



Is the Day of Great Leaders Past?

A recent column co-authored by John Eidsmoe and Ben DuPré struck me. They titled their column, "What Makes a 'Great' President?"

The basic thrust of the column was to examine the qualities that make one a "great" President. They start by examining the presidency of our 11th President, James K. Polk. They note that Polk is commonly regarded as being one of America's top 12 greatest Presidents. To use their words, "between eighth and 12th among our greatest presidents."



Eidsmoe and DuPré note that Polk was undoubtedly a man of outstanding Christian character and faith. They say that Polk was "the only president who kept and fulfilled every one of his campaign promises." They observe him to be a man "with a Puritan work ethic, [who] literally worked himself to death as president, retired from office in broken health and died 103 days later."

But Polk also greatly expanded the power of the presidency. "In 1846, President Polk sent American troops into disputed territory where they were almost certain to become embroiled in hostilities, and then demanded that Congress recognize that a state of war already existed. Increasingly with Polk's presidency and thereafter, the president set national policy and the Congress rubber-stamped the president's decisions."

Eidsmoe and DuPré note that the people who are charged with rating our Presidents are commonly academicians, "and as such they tend to be left of center. They believe in centralized power, and they therefore admire presidents who increased federal power and concentrated it in the presidency."

In this regard, Eidsmoe and DuPré are 100 percent correct. Look at the heroes of liberal historians, and who do you find? Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt. Not by accident, these same historians will extol the virtues of Hammurabi, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon. All these men have one thing in common: they were responsible for expanding (either by force or fraud) a centralized government.

Eidsmoe and DuPré correctly challenge the standard by which greatness is determined and offer alternatives to the avant-garde, politically correct formula. They proffer that "the truly great men of history are those who have defended and preserved individual liberty by resisting the increase and centralization of government power."

To that I say a hearty "*amen*."

Eidsmoe and DuPré then offer their own list of great men, which includes Judas Maccabeus, Cato and Cicero, Hermann the Liberator, Archbishop Stephen Langton of Canterbury, William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, and George Washington and Patrick Henry.

This brought to mind the fact that, several months ago, I had asked my friend, Howard Phillips, to rate



Written by [chuck](#) - on November 10, 2009

his favorite U.S. Presidents. This was his response:

- 1) George Washington: for the standard he established during his presidency.
- 2) Thomas Jefferson: for his commitment to religious liberty and for recognizing the role of the states as he spelled out in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions.
- 3) Andrew Jackson: for his opposition to the second bank of the United States.
- 4) John Tyler: for his role in the admission of Texas to the Union.
- 5) James Polk: for advancing America's "manifest destiny."
- 6) Grover Cleveland: for his fidelity for the Constitution of the United States.
- 7) Calvin Coolidge: for his commitment to low taxes and limits on federal spending, as well as for his good character.

As for my personal list of greatest Presidents, it would largely mirror Howard's list, with one deviation. I would suggest:

- 1) George Washington: America's greatest President, without whom this republic would not exist. His "Farewell Address" is the greatest political speech ever delivered on American soil and should be regarded as "must-reading" for every American citizen.
- 2) Thomas Jefferson: America's greatest defender of individual liberty and states' rights.
- 3) James Monroe: for his leadership in establishing America's strategically important "Monroe Doctrine."
- 4) Andrew Jackson: for standing up against the bankers.
- 5) John Tyler: for defying his own party (Whigs) and twice vetoing the incorporation of the U.S. Bank. And also for supporting the Southern cause for secession.
- 6) Grover Cleveland: for his honesty and devotion to the U.S. Constitution.
- 7) Calvin Coolidge: for his dogged determination to limit taxes and federal spending.

As for my suggested list of personal heroes, those are already chronicled on my [Wikipedia page](#).

Interestingly enough, DuPré and Eidsmoe's hero candidates, William Wallace and Patrick Henry, also grace my list of heroes as posted on my Wikipedia page.

One will notice that there are hardly any modern-day heroes mentioned on my list. I also observed that there were no modern-day heroes mentioned by John Eidsmoe and Ben Dupré in their column. Indeed. Where are the real heroes in national public office today?

Our national leaders (from both parties) seem to be shortsighted opportunists, possessing little regard for their oaths to the U.S. Constitution, the principles of decency, or even plain, old-fashioned common sense. Both major parties in Washington, D.C., offer the American people varying degrees of socialism. Neither party demonstrates even tacit devotion to constitutional government. Federalism and limited government have all but disappeared under the oversight of both Republican and Democratic leaders. These disastrous Presidents (from Johnson, Nixon, and Carter to Clinton and Bush I & II) calmly leave office with no regret or remorse for the devastation, death, and deception that they inflicted upon the country. They live in the lap of luxury and comfort without the slightest tinge of conscience as to the massive destruction done to our Constitution, not to mention our economy, security, and way of life. Beyond that, our Congressmen and Senators are mostly miscreants in the similitude of Nancy Pelosi and Lindsey Graham.



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It's hard to imagine there was a time when giants once lived among us. It's hard to recall a day when the word "hero" really meant something. Today, everyone is called a hero. Well, as one Marine Corps veteran recently said, "If everyone is a hero, no one is a hero." Amen!

Perhaps more than anything, America needs great leaders once again. Men who are not enamored with power and wealth. Men who are more concerned with honoring their word and preserving the Constitution than they are being reelected and receiving a government pension. Men who really do respect the people who elected them. Men who are willing to be unpopular, if that is the cost of honesty and integrity. Men who know the difference between the eternal and the temporal. And, yes, men who know the meaning of the word *American*.

Is the day of great leaders past? With few exceptions, it would appear so. And that — more than anything else — is why we are in the mess we are in today.

So, while you are saying your prayers tonight, don't forget to ask God to give us some men like Washington and Jefferson. We could sure use them about now.

This column is archived [here](#).

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