



*Thomas Jefferson - Principles of Good Government  
(from his Inaugural Address - March 4, 1801)*

About to enter fellow citizens, on the exercise of duties which comprehend everything dear and valuable to you, it is proper you should understand what I deem the essential principles of our government, and consequently those which ought to shape its administration. I will compress them within the narrowest compass they will bear, stating the general principle, but not all its limitations.

- Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political
- Peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none
- The support of the State governments in all their rights, as the most competent administrations for our domestic concerns, and the surest bulwarks against antirepublican tendencies
- The preservation of the general government in its whole constitutional vigor, as the sheet-anchor of our peace at home and safety abroad
- A jealous care of the right of election by the people
- A mild and safe corrective of abuses which are lopped by the sword of revolution, where peaceable remedies are unprovided
- Absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority, the vital principle of republics, from which is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism
- A well-disciplined militia, our best reliance in peace and for the first moments of war, till regulars may relieve them
- The supremacy of the civil over the military authority
- Economy in the public expense, that labor may be lightly burdened
- The honest payment of our debts, and sacred preservation of the public faith
- Encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaid
- The diffusion of information and arraignment of all abuses at the bar of the public reason
- Freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and freedom of person, under the protection of the Habeas Corpus; and trial by juries impartially selected

These principles form the bright constellation which has gone before us, and guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation. The wisdom of our sages and blood of our heroes have been devoted to their attainment. They should be the creed of our political faith, the text of civic instruction, the touchstone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them in moments of error or of alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety.