



## George Washington in America Today

MANDY OZMENT

Each year, the Betty Baker Jernigan Endowed Scholarship Fund offers a \$1000 scholarship to the winner of an essay contest open to qualified continuing and incoming USAO students. The contest asks students to write 300-500 words addressing the question: “How is America doing – politically, socially, economically?”

Beginning this year, *The Drover Review* also offers to publish winning submissions.

The winner of the 2019-20 Jernigan Award is Mandy Ozment, who argues that George Washington’s 1796 farewell address predicts the modern problem of acrimonious political parties, which subvert America’s founding ideals.

**M**ANY MODERN AMERICANS probably see America as doing as well as it can politically, socially, and economically, considering how the world is going today. However, if we were to bring back some of the founding fathers of America, I wonder what view they would take. In today’s culture, America can be identified by our democratic government, where we have two major

parties that compete for the chance to take the highest power position our government has to offer: president. If we look at George Washington's Farewell Address, we can see that America has fallen into many of the traps that he warned us against, a major one being political parties. Washington states, "I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the State, with particular reference to the founding of them on geographical discriminations."

Washington was wary about how the country would grow and develop once he stepped down from office. His major concern was the idea of bringing political parties into the mix. While Washington admits that political parties are a necessary evil and that they will exist in all different shapes of government, he advises us to be wary of political parties and to prevent them from consuming us as we grow. Washington describes political parties as being an "alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge." I think that we can see that description as defining political parties today. Republicans and Democrats are at such great odds when it comes to making substantial political decisions that these decisions almost never even get made. A very recent example of this is the decision to build the border wall. Both parties have refused to come to an agreement, which has caused a thirty-five-day national government shutdown: the longest in American history.

Furthermore, Washington warns that political parties will cause unneeded arguments between the people of the nation. Political parties will bring about jealousy and animosity against one party and the other. Anyone can see examples of this in our political state as a nation right now. Just by turning on the news, you can see people arguing over every little detail that each party stands for. All this arguing breaks the unity that Americans have with each other; it divides the nation into two separate groups who constantly want to win the overall battle that they have with the opposing side.

Washington ends his warning to the future generations of America by describing political parties like this: "A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting

into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume.” If Washington were to come back and see America today, I would have no doubt that he would be disappointed in our political state and the choices that we took to get here. ▶▶

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WASHINGTON, GEORGE. “Farewell Address.” Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/resource/mgw2.024/?sp=229&st=text](http://www.loc.gov/resource/mgw2.024/?sp=229&st=text). Accessed 30 Apr. 2019.