

**Lt. Governor Anthony G. Brown**  
**George Washington Address**  
**February 18, 2008**

**Introduction**

- Mr. President, Mr. President Pro Tem... thank you for inviting me to your chamber this evening...
  - ...to take a few moments to reflect on the life of one of our country's founding prophets for democracy,
    - ...an inspiration to the small, yet vastly-wise community of founding gentlemen...
- Mr. Majority Leader, Mr. Minority Leader, Members of the Maryland Senate... My fellow Marylanders...
- Tonight I draw your attention, if only for a brief time, to the legacy of selfless service which was eternalized just a few steps from this podium...
- The legacy I speak of belongs to General George Washington –
  - America's first and most enduring citizen-soldier...
  - the quintessential American revolutionary...
  - the citizen-soldier whose patriotism is forever etched in our national identity...
- And like all citizen soldiers – including veterans of the armed services in this chamber...
  - Senator Astle...
  - Senator Exum...
  - Senator Della...
  - Senator Edwards –
- ... Like all citizen-soldiers – including Senator Harris and Senator Garagiola – General Washington counted on the invaluable support of his family...
  - He knew that their service at home – away from the trenches and the uniforms – was, and still is, often much more difficult than the service of those in the uniform.
- He knew what you do, Senator Middleton... Senator Munson...
  - And you, Senator DeGrange... Senator Peters...
  - ...He knew that service to your country is never an individual effort... but one built on the strong foundation of family.

- Martha Washington, the intelligent and stately wife of the general, once wrote to a friend...
  - *“I cannot blame [my husband] for having acted according to his ideas of duty in obeying the voice of his country...”*
  - *I am still determined to be cheerful and happy, in whatever situation I may be...*
    - *for I have also learned from experience that the greater part of our happiness or misery depends upon our dispositions and not upon our circumstances...”*
- I myself have had the good fortune to lean on the invaluable support of my wife, Pat and our two beautiful children...
  - Patty, Rebecca, Jonathan... thank you for your love,
    - ...your friendship ...
      - ...and your positive disposition that allowed me to pursue my own “ideas of duty in obeying the voice of my country...”

### **Knowing the Citizen Soldier**

- It’s fitting that we speak of a president this evening who served not simply as a citizen statesman, but as a citizen soldier...
- It’s fitting that in our reflection on the man who helped build this nation, that we speak of the men and women who, at every point in our nation’s history, have served their countrymen...
- The citizen-soldier – the Reserves, the National Guard – plays an increasingly essential role in the defense of our country...
- And whether we realize it or not, the citizen-soldier is present in our daily lives...
  - She is your colleague... your neighbor... your cousin;
  - He is your brother... your grocer... your daughter’s 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher...
- And, at various points in our history, he has been your president...
  - Major General Andrew Jackson;
  - Captain Abraham Lincoln;
  - Colonel Theodore Roosevelt...
  - Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower...

- Twenty-seven of our 43 presidents served in the military before taking the highest civilian oath in the land,
  - yet none leaned so heavily on their experiences in the military as General Washington...
  - None realized the price of freedom so clearly; ...
  - ... And no American president “entered the office with more personal prestige” than General Washington...
    - ...prestige that was squarely built on his years of service in the Virginia militia and, later, in the Continental Army...
- George Washington is the symbol of the American Spirit... of the courage and optimism that have shaped our nation’s history...
  - He is the symbol of our bold efforts to meet the challenges of evolving times...
  - He was a political and military leader who nobly dedicated himself to promoting conditions for the fulfillment of the American promise...
    - “life... liberty... and the pursuit of happiness...”
- But before he became our nation’s eternal symbol for that which is good about democracy and freedom, he was a man...
- A fourth-generation Virginian, born into a respectable but by no means prominent family...
  - ... He was born during an important moment of colonial history, towering over other men of his time...
- He was not an educated man... certainly not a man of letters ...
  - ... In fact, Joseph Ellis – the historian – wrote of Washington:
    - “instead of going to college, Washington went to war...”
- Though a famous general, Washington was no military genius and he probably lost more battles than he won...
  - And it’s been said that many of his defeats “were frequently a function of his own overconfident and aggressive personality...
    - Traits we rarely, if ever, associate with his stately presidency.

- That's because, through defeat, Washington learned to lead.
  - He learned to lead not with force, not with authoritarian instinct...
    - but with decency, integrity and with common purpose...

## Washington Today

- Washington believed deeply that this nation was founded on the laurels of that which is good...
  - ... Believed deeply in the still unwritten words of de Tocqueville:
    - *“America is great because she is good.*
    - *“If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great...”*
  - And it was a belief that carried a young nation out of infancy...
- So, where are we today?
  - General Washington, have we done your legacy well?
  - Are we still on the path of greatness that you blazed from the front lines of the Continental Army?
- I believe, sadly, we are not...
  - I believe that we owe our founding patriarch better...
    - And I believe our nation is losing its grip on the goodness which for so long made us great...
- Washington stood beside the citizen soldier – in war and in service. Yet today, we leave our soldiers wanting...
  - Deployment pay is down;
  - The necessary battle armor is unavailable;
  - Tours are overextended... leave underprovided...
  - Mental health problems are rising, but services are declining;
  - Hospitals like Walter Reed are mired by abuse and neglect;

- And states – not the Federal government – are being left to pick up the tab to care for our most patriotic citizens...
- Sadly, I believe we are losing our focus on Washington’s dream...

[SLIGHT PAUSE... BUILD OPTIMISM]

- Still ... I believe in the words of President Clinton; words that ring with the optimism Washington inspired...
  - *“There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America...”*
- We are standing a crossroads in our nation’s time and we’re being called by the echoes of Washington’s words:

- *“Happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction,*
- *...to persecution no assistance,...*
- *requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving on all occasions, their effectual support...”*

[PAUSE]

- We are a nation at war... a war which has inspired debate and partisan division.
- Still, as a people – as individual Americans – we have rallied together to support the citizen soldier...
  - To offer him our prayers;
  - To offer her our solidarity;
  - To offer their son and daughter a nation that is better off today than it was before...
- If Washington taught us one thing, it is that our freedom is not a partisan issue and neither are the lives of the brave men and women who have volunteered to protect it...
- On August 27, 1776, Washington’s Army – inspired by the words of their daring and calculated General – saved American democracy just a few months after its birth...
  - *“The time is now near at hand which must probably determine whether Americans are to be freemen or slaves,”* the towering General said...
  - *“... The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army.*
  - *Our cruel and unrelenting enemy leaves us only the choice of brave resistance, or the most abject submission.*

- *We have, therefore, to resolve to conquer or die...*
- What followed became the defining moment of our history... a moment we owe to those who came before us...
  - ...A moment that birthed a nation.

## Conclusion

- Before I close, please join me by again paying tribute to the 11 members of this body who have graced the uniform... Please rise as I read your name...
  - John Astle – United States Marine Corps
  - Richard Colburn – United States Army
  - Edward DeGrange – United States Army Reserves
  - George Della – Maryland National Guard
  - George Edwards – Maryland National Guard
  - Nathaniel Exum – United States Army
  - Robert Garagiola – United States Army Reserves
  - Andrew Harris – United States Naval Reserves
  - Thomas “Mac” Middleton – United States Army
  - Roy Munson – United States Army Reserves
  - Douglas Peters – United States Army Reserves
- And let us reflect during a moment of silence to remember those Marylanders and Americans who have given their lives to protect the vision and ideals Washington founded this nation upon...

[LEAD BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE]

- As we pause... I think back to my own service, my time in Baghdad, and I reflect on the life of George Washington...
- When I think of our first president, I truly believe that he loved peace...
  - ...but that he cherished freedom more deeply.
- Above all, his life reveals that he valued the responsibilities of both the soldier and the citizen ...
  - ... and recognized that during many of our most important times, those responsibilities are intertwined.
- On December 12, 1799, just two years into retirement, Washington took ill...
  - Two days later, with his wife at his bedside, Washington passed away...

- A fellow Virginian, Henry Lee, offered a eulogy that “echoed through the ages...”
  - ...short and simple words that describe who exactly George Washington was, even to the most casual observer of American history.
  - *“First in war; First in peace... and first in the hearts of his countrymen...”*
- Washington passed quietly and courageously, well aware that his life’s work – the founding of a nation – would indeed outlive his time...
  - *“I die hard,” he said to Martha, “but I am not afraid to go...”*
- Thank you.

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