obstacles or difficulty. To remember how many before you chose the easy path rather than the right one, and to stay the course.

Respect: Honor or admiration of someone or something. To protect your mind and body as precious aspects of your identity. To extend that protection to every other person you encounter.

Responsibility: Acting on good judgment about what is right or wrong, or deserving the trust of others. To strive to know and do what is best, not what is most popular. To be trustworthy for making decisions in the best long-term interests of the people and tasks of which they are in charge. Individuals must take care of themselves and their families, and be vigilant to preserve their liberty and the liberty of others.

Resourcefulness: Taking constructive action in difficult situations quickly and imaginatively.

Self-Governance: To be self-controlled, avoiding extremes, and to not be excessively influenced or controlled by others.

Vigilance: Being alert and attentive to take action to remedy possible injustices or evils.

Vices

Ambition: To be driven by self-interest while pursuing power and fame for yourself rather than serving the republic or the good of others.

Avarice: To allow the love of wealth to lead you to do wrong in acquiring it

Deception: To lie to yourself and others either to deceive them or because you are deluded into thinking that something is right when it is wrong and unjust.

Demagoguery: To lead others astray because you control or manipulate their emotions through moving words or a deceptive vision.

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

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

Political Intolerance: Disrespect for the different political views of others and violating their inalienable rights.

Principles and Virtues Graphic Organizer

Principle	Present	Absent	Examples/Explanation
Checks and balances			
Consent			
Due process			
Equality			
Federalism			
Freedom of contract			
Freedom of religion			
Freedom of speech, press, and assembly			
Inalienable rights			
Limited government			
Private property			
Rule of law			
Separation of powers			
Others?			

Virtue	Present	Absent	Examples/Explanation
Civil discourse			
Courage			
Honor			
Humility			
Integrity			
Justice			
Moderation			
Perseverance			
Respect			
Responsibility			
Self-governance			
Others?			