

OUR GOVERNMENT IS OF THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE AND BY THE PEOPLE

Benjamin Franklin said to Elizabeth Willing Powell that we're going to have a Republic if you can keep it!

Benjamin Franklin's famous reply to Elizabeth Willing Powell,^[1] "A republic, if you can keep it," was his way of saying that the newly created United States would be a republic, where government derives its authority from the people rather than from a monarch, but that its success and survival would depend on the vigilance, responsibility, and participation of its citizens. When Powell asked Franklin whether the Constitutional Convention had produced a republic or a monarchy, he emphasized that self-government is never guaranteed and can endure only if people remain committed to preserving constitutional principles, obeying the rule of law, staying informed, protecting individual liberties, and holding their leaders accountable. In essence, Franklin was warning that a free government can survive only if the people actively work to maintain and defend it.

Several major U.S. cities, including New York, Seattle, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Chicago, and Minneapolis, have seen growing support for democratic socialist politicians and policies that emphasize a stronger role for government in addressing economic and social challenges. Supporters of these policies typically advocate for affordable housing, expanded public transportation, stronger labor protections, accessible childcare, greater healthcare access, and increased public investment in community services. While these cities remain part of a market-based economy and do not officially identify as socialist, many voters have shown interest in leaders who promote policies aimed at reducing economic inequality and expanding public services, reflecting an ongoing debate about the appropriate balance between private enterprise and government responsibility in improving quality of life.

Drawing on Benjamin Franklin's famous reminder that America would be "a republic, if you can keep it," one might observe that the ongoing debate over democratic socialist policies in cities such as the people, for the people and by the people New York, Seattle, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Chicago, and Minneapolis reflects the very kind of civic engagement Franklin believed was essential to a healthy republic. Supporters view these policies as a means of addressing challenges such as housing affordability, access to healthcare, childcare, transportation, and economic inequality, while critics raise concerns about the proper scope of government and the potential impact on economic freedom. Regardless of where one stands on these issues, the fact that citizens continue to debate, vote, advocate, and participate in shaping public policy demonstrates the strength of a republic that relies on informed and engaged citizens. Franklin's caution was not about endorsing any particular ideology, but about preserving a system in which free people can peacefully consider competing ideas and determine their collective future through democratic institutions.

Elizabeth Willing Powell's famous question to Benjamin Franklin, and his reply, "A republic, if you can keep it," remind us that the preservation of a free society is not the responsibility of a few, but of all its citizens. Franklin's wisdom endures because it calls each generation to exercise both vigilance and humility. Humility reminds us that no single person, party, or philosophy has all the answers. A strong republic is sustained when each of us contributes according to our abilities, listens respectfully to others, and works toward the common good. By approaching one another with grace, responsibility, and a shared commitment to our nation's highest ideals, we can bridge differences and strengthen the bonds that unite us. In doing so, we affirm the vision of one nation under God, where a government of the people, by the people, and for the people endures because citizens choose cooperation over division and service over self-interest. Like a Compass Rose that guides travelers through changing winds and uncertain waters, our shared values of faith, liberty, integrity, service, and mutual respect help us stay the course. When we keep our bearings fixed on these enduring principles, we are better able to move forward together as one people, preserving and strengthening the republic entrusted to our care for generations to come.

STAY THE COURSE

Hal

[\[1\]](#) Elizabeth Willing Powel (1742/43-1830) was a prominent Philadelphia socialite, political adviser, and influential figure during the founding era of the United States.

Honor with Respect. Act with Responsibility. Stand in Rectitude.

***GROUNDING IN MANY YEARS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE AND INFORMED BY FORMAL STUDY,
REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS, AND EXPERT COUNSEL, MY WRITING IS CLARIFIED THROUGH THE
MEASURED CONTRIBUTIONS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.
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