

walk through in terms of walking through why, again, the economic challenges that are before us are, again, not in our grandkids' time, not in our kids' time, but in our time, which makes spending restraint that much more important.

I have taken up more than my share of time for my dear colleague from Oklahoma, and I don't want to burn through the entirety of his time, so I thank the gentleman from Oklahoma profusely for allowing me to walk through a couple of slides this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

UNIFYING AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. RUSSELL) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. RUSSELL. Mr. Speaker, he was a soldier who had given 45 years of service to his country. 222 years ago, this month, he crafted a farewell address to the Nation. In it, he made no attempt to recount his time as a businessman, warrior, lawmaker, founder, Framers, battlefield commander, or President of a United States that he, more than any other, helped to create.

□ 1700

Instead, George Washington, chose to offer "disinterested warnings of a parting friend," which he felt were, important to the permanency of our felicity as a people.

Leaders today departing public service might recount their personal journey and thank those who shared some of their path. Washington's final words were nothing of the sort. He chose, instead, to look far into the future and address all of us, the future. None of us can know it. We get occasional glimpses of it by talking to older people, those a little further down the road.

From them, we gain wisdom and counsel. Yet, sadly, each generation imagines that it faces unprecedented problems only to dismiss the counsels of the generation or two before them. We find it tough to absorb the Wisdom of Solomon when he stated, "There is nothing new under the Sun." Another way to put it is this: Times change, people don't.

Taking this truth, what would George Washington say to us if he were here today? What counsels would he give our Nation? What relevance would it have? Fortunately, in this gleaming alabaster city that bears his name, we have rich archives to continue to hear from George Washington. Whether we are wise enough to heed Washington, is another matter altogether.

Surprisingly, he gave no recommendation for us to love liberty, as liberty is in the very fiber of the human race, and was certainly heightened among the early Americans whose efforts had recently secured it. Instead,

Washington made a vital observation while trying to give future Americans a heads-up. Here it is: Liberty does not secure independence.

Washington knew a fallen mankind would flourish in liberty, and as such, Americans would be enticed to reduce and erode our independence for temporary gain or perceived future benefit. Instead of liberty, he identified unity as the essential factor to retain American independence.

At first ponder, this seems counter-intuitive. After all, unified efforts require a certain accommodation to one another for greater good, necessitating an occasional deferential voluntary reduction in one's personal liberty.

Unity achieves result without reducing liberty through power, pen, statute, or sword. For these reasons, Washington told America that unity was the, "main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home, your peace abroad, of your safety, of your prosperity, of that very liberty which you so highly prize."

Even after 242 years as a Republic, we still embody this idea in our national motto: *e pluribus unum*, a Latin phrase meaning, out of many—one.

We see it in our pledge, with terms like "one Nation," "indivisible," but what of our behavior today? We still, on occasion, employ the words, but we deploy actions that could better be described as *e pluribus pluribus*. One hyphenated nation and divisible.

Washington warned of it: "But as it is easy to foresee that, from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth . . . that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think . . . of it as . . . your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts."

Washington's words today read like stinging rebuke to all Americans. Instead of guarding our institutions jealously with cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment, we in these august Chambers across every aisle allow disruption to displace discourse, polarization to pass for politics, and resistance to replace result.

Mr. Speaker, we stand condemned, but not irredeemable. Like any first step, admitting the problem is the path to recovery. How did we allow these congressional Chambers to suffer such infiltration? Our own history contains sharp lessons of discord, the loss of our

own lawmakers by caning and shooting—sometimes by our own selves; a preference for conflict over Constitution, and a division so great that we ended up destroying each other on America's fields and farms from Gettysburg to Vicksburg.

Washington's warnings went unheeded a mere 100 years after he gave them. We self-corrected, but only after great harm to ourselves. It has been 150 years since we nearly destroyed each other. Are we on any more secure a path? It would appear from our treatment of each other and our view of our own Nation's future that we are tempted to walk an old path. If that be the case, then taking counsel from George Washington might be a timely exercise.

With regard to unity, we must realize we are all in the ship of state together. Crashing it on the rocks as we fight each other for control of the helm will deny any safe harbor we wish to obtain. Washington believed that we must view our unity as a sacred tie that links together the various parts.

"Citizens by birth or choice of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name 'American,' which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have a common cause fought in triumph together; the independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint counsels and joint efforts of common dangers, sufferings and successes. . . . your union ought to be considered as a main prop to your liberty, and that the love of one ought to endear you to the preservation of the other."

If the unity of our people be the main prop of our liberty, what was it that George Washington believed would knock out that prop?

Warning number one and number two from George Washington, Geographical and Party Disunion: Washington believed, "a government for the whole is indispensable." When various parts of the country come to feel that they are more important than the others, they will "acquire influence within particular districts to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts."

Disregarding government for some regional or geographical preference to suit our own interest is a sure way to erode our unity. Washington's view of our government was to show "Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty."

Washington believed that the Constitution and its authentic amending was an act by the people upon themselves, and that every American would naturally have an obligation to obey the established government for the experiment even to work.

"All obstructions to the execution of the laws . . . designs to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle and a fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force; to put, in the place of the delegated will of the Nation the will of a party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community; and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the mirror of the ill-concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common counsels and modified by mutual interests."

Washington foresaw that geographical interests could coalesce around party preferences, with urban and rural, coastal and inland, northern and southern, eastern and western, forming the basis by which we would try to empower ourselves with party faction to obtain the interests of one rather than the interests of all.

For our government to work for the whole Nation, he encouraged us to "remember that time and habit are at least as necessary to fix the true character of governments as of other human institutions."

For example, we understand that it takes time for a child to become an adult, or that an adult, in time, must master his or her skills and experience to succeed in work or creativity. Yet, somehow, we imagine that the difficult things of government can be solved in months, when in the natural flow of life, it takes years and decades to secure true accomplishment.

Even if we were able to accept this wisdom, we find ourselves provoked to what Washington called, "the spirit of revenge" among parties as one faction would alternate domination over the other. Washington warned that it was, "natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetuated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty."

Washington warned that party faction would always distract public cooperation, weakening our government's ability to function. Loyalty to party over the Nation would, in his phrases, agitate communities, kindle animosity, foment occasional riot and insurrection, and open the door for foreign influence and corruption to weaken the Nation.

He also warned of those using patriotism and liberty as their justification to stress the Nation, rising in their

deep conviction with the spirit of party and urgency. Admitting that there would be some indulgence for this, if not favor, he warned that such a spirit was not to be encouraged.

He called upon all Americans to not fan these embers as they were "a fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume."

Warning number three, The Encroachment of National Leaders: Washington warned that national leaders "to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another . . . The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism . . . If, in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed."

Warning number four, Religious Abandonment: For all of Washington's warnings about political and party faction, his remedy was very clear. So clear, in fact, that its absence, he said, would guarantee that our Nation would lack human rights.

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are dispensable supports. . . . Let it simply be asked: Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle. . . . virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. Who . . . can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?"

□ 1715

Warning number five, Public Debt and Weakened Defense: Washington had much to say about public credit. He believed it should be used as sparingly as possible. He also believed one sure way to preserve the national treasury would be to promote peace, but also to fund the government on time. Proper funding would secure the Nation, preventing greater cost to repel danger and burden the Nation with debt. Toward all national debts, Washington reminded all Americans that it took revenue to pay them.

"The execution of these maxims belongs to your representatives, but it is

necessary that public opinion should cooperate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty, it is essential that you should practically bear in mind that towards the payment of debts, there must be revenue; that to have revenue, there must be taxes; that no taxes can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant."

For these reasons, Washington warned that our motives must be decisive in the expense of government and to choose wisely the objects that we should fund. To ignore this would weaken our Nation as a whole.

Warning number six, Entangling and Favored Alliances: Washington's view of foreign policy was to: "Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be, that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened nation, and at no distant period, a great nation, to give mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence."

Washington believed good morality would naturally create good foreign policy, fairness, and impartiality. He urged to treat all nations equally, initially. He warned that adverse relations with nations would result in poor policy and unnecessary conflict. Unnecessary favor to particular nations might pull us into conflict with some other where we may have had no quarrel at all.

Washington was passionate here: "Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence, I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens, the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government. But that jealousy to be useful must be impartial."

His final warning, warning number seven, Partiality in Commerce: Washington instructed: "The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible."

Washington believed strong relations could be built upon commerce, keeping us in a fair and neutral position, preventing entanglement in disputes between other nations. He urged to steer clear of permanent alliances, but, rather, that "we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies."

Washington argued commerce should be equal and impartial, neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors; to consult the natural course of things; to handle gently the natural streams of commerce; to force nothing; to define the rights of our merchants; to enter upon agreements in a temporary fashion, recognizing that from time to time such commerce could be abandoned or modified as needs and circumstances might dictate.

Washington foresaw that, if we expected disinterested favors from other nations without an equal benefit, there would be an accounting. He warned: "There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation."

George Washington had no illusions that his warnings would endure to control the Nation's passions. He did hope, however, they "may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good; that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism."

So where do we stand, Mr. Speaker, as a nation in these areas of warning?

How are we doing on geographical and party disunion?

We stand guilty of it. The average American citizen has only been to 8 of her 50 States, and our national leaders and our own people disrespect our Nation's Capitol as a swamp.

We see coastal cities referring to interior rural towns as "flyover country," not realizing that nearly all of their food comes from it, while rural areas declaring coastal regions would not be missed if they simply fell into the ocean, not realizing that these areas represent the bulk of national trade and economy.

We see Americans electing the most polarized to the left or to the right, sending them to work in Washington, D.C., wondering why they can't get along to get things done when they get here.

We see elected leaders calling for disruption and resistance rather than discourse and result.

We see chairs thrown through campus windows because we cannot abide free speech.

We see history expunged because we cannot abide free thought.

We have abandoned accommodation, bypassed toleration, encouraged isolation, organized intimidation, and are set to pursue a path to castigation.

What is next? Elimination of our Republic?

We must get reacquainted as Americans with unity, with the idea that the Nation comes before region, before party, before self. A republic is a mutual enterprise. We must relearn how to keep it.

How are we doing on Washington's warning of national leaders encroaching on each other's branch of government or each other's business?

We complain of judges legislating from benches while we judge from our legislatures.

We see executive branches move by power of decree rather than by power of consent.

We see people ignore Federal authority while demanding Federal aid.

We have eroded respected institutions as elected leaders abandon civil conduct in hearings, confusing disruption, disrespect, and division somehow with democracy. We have deluded our-

selves that rudeness is now a form of representation.

If we cannot respect these hallowed institutions that we ourselves, as Americans, control, how can we possibly receive respect in return from our fellow citizens as we look to lead government?

If we spent as much effort to watch our own lanes and make government business efficient rather than inflammatory, we might just restore some respect to the greatest constitutional republic that has ever existed. And, Mr. Speaker, it starts with us.

And how about Washington's warning on expecting morality without religion?

We have traded accommodation for castigation, abandoning the very religious principles adorning all 13 of our original State constitutions, our own Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights.

Every Chamber, hall, ceiling, nook, and corner of our Capitol is adorned with these foundational beliefs. In this very Chamber, "In God We Trust" is over the Speaker's podium, and 97 percent of the Members of Congress claim these principles in their personal beliefs. Why then have we become silent on free exercise of religion guaranteed in our Constitution?

We have imagined that we can show respect without being respectful.

We have encouraged and exchanged truth for a lie and now wonder why people are so uncivil to one another, and why we have faded hope, unclear vision, purpose, or reason to be a force for good in the world as a United States.

Contrary to Washington's warning, we imagine we can have morality without the free exercise of religion. We foolishly believe we can fix moral problems with political solutions. I am of the belief we need to ask God's forgiveness.

What of Washington's warning on public debt, \$20 trillion and counting?

We demand thrift from each other but not from ourselves in our personal pocketbooks. The problem is so great today, but not greater than our people if we lead by our individual examples.

We, the nationally elected leaders, are a reflection of America as a whole. Until Americans demand fiscal discipline in themselves, it will be a long wait to expect it from those whom we elect.

We, the people, have put ourselves into this situation by making demands of government to pay for all of our shortcomings. At some point, that payment becomes due. We must ask less from the government and more from ourselves, solving our problems locally, together, without an invitation for government control.

What of Washington's warning on alliances and trade?

Rather than a fair and bilateral approach to nations, we have entangled ourselves in multinational permanent agreements on trade, without the vi-

sion to think that the circumstances may change.

We have pledged long-term favored status by treaty as opposed to short-term agreements and objectives. We have a moral obligation to honor the agreements we have enjoined, but we would do well to heed Washington's counsel to approach foreign relations commercially and have as little political connection to them as possible.

Mr. Speaker, George Washington's counsel is sorely needed today. We stand guilty in all seven of his warnings. We are guilty but not irredeemable. Americans have a history of self-correction. Unfortunately, it often comes with some great distress or disaster. We can and must heed Washington's warnings now and correct by choice rather than by circumstance.

As a combat infantryman, a warrior, returning home from more than two decades of personal service, who now has a political life, I have asked myself this question:

How did we as Americans allow our voice to be co-opted by self-proclaimed cynics and critics on both sides of the political spectrum who have divided our great Nation?

When did American zeal for innovation, sweat, and determination become replaced with intimidation, threat, and extermination of meaningful dialogue by pathetic keyboard commandos eating their bags of Cheese Puffs while sunken into their couches?

America has never been built on the labor and counsel of cynics and critics. Americans, we need to wake up. It is time to rekindle that spirit that united our country, ended enslavement, enriched our land, advanced our arts and sciences, granted women's suffrage, protested inequality, and protected the defenseless.

Americans know the difference between what is evil and what is good.

□ 1730

The question we must now ask is whether we will unite and continue to live free or continue to attack ourselves, give way to cynicism, and watch America's liberty and place in the world die.

Thank God America is still full of men and women who know it is not the cynic and critic who dig the ditch, teach the child, inspire the solutions, or create the future.

It is time for Americans to put America before self again, to inspire, to lead, to unify, and to sacrifice. It starts with each of us sacrificing a few things, sacrifice doubt, sacrifice anxiety, sacrifice cynicism.

America cannot allow warriors like me to come home from a decade of fighting and war to see our Republic overcome by the self-indulgent, the divisive, and the visionless.

As visionary as we Americans and lovers of liberty claim to be, we will make little headway if our only answers to our friends and neighbors are mere sideline snipes about what is wrong with this country.

Are we so shortsighted that we cannot accommodate dialogue, exchange ideas, and show some deference and respect to one another and rebuild our Nation?

It is time for the American people to embrace what is right about our wonderful country, not what is wrong with it. Let us heed Washington's warnings and get to work.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. CHENEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I appreciated so much hearing the fantastic presentation about George Washington. It was interesting in the last several months to hear a presentation by a biographer of Benjamin Franklin over at the Library of Congress.

He was asked: Do you see anybody in America today, in politics, that reminds you of Benjamin Franklin?

He said:

Well, I see, basically, a lot of different people with different parts of Franklin. He was brilliant, genius, funny, and clever.

But it is not like he was George Washington. There was only one of those.

We heard from the director of the Society of the Cincinnati, which has been around since the Revolution and is dedicated to the study of the Revolution. It is particularly named for the Roman General Cincinnatus who had come from the farm, won a great campaign, and went back to the farm.

George Washington, it is very clear, could have been emperor or czar, whatever title he wanted. There were at least a couple efforts to have a military coup when the government was falling apart.

Washington replied to one effort. They told him he didn't even have to participate in the coup. They would even agree, when he didn't want to serve or passed away, that they would honor whomever he chose as his subordinate. Basically, his response was: If you have any regard for me or this Nation, you will never mention such a notion to anyone again.

What an incredible man George Washington was. He was a man of honor and a man of integrity. His word was his bond.

That is why, for example, when he found out about Benedict Arnold, a man who was really the hero of the Battle of Saratoga—it wasn't General Gates; it was really Benedict Arnold—he couldn't believe it. It just crushed him to his soul that this great leader, Benedict Arnold, had turned on him and was ready to surrender him to the enemy. He just couldn't believe, as such an incredible person of honor, that somebody he trusted would be such a traitor.

We had a service in what was the largest Christian church in Washington

for 60 or so years. That happened to be the old House Chamber down the hall. We had that last night led by Pastor Dan Cummins; his wife, JoAnne; and an incredible singer, Steve Amerson.

I told people about the story of Isaac Potts. The big Potts family had land in Pennsylvania where Washington wintered his Army at Valley Forge. That was mainly on Potts land. Isaac Potts himself was a Quaker. He didn't believe Christians should ever fight.

He was out in the woods. A painting that depicted that scene was painted by Friberg. I am advised that there had been more prints made of that painting than any other American painting in history. It was Washington down on one knee beside his big, gray horse. He was praying to God.

He had made mistakes as Commander of the United States, the Revolution. Potts heard him pray. He prayed out loud. In the painting he is seen with eyes closed basically looking down. My understanding is normally he looked up and spoke out in prayer.

Alexander Hamilton found him on his knees praying in his tent many times early in the morning when he had to interrupt him for something important.

But there he was, out in the snow. Potts listened to him. When Washington got on his big, gray horse and rode back into Valley Forge, Potts hurried home.

First, he told his wife and told others. This was something that was passed from Potts and his wife. They told it, and they retold it.

It had an incredible impact on this strong, Christian Quaker, because he was totally against the Revolution. He thought it was a disastrous mistake. He felt like no one who was a Christian could participate in a revolution, in any kind of military operation.

But there was fake news back in those days, too. There was a biographer in the early 1800s who was trying to disprove that George Washington was a man of faith, a Christian.

Peter Lillback in his big, wonderful book regarding George Washington takes on all of that fake news back in the day. That includes the early biographer's account that everyone had heard the story about Isaac Potts. But he said that, in essence, he had talked to witnesses or people who thought it actually may not have ever happened.

Kind of like news today, you don't talk to the people who were actual witnesses. You talk to people who don't know firsthand anything. All they know is hearsay, and they just happen to support your particular position.

By the way, "George Washington's Sacred Fire" is the name of Peter Lillback's book.

That night, Potts came back. We know what was said because it was repeated over and over again by Isaac Potts and by his wife. His granddaughter reduced it to writing. He said that Washington prayed out loud, and in his prayer, and this is quoting, "He

utterly disclaimed all ability of his own for this arduous conflict."

We are talking about George Washington, 6 foot 4, even though Chernow's book said he was a little shorter than 6 foot 2. That was one of the numerous mistakes in Chernow's book. There is no question at all. It is indisputable that when Washington in 1799 was flat on a slab, he was 6 foot 3½.

But, in any event, this big, athletic, courageous man of faith, according to Potts, "wept at the thought of that irretrievable ruin which his mistakes might bring on his country." Potts said: "And with the patriot's pathos spreading the interests of unborn millions before the eye of Eternal Mercy, he implored the aid of that arm which guides the starry host."

Now, that is an incredible human being. His biographers, as the director of the Society of the Cincinnati had pointed out, say that there has never been anybody like him.

When I was on islands south of India some years back on a trip where we had gone to check on our Special Forces, I had a leader there tell me:

We are a new democracy, and we are always hearing about a potential military coup to overthrow our elected government.

He paused. He looked at me, and he said:

We never had a George Washington to set the proper example here, so we are always worried about a coup.

He was an incredible man.

Potts said: "I have seen this day what I shall never forget. Till now, I have thought that a Christian and a soldier were characters incompatible; but if George Washington be not a man of God, I am mistaken, and still more shall I be disappointed if God do not through him perform some great thing for this country."

So Isaac Potts was talking about a man known since 1755 in the French and Indian War for his relentless courage, his leadership, and his faith. As he said of a battle of the French and Indian War:

That night when I took off my coat, I had bullet holes through and through my coat, but I had not a scratch on me. I took off my hat, and it had bullet holes through it.

But he shook out his hair. Fragments flew everywhere.

He said: Truly, I was protected by divine providence.

And he truly was.

Indians referred to him from that battle as the man God would not let die.

He was such a man of honor and integrity that set this country on a path to freedom and into being a light on the hilltop.

As a former President of the Czech Republic told me last night here, he said: America has always been seen, even when we disagreed with it, as that light on the hilltop. It was a beacon. It was showing the way for truth.

He said: You don't have that light on the hill here anymore.

We can get it back. But Washington, of course, in his "Farewell Address"