



CIVIC VALUES AND SKILLS

Compromise

Compromise means looking for solutions to problems that allow all to benefit, even if it requires setting aside one's own personal interests. Citizens compromise in politics by looking for solutions that satisfy the concerns of many different groups and by practicing moderation. Citizens compromise in personal relationships by collaborating with others to achieve common goals.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "People talk about the middle of the road as though it were unacceptable. Actually, all human problems, excepting morals, come into the gray areas. Things are not all black and white. There have to be compromises."

Compromise in politics allows progress in dealing with problems whereas without compromise progress might end and beneficial outcomes might not be extended to all individuals or groups. The Founders compromised, for example, in the battle over ratification of the new U. S. Constitution written at the constitutional convention at Philadelphia in 1787. James Madison promised the Anti-Federalists that a bill of rights would be added to the Constitution after ratification, even though at first he personally did not favor doing this.

On the other hand, compromising one's values is not always a virtue. Refusing to compromise can be a sign of integrity. For example, some Anti-Federalists such as George Mason refused to sign the new U. S. Constitution because they believed it did not adequately protect rights. Another example is John Dickinson who did not believe declaring independence from England to be the best course of action and thus left Philadelphia rather than sign the Declaration of Independence.

Some examples of significant compromises in early American history in this Study Guide are the Connecticut Compromise, the Missouri Compromise, and the Compromise of 1850.

Consideration

Consideration means being thoughtful, courteous, having good manners, and showing respect for different ideas even if one does not agree with them. Citizens show consideration for others by not saying hurtful things, by being quiet when others are talking, showing good sportsmanship, offering senior citizens seats on public transportation, and respecting others' words, actions, ideas, values and backgrounds.

The Founders knew that consideration of new ideas was beneficial to individuals and society. Benjamin Franklin, for example, said, "I have experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information or fuller consideration, to change

opinions...” Thomas Paine observed, “New opinions are always suspected, and usually opposed, without any other reason but because they are not already common.”

In a society that guarantees free speech, individuals and institutions must be considerate. Government cannot simply ban words or ideas that it does not agree with. Citizens have a responsibility to give consideration to others’ points of view. Similarly, people exercising their First Amendment rights to free speech, press, and assembly, have a responsibility to do so in ways that are within the law and considerate of others’ rights.

Courage

Courage means taking action in spite of feeling afraid and being strong in the face of danger. Individuals exhibiting courage can bring about political change and ensure justice.

Citizens exhibit courage when they engage in political speech, serve in the military, and stand up for their rights and the rights of others.

President Andrew Jackson said, “One man with courage makes a majority.” In his “Duty Honor, Country” Address, General Douglas MacArthur described the temperament of the American soldier as a “predominance of courage over timidity.”

The Founders displayed courage by issuing the Declaration of Independence, fighting the Revolutionary War, and framing a republican government in the new U. S. Constitution.

Equality

Various individuals and documents in American history have asserted that all persons are created equal and have the same natural rights. For example, the Declaration of Independence declared that “all men are created equal” and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Abraham Lincoln echoed the Declaration of Independence in the *Gettysburg Address* when he declared that America is “dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” Alice Paul said of the women’s suffrage movement, “I never doubted that equal rights was the right direction. Most reforms, most problems are complicated. But to me there is nothing complicated about ordinary equality.” Martin Luther King, Jr. expressed his hope for a society more dedicated to equality in his “I Have a Dream” speech.

Industry

Industry means working hard with resources that are available, as well as finding or creating the resources one needs. Individuals are industrious when they work hard on whatever they choose to do or are required to do in life.

The Founders saw industry and property rights as critical to the happiness of society. Thomas Jefferson remarked that good government will “leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned...” James Wilson asserted that “private industry...is the basis of public happiness.” James Madison agreed, holding that protecting “property as well as personal rights is an essential object of the laws, which encourage industry by securing the enjoyment of its fruits...”

Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution gives Congress the power “to promote the progress of science and useful arts by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.” The Fifth Amendment requires the government to pay citizens just compensation when private property is taken for public use. These constitutional provisions demonstrate the Founders’ views about industry.

Initiative

Initiative means acting independently and energetically, especially when taking the first steps toward a goal. A society dedicated to self-government requires that individuals take the initiative to ensure the happiness of society. Citizens have many opportunities to show initiative. For example, they do so by completing their home, school, or career responsibilities without being reminded, by starting their own businesses, by joining a political party, or by lobbying for new laws.

Thomas Paine celebrated the initiative of the Founders when he wrote in *Common Sense*, “We have it in our power to begin the world over again.” Frederick Douglass remarked that his own initiative made the difference in gaining his freedom, “I prayed for twenty years but received no answer until I prayed with my legs.” Several amendments to the Constitution, including the Fifteenth and Nineteenth, were drafted and eventually adopted as a result of the initiative of certain individuals and groups.

Integrity

Citizens exhibit integrity by being true to their word and following through on their promises. Refusing to compromise one’s values can also be a sign of integrity.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower asserted, “The supreme quality of leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office.

Justice

Justice includes concepts such as the fair, equal, and reasonable treatment of individuals by the government, the fair enforcement of laws, and appropriate punishment for crimes.

Many individuals and documents in the Founding era of the United States were especially concerned with justice. William Penn explained that “Impartiality is the life of justice.” The Declaration of Independence charged the King with being “deaf to the voice of justice.” The Preamble declares that a purpose of the Constitution

is to establish justice. The Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Amendments to the U. S. Constitution pertain to the administration of justice. The Thirteenth Amendment banned slavery and involuntary servitude, and the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause was adopted to ensure the equal legal treatment of all Americans.

Moderation

Moderation was a value especially prized in Ancient Republics such as Rome. It means to be mild and measured in actions and thoughts and to avoid extremes or excesses. Citizens practice moderation by avoiding too much of anything: food, drink, work, play, sleep, emotions, etc. When individuals or groups disagree, violent conflicts can be avoided by practicing moderation.

The Founders were committed to moderation as a value that would support public happiness. Thomas Paine said "Moderation in temper is always a virtue, but moderation in principle is always a vice." In his Autobiography, Benjamin Franklin advocated moderation when he advised avoiding extremes. In his Farewell Address, President George Washington urged moderation when dealing with foreign entanglements.

The U. S. Constitution's checks and balances system is designed to encourage moderation in government. Also, the Constitution's Eighth Amendment ban on cruel and unusual punishments displays the value of moderation.

Perseverance

Perseverance means sticking to one's goals and continuing to pursue them in the face of opposition or discouragement. Citizens persevere by continuing to pursue their goals even when facing obstacles.

President John Quincy Adams explained that with "courage and perseverance,...difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish into air." A little known American entrepreneur once said, "I do not think there is any other quality so essential to success of any kind as the quality of perseverance. It overcomes almost everything, even nature."

The American Founders persevered in expressing their grievances to the British Crown. They also persevered in their goal of establishing a republican form of government when they framed a new U. S. Constitution after the Articles of Confederation proved inadequate. The Anti-Federalist opponents of the new U. S. Constitution successfully persevered in their demands for a bill of rights. Many citizens have persevered through years of court struggles to secure their rights.

Philanthropy

Philanthropy is the act of private charitable giving: donating money, time, or resources to beneficial purposes. The word comes from the Greek and means "to love people."

Individuals act philanthropically by donating money and resources to charities they believe are beneficial as well as by volunteering their time.

The Founders believed philanthropy was important. For example, Thomas Jefferson said, "We are all doubtless bound to contribute a certain portion of our income to the support of charitable and other useful public institutions."

Responsibilities of Citizenship

The responsibilities of citizenship include both private and public responsibilities. Each citizen is responsible for taking care of oneself and one's family and for showing consideration for the welfare of others. These responsibilities are facilitated through the practice of private civic values such as courage, initiative, industry, justice, integrity, moderation, perseverance, and respect that help ensure the happiness of society as a whole.

Involvement with local governments and other local institutions provide opportunities for individuals to act responsibly in their communities. In a republic based on popular sovereignty, citizens have the responsibility to stay informed about and engaged with government. They are responsible for knowing how government operates and what government is doing. Citizens also have the responsibility to know the law, pay taxes, and understand such constitutional principles as federalism, limited government, individual rights, and majority rule versus minority rights.

Voting, which Samuel Adams called "one of the most solemn trusts in human society," is another important responsibility of citizens. Citizens should also be aware of other ways by which they can act responsibly: circulating and signing petitions, volunteering, speaking and writing for or against the passage of laws, working on political campaigns, serving on juries, serving in the military, or serving in government.

Systems of Government

Among nations of the world, a variety of systems of government can be found. Under the Articles of Confederation (the United States' first national constitution), the U. S. had what is called a confederation system of government. In such a system, all power is in the smaller units of government (states or whatever they may be called). The national government has only those powers or duties given it by these smaller units of government. No nation in the world today has such a system of government. The closest thing to a confederation system today is the United Nations or perhaps the European Union. Great Britain and most nations of the world today have what is called a unitary system of government. Here the power is in the hands of the national government, and the smaller units of government (whatever they may be called) have only those powers or duties which the national government gives them. The United States and a few other nations of the world such as Canada and Mexico have what is called a federal system of government where power is divided between a national government and a series of smaller units of government called states (or provinces). Some things only the national government can do, and some things only the smaller units of government

can do. For the framers of the 1787 U. S. Constitution, a federal system was a compromise between a confederation system and a unitary system.

Another important governmental difference among nations of the world today is between a parliamentary system such as that found in Great Britain and the largest number of nations and a so-called presidential system such as that found in the United States. In a parliamentary system, power is centered in the legislative branch of government. For example, in Great Britain power is in the hands of Parliament, more specifically the House of Commons. The Prime Minister (the British equivalent of the U. S. President) is a member of, is chosen by and can be removed at any time by a majority vote of the House of Commons. The Prime Minister is Head of Government, but a different person, namely the monarch, is Head of State. In a parliamentary system, there is in reality no such thing as separation of powers. In a presidential system, on the other hand, such as that found in the United States, separation of powers is a fundamental principle. The President is independent of and separate from the legislative branch. The President cannot at the same time be a member of the legislative branch, is not chosen by, and can only be removed for “high crimes and misdemeanors” by the legislative branch through a constitutionally provided impeachment process. The President serves as both Head of State and Head of Government in the presidential system.

The Importance of an Independent Judiciary

In the Federalist No. 78, Alexander Hamilton wrote, “The complete independence of the courts of justice is peculiarly essential in a limited Constitution.” The U. S. Constitution provides for a judiciary which is independent in two ways – independent from the other two branches of government and independent from the majority of the electorate. Influenced by the French philosopher Baron de Montesquieu and his 1748 work *The Spirit of the Laws*, the framers of the new U. S. Constitution were careful to provide an independent judicial branch to interpret the law and settle disputes. The American system of checks and balances provides for judges (justices) to be nominated by the President and approved by the Senate. Once appointed and approved by the Senate, these judges (justices) serve for life (“on good behavior”). This system of checks and balances was designed to prevent abuses of power—not only by government but also by a majority of the people.

The framers saw the danger of the tyranny of the majority as a potential threat to the rights of the minority. Thomas Jefferson said, “a democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where 51% of the people may take away the rights of the other 49%.” James Madison said, “The danger in republics is that the majority may not sufficiently respect the rights of the minority.”

The natural rights theory of the Declaration of Independence holds that rights come from the Creator and are not created or “granted” by majority vote. Because judges at the national level in the U. S. hold their office for life (“on good behavior”), they do not have to fear being removed from office for unpopular decisions. As Alexander Hamilton explained, appointed judges who serve for life are more likely “to secure a steady, upright, and impartial administration of the laws...”