

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026

Message on the Birthday of President James Madison

March 16, 2026

Today we celebrate the birthday of President James Madison, the Father of our Constitution and intellectual architect of the American Founding, whose wisdom and commitment to the common good breathed life into our Republic 250 years ago.

Born on March 16, 1751, in Port Conway, Virginia, Madison was deeply devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. Through his intense study of history, philosophy, and the classics, he nurtured the ideas that would help guide a young nation toward liberty and self-government. In 1776, he was elected to the Fifth Virginia Convention, where he helped draft the state constitution and the foundational Virginia Declaration of Rights, which would later inspire the opening paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence.

As a member of the Second Continental Congress, Madison played a key role in the debates that led to the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention, and when he gathered with other delegates in the sweltering summer of 1787, Madison's depth of study of both classical and Enlightenment texts on the nature and history of republican governance helped define the contours of the debates that followed. His proposed government—grounded in the separation of powers, popular representation, and structural accountability—helped shape our Constitution, which so famously in final form begins with the revolutionary sentence that forever changed the world: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

During the ratification debates that followed, Madison penned 29 essays of the legendary "Federalist Papers," in which he laid out and defended the philosophy and principles lying at the heart of our new constitutional order. And he helped ensure ratification of the Constitution at the contentious ratification debates in Virginia. Madison's role in defining our form of government did not end there, though. As a member of the House of Representatives in the First United States Congress, Madison drafted the Bill of Rights, balancing the constitutional framework he established with a list of stated rights and guarantees that have become central to our constitutional order.

Madison would go on to serve as Secretary of State under President Thomas Jefferson, where he played a key role in bringing about the Louisiana Purchase, which doubled the size of our new Nation. As the fourth President of the United States, Madison defended American sovereignty during the War of 1812, and ushered in the "Era of Good Feelings" thereafter, helping to define the civic character of the United States.

Following his Presidency, Madison returned home to his beloved Montpelier estate in Virginia, where he remained a titan in American public life for years to come. He served as the rector of the University of Virginia, which he helped to establish, and played a decisive role in resolving the Nullification Crisis. At the age of 78, Madison was a representative to the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829 to 1830.

In his honor, as we celebrate 250 glorious years of American independence, my administration reaffirms the sacred principles that James Madison spent his life defending, including rule by the people, freedom of religion, and the constitutional rule of law. On what

would have been his 275th birthday, we salute the great James Madison for his integral role in securing our birthright of liberty.

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