

Founding Father Quotes

"A free people ought to be armed." - George Washington

"Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety." - Benjamin Franklin

"No free man shall ever be debarred the use of arms." - Thomas Jefferson

"I prefer dangerous freedom over peaceful slavery." - Thomas Jefferson

"The laws that forbid the carrying of arms are laws of such a nature. They disarm only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes.... Such laws make things worse for the assaulted and better for the assailants; they serve rather to encourage than to prevent homicides, for an unarmed man may be attacked with greater confidence than an armed man."

- Thomas Jefferson (quoting 18th century criminologist Cesare Beccaria)

"A strong body makes the mind strong. As to the species of exercises, I advise the gun. While this gives moderate exercise to the body, it gives boldness, enterprise and independence to the mind. Games played with the ball, and others of that nature, are too violent for the body and stamp no character on the mind. Let your gun therefore be your constant companion of your walks." - Thomas Jefferson

"The Constitution of most of our states (and of the United States) assert that all power is inherent in the people; that they may exercise it by themselves; that it is their right and duty to be at all times armed."

- Thomas Jefferson

"On every occasion [of Constitutional interpretation] let us carry ourselves back to the time when the Constitution was adopted, recollect the spirit manifested in the debates, and instead of trying [to force] what meaning may be squeezed out of the text, or invented against it, [instead let us] conform to the probable one in which it was passed." - Thomas Jefferson

"I enclose you a list of the killed, wounded, and captives of the enemy from the commencement of hostilities at Lexington in April, 1775, until November, 1777, since which there has been no event of any consequence ... I think that upon the whole it has been about one half the number lost by them, in some instances more, but in others less. This difference is ascribed to our superiority in taking aim when we fire; every soldier in our army having been intimate with his gun from his infancy."

- Thomas Jefferson in a letter to Giovanni Fabbroni, June 8, 1778

"Arms in the hands of citizens may be used at individual discretion in private self defense."

- John Adams

"To disarm the people is the most effectual way to enslave them." - George Mason

"I ask sir, what is the militia? It is the whole people except for a few politicians."

- George Mason (father of the Bill of Rights and The Virginia Declaration of Rights)

"Before a standing army can rule, the people must be disarmed, as they are in almost every country in Europe." - Noah Webster

"The supreme power in America cannot enforce unjust laws by the sword; because the whole body of the people are armed, and constitute a force superior to any band of regular troops." - Noah Webster

"A government resting on the minority is an aristocracy, not a Republic, and could not be safe with a numerical and physical force against it, without a standing army, an enslaved press and a disarmed populace." - James Madison

Founding Father Quotes

"Americans have the right and advantage of being armed, unlike the people of other countries, whose leaders are afraid to trust them with arms." - James Madison

"The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. A well regulated militia, composed of the body of the people, trained to arms, is the best and most natural defense of a free country." - James Madison

"The ultimate authority resides in the people alone." - James Madison

"Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves." - William Pitt

"To preserve liberty, it is essential that the whole body of the people always possess arms, and be taught alike, especially when young, how to use them." - Richard Henry Lee

"A militia, when properly formed, are in fact the people themselves ... and include all men capable of bearing arms." - Richard Henry Lee

"Guard with jealous attention the public liberty. Suspect everyone who approaches that jewel. Unfortunately, nothing will preserve it but downright force. Whenever you give up that force, you are ruined.... The great object is that every man be armed. Everyone who is able might have a gun."
- Patrick Henry

"This may be considered as the true palladium of liberty.... The right of self defense is the first law of nature: in most governments it has been the study of rulers to confine this right within the narrowest limits possible. Wherever standing armies are kept up, and the right of the people to keep and bear arms is, under any color or pretext whatsoever, prohibited, liberty, if not already annihilated, is on the brink of destruction." - St. George Tucker

"... arms ... discourage and keep the invader and plunderer in awe, and preserve order in the world as well as property.... Horrid mischief would ensue were (the law-abiding) deprived the use of them."
- Thomas Paine

"The Constitution shall never be construed to prevent the people of the United States who are peaceable citizens from keeping their own arms." - Samuel Adams

"The right of the citizens to keep and bear arms has justly been considered, as the palladium of the liberties of a republic; since it offers a strong moral check against the usurpation and arbitrary power of rulers; and will generally, even if these are successful in the first instance, enable the people to resist and triumph over them." - Joseph Story

"What, Sir, is the use of a militia? It is to prevent the establishment of a standing army, the bane of liberty Whenever Governments mean to invade the rights and liberties of the people, they always attempt to destroy the militia, in order to raise an army upon their ruins."
- Rep. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts

"... for it is a truth, which the experience of all ages has attested, that the people are commonly most in danger when the means of insuring their rights are in the possession of those of whom they entertain the least suspicion." - Alexander Hamilton