



Leadership Backstory

The American Revolutionary War hung in the balance. Fort Lee was abandoned and George Washington moved his troops to safety behind the Delaware River. Defeat hung in the air like thick smog as the demoralized troops began to fall apart in retreat. Sickness and desertion rates increased. Washington, Commander-in-Chief anguished; it was a very low point in the American Revolution. Washington needed to do something. Thomas Paine wrote of this defining period,

“These are times that try men's souls; the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.”

Within a day of its publication in Philadelphia, General Washington ordered it be read to the troops encamped at Washington Crossing.

On December 26, 1776 at about three o'clock in the morning Washington marched approximately 2,700 soldiers off of the Jersey Bank of the Delaware River resolved to take victory. It was a pivotal point in the American Revolution, the Battle of Trenton. Although not much territory was gained, it was crucial to prove to a bunch of unrefined soldiers and anxious countrymen that a quest for independence could succeed! That is indeed what happened.

“First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen, he was second to none in humble and enduring scenes of private life. Pious, just, humane, temperate, and sincere; uniform, dignified, and commanding; his example was edifying to all around him as were the effects of that example everlasting...” Congressman Henry Lee spoke of Washington shortly after his death in 1799.

Washington was a man of virtue, character and peace. He offered a firm warning against partisanship in domestic politics and called for Americans to work for the common good. He was persuaded to attend the Constitutional Convention of 1787 where he was unanimously elected President of the Convention. It was at this Convention that the office of the Presidency was designed.

On April 30, 1789, George Washington took the oath of office as the first President of the United States in New York City. He is the only president to receive 100% of the electoral votes. Congress voted to pay the President a salary of \$25,000, a large sum of money at the time. Already wealthy and viewing himself as a public servant Washington turned the salary down but later accepted so that the office of the president would not be limited to only the wealthy.

George Washington remains an iconic figure for leadership in the face of adversity the world over. He built character, expected greatness, and inspired loyalty in a new nation.

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