

George Washington's Farewell Address (Excerpt)

George Washington
September 17, 1796

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS:

1 The period for a new election of a citizen, to administer the executive government of the United States, being not far distant, and the time actually arrived, when your thoughts must be employed designating the person, who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those out of whom a choice is to be made.

2 I beg you at the same time to do me the justice to be assured that this resolution has not been taken without a strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation which binds a dutiful citizen to his country; and that in withdrawing the tender of service, which silence in my situation might imply, I am influenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest, no deficiency of grateful respect for your past kindness, but am supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

3 The acceptance of, and continuance hitherto in, the office to which your suffrages have twice called me, have been a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty, and to a deference for what appeared to be your desire. I constantly hoped, that it would have been much earlier in my power, consistently with motives, which I was not at liberty to disregard, to return to that retirement, from which I had been reluctantly drawn. The strength of my inclination to do this, previous to the last election, had even led to the preparation of an address to declare it to you; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of our affairs with foreign nations, and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my confidence impelled me to abandon the idea.

4 I rejoice, that the state of your concerns, external as well as internal, no longer renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty, or propriety; and am persuaded, whatever partiality may be retained for my services, that, in the present circumstances of our country, you will not disapprove my determination to retire.

Source: Washington, George. "Washington's Farewell Address." Address. United States. 17 Sept. 1796. George Washington's Mount Vernon. Mount Vernon Ladies' Association. Web. 28 Nov. 2016.
<<http://www.mountvernon.org/education/primary-sources-2/article/washingtons-farewell-address-1796/>>.

Questions on George Washington's Farewell Address (Excerpt)

1. Why is George Washington publishing this address now?
2. What is the purpose of Washington's "Farewell Address"?
3. What is Washington's purpose for writing the 2nd paragraph?
4. Why did Washington want to resign after his 1st term?

5. According to the “Farewell Address,” why does Washington continue for a 2nd term?

6. Why does Washington feel he can retire now?