

Is the United States of America a “Republic” or a “Democracy”?



“Democracy is the art of running the circus from the monkey cage.”

— Herman Melville (1819–1891) Author, short story writer & poet

The United States of America was established as a “republic,” not a “democracy,” contrary to the misinformed assertions of many Americans. A democracy was considered despotism, by the founding fathers as form of government, it was universally detested. John Adams stated his sentiments clearly when he said, “remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.” Alexander Hamilton said, “we are a republican government. Real liberty is never found in the despotism or in the extremes of democracy.” “Republican” Thomas Jefferson warned us was “the only form of government which is not eternally at open or secret war with the rights [given by God, not government] of mankind.”

At the Constitutional Convention, James McHenry recorded that as members emerged from Independence Hall, a woman asked Benjamin Franklin, “Mr. Franklin what have you given us?” Franklin simply responded, “a republic, Madam, if you can keep it.” Among the founding fathers, there was no debate as to the form of government they labored so hard and sacrificed so much to establish.

Yet today, most Americans, when asked what form of government we have in the United States, wrongly answer “democracy.” Even elected officials, occupying the highest offices in the land with an sworn oath to uphold the Constitution, say that we live in a democracy as well. Has the government we live under changed? Words have meaning, and when we choose words, in describing the form of government that protects our God given liberties, and freedoms, words really do matter.

We need to ask this question; is the United States of America today, a “republic,” or a “democracy”? If the answer is a democracy, then as Vladimir Lenin stated, “socialism and democracy are inseparable” and we have now become a socialist state. If we live in a democracy, then the Founding Fathers fears of loosing the republic has finally come to pass. Then Samuel Adams words of distain were for our generation, the ones who lost the republic, “The liberties of our country, the freedom of our civil Constitution, are worth defending at all hazards; and it is our duty to defend them against all attacks. We have received them as a fair inheritance from our worthy ancestors: they purchased them for us with toil and danger and expense of treasure and blood, and transmitted them to us with care and diligence. It will bring an everlasting mark of infamy on the present

generation, enlightened as it is, if we should suffer them to be wrested from us by violence without a struggle, or to be cheated out of them by the artifices of false and designing men.”

“Yes, we did produce a near-perfect republic. But will they keep it? Or will they, in the enjoyment of plenty, lose the memory of freedom? Material abundance without character is the path of destruction.”

— Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) Third President of the United States



“Republics are created by the virtue, public spirit, and intelligence of the citizens. They fall, when the wise are banished from the public councils, because they dare to be honest, and the profligate are rewarded, because they flatter the people, in order to betray them.”

— Joseph Story (1779-1845) Lawyer, Supreme Court Justice & influential commentators on the U.S. Constitution

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to be added