

March 4, 1799

To Whom It May Concern

We have each served as President of these United States and observed and presided over the development of our government since the officially ratified Constitution became effective ten years ago today. We are writing this letter in the hope that, should at some future point some warning signs we can already see today prove to have actually been the beginnings of problems to come, some things we've said in letters and speeches will not be forgotten. We are repeating those warnings here in case they fail to be carried forward in documents that may be archived and made available to our citizens in future generations. . . .

"However political parties may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion." [George Washington]

"All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations and associations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle, and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force; to put, in the place of the delegated will of the nation the will of a party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community; and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the mirror of the ill-concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common counsels and modified by mutual interests." [George Washington]

"There is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in opposition to each other. This, in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution" [John Adams.]

If you are reading this letter and find that the current condition of the country indicates that our warnings were well founded, we urge you to do what you can to rectify the situation.

Your humble servants,

