

Federalist #10

by James Madison



The Founding Fathers, assembling in Philadelphia in 1787 to correct the serious problems of the Articles of Confederation, were very experienced in local government and military service. Most were also well-schooled in history. They understood that there had never been a long-lasting democracy or republic in the entire history of mankind. On the other hand, few seriously considered creating a monarchy.

James Madison, a loyal political ally of Thomas Jefferson and a veteran of the weak, ineffective Confederation Congress, had written the Virginia Plan in order to strengthen the central government within distinct limits. He vigorously argued that any attempt to diminish “popular sovereignty” in the new system of government would weaken it and threaten personal liberty.

And, yet, Madison knew that earlier republics had all ended in violence -- either civil war leading to a dictator/tyrant or invasion by foreigners following civil discord. He agonized over this fact of history as he witnessed the seeds of discord sown in Shay’s Rebellion, the popular relief movement, and interstate squabbling over tariff inequities.

The Constitution clearly required republican forms of government throughout the United States. How could it survive the test of time? After studying the writings of Scottish Enlightenment philosopher David Hume, Madison developed his theory of an “enlarged republic” as a safeguard against the forces that could tear the nation apart.

In Federalist #10 he sets out to explain how the proposed Constitution would actually strengthen our Union and preserve liberty.

Instructions: Carefully read Federalist #10 as you answer the following questions about Madison’s explanation. The numbers used below represent the paragraphs in his essay. If you have your own copy, feel free to number them yourself.

- 1.1 "A well-constructed Union" will control the violence of what type of group?
- 1.2 Referring to democracies and republics, Madison wrote that popular governments have the propensity (tendency) to develop what "dangerous vice"?
- 1.3 What type of people introduce "instability, injustice, and confusion" into popular governments?
- 1.4 What effect do these "mortal diseases" have on popular governments?
- 1.5 What were three complaints against the existing governments?
- 1.6 Does Madison agree?

2.1 Define "faction".

4.1 What are the two methods for eliminating factions?

Complete the following phrases in your own words, based on Federalist #10.

5.1 As long as people are free and have liberty, they will inevitably form _____.

6.1 Giving everyone the same opinion is impracticable and unwise because _____.

7.1 What is the most durable reason for forming factions?

7.2 List four other factions that exist?

7.3 What is the "principle task of modern legislation"?

8.1 Ideally, what concept should balance the conflicts between factions?

8.2 However, Madison points out, in popular governments these conflicts are decided on what basis?

8.3 What type of laws gives the majority the greatest opportunity to ignore justice?

11.1 In a republic, how are "sinister views" of a minority faction controlled?

11.2 If the majority forms a faction, they will be tempted to sacrifice what two values?

13.1 What is a "pure democracy"?

13.2 Does Madison believe that the "mischiefs of faction" can be controlled by a pure democracy?

14.1 What is a "republic"?

15.1 What two advantages does a republic have over a democracy?

- 16.1 What three positive traits in representatives can lead to protecting the public good?
- 16.2 Evil representatives use what two means to gain power?
- 17.1 According to Madison, do small republics or large republics have a better chance to choose a good group of representatives?
- 19.1 What is the disadvantage of a large republic?
- 19.2 How does our Constitution solve this problem, according to Madison?
- 20.1 Will a greedy faction be more likely to gain majority control in a small or large society?
- 21.1 Would our rights be better protected in a small or large society?
- 22.1 List four issues that could lead to factions that gain control of small areas of the country.
- a. c.
- b. d.

Congratulations! You've waded through one of the most significant documents of the Federalist Era. The Constitution made specific provisions against those four issues that the Founders believed could have ripped this nation apart. They could not resolve the one that eventually did lead to civil war. In the space below and the next page, write a paragraph summarizing how Madison believed that the Constitutional requirements for republican forms of government would preserve this nation, thus contradicting the history of mankind: