

Foundational documents: the branches, equality, and markets

Federalist 70

Topic: The presidency. **Author:** Alexander Hamilton

- ✓ A single, energetic president is important for an effective government
- ✓ A multiple executive would only create confusion and a lack of accountability. In a crisis, the nation needs one person making efficient, time-saving decisions, rather than several people in the role of chief executive
- ✓ The legislative branch is the place for many people deliberating and debating, not the executive branch, which is tasked with enforcing the laws and keeping the country safe

Federalist 78

Topic: The federal judiciary. **Author:** Alexander Hamilton

- ✓ The judicial branch, as the Constitution designs it, is the weakest branch of government
- ✓ It controls neither the “sword” of the community (the executive branch) nor its “purse” (the legislative branch)
- ✓ **Judicial review** does not make the federal courts superior: they are a neutral referee, and the superior power is the Constitution, which the courts are responsible for upholding
- ✓ Life terms for federal judges are important because they make judges independent of the other two branches

The Wealth of Nations (1776), core principles

Topic: Free markets, low government interference in the economy, and the causes of a nation’s wealth. **Author:** Adam Smith

- ✓ Specialization and division of labor make workers more efficient and increase a nation’s economic productivity
- ✓ Government should not determine prices and levels of production; the marketplace decides them through supply and demand
- ✓ Government should not meddle in the economy, but it has a role to play: providing order and justice, enforcing contracts, and providing education and infrastructure

Emancipation Proclamation (1863)

Topic: Freedom from slavery. **Author:** Abraham Lincoln

- ✓ Through an **executive order**, President Lincoln freed the slaves in the rebelling states
- ✓ It also allowed Black men to join and fight in the U.S. military
- ✓ Lincoln made freedom from bondage and slavery one of the main purposes of the Civil War

Gettysburg Address (1863)

Topic: Preserving human equality and democratic government. **Author:** Abraham Lincoln

- ✓ In a two-minute speech honoring the soldiers who died in the Battle of Gettysburg, Lincoln named the Declaration of Independence’s phrase “all men are created equal” as the foundation of the new nation
- ✓ He defined the Civil War as a battle for human equality, and said the way to honor the soldiers who died at Gettysburg was to make sure that government of the people, by the people, and for the people survives

Letter from Birmingham Jail (1963)

Topic: Nonviolent direct action. **Author:** Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

- ✓ Everyone, wherever they live, must be involved in fighting segregation and injustice, because “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”
- ✓ Despite others urging patience in the fight for justice, waiting almost always means never, and waiting to seek justice only helps the oppressor
- ✓ **Extremist** is not necessarily a negative label, since it was applied to people like Jesus, Jefferson, and Lincoln
- ✓ A nonviolent movement begins once facts are gathered to show injustice, negotiation is attempted, the people involved get mentally ready for the struggle, and a decision is made to take direct action