



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 119th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 171

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2025

No. 32

Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we pause to thank You for life and health and love. Faced with challenges that demand greater than human wisdom, we find comfort in the knowledge that You really care. Free us from guilt through the power of Your limitless forgiveness.

Today, O Lord, keep our lawmakers faithful in the performance of their duties. Remind them of their total dependence on You. Open their minds to opportunities to do Your work on Earth. Lord, give them wisdom for the crucial decisions that affect our Nation and world.

Today, as we recall George Washington's Address to the American people, inspire us all to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with You.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

READING OF WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the Senate of January 24, 1901, as modified by the order of February 11, 2025, the Senator from Mississippi, Mr. WICKER, will now read Washington's Farewell Address.

(Mr. BANKS assumed the Chair.)

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, my fellow Americans

and guests, on September 19, 1796, President George Washington published an open letter to the American people. The immediate purpose of this message was to notify his fellow citizens that he would not seek a third term as President. Beyond that, George Washington chose the occasion to provide profound parting advice to his countrymen. In what has become known as George Washington's acclaimed Farewell Address, our first President gave advice and counsel regarding a wide range of issues: foreign policy, accumulation of debt, excessive partisanship, the separation of powers, and the role of religion and morality in public life.

Of course, this was not the first time President Washington had let go of power. Just down the hall from where I stand right now, in the Capitol Rotunda, hangs a painting by John Trumbull. It depicts George Washington resigning from his commission as general of the Continental Army. This took place on December 23, 1783. In the painting, General Washington is dressed in full military garb. He is an image of strength and commanding presence. He had led a small army to victory against a powerful empire. If he had wanted to, the American people, no doubt, would have given him power for life. Instead, the painting shows Washington with a hand outstretched, giving his resignation letter to the Continental Congress, relinquishing power.

Almost 250 years later, Trumbull's painting remains in the Rotunda. Presidents, Senators, Representatives, Justices, and Cabinet officials have passed it as they have gone about the business of the country. Generations of families and school groups have craned their necks to gaze at this 12- by 18-foot depiction of humility.

Today, it might strike viewers as odd that we devote an entire painting to that moment. But in the late 1700s and certainly in the history of the world at that time, this was rare. Most leaders

did not voluntarily relinquish power. The Senate's annual reading of this letter can keep us from taking Washington's decision to step down from the Presidency for granted.

I am a huge fan of Lin-Manuel Miranda's famous musical "Hamilton." Miranda put it well when he wrote that George Washington was to "teach them how to say goodbye." By his actions and his words, he did teach Americans how to relinquish power. He also charged us to stay the course in this great experiment of self-government.

I am grateful to my colleagues for giving me the opportunity to read these words to you today. Pursuant to their invitation, I do read the words of George Washington.

Mr. WICKER, at the rostrum, read the Farewell Address, as follows:

To the people of the United States:

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS: 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 in 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.

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.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S995