



Center for the Study of the Presidency

The Mount Vernon Compact April 2006

We, the signers of this *Mount Vernon Compact*, recognize the need and call for a national renewal of character-based leadership, beginning with the United States Congress.

Despite many sterling examples to the contrary, an erosion of ethical and honorable conduct has developed in American society during the past several decades which affects government, business, education, sports, journalism, academics, and in some cases, the clergy. We recognize that we in the Congress, along with the other two branches of government, must set a high standard for the nation and for ourselves.

While we recognize the need for reform, the focus of this compact is on character. The founders of our country set a very high standard for character, and their living up to that standard helped to make this nation possible. George Washington did so in leading us to victory in the Revolutionary War, in presiding over the successful Constitutional Convention of many members with different viewpoints, and in his tenure as the first President of the United States. None of us presume to have the moral imperative of George Washington, but we all can work harder to put the People's House in order and conduct ourselves with greater honor.

Furthermore, at a time of great challenges to our nation both at home and abroad, and given the degree of polarization, it is appropriate for us to recall and follow Washington's lead on civility and inclusive leadership. He knew civility did not require always agreeing or seeking to minimize differences; it requires willingness to manage differences with respect, listening, and dialogue. Exercising the four components of civility, respect, listening, and trust, can often lead discussions to a higher ground and greater creativity in meeting challenges. We recognize and commend the National Committee to Unite a Divided America for promoting this philosophy across the nation. *E Pluribus Unum* remains a wise motto.

In the days before the Constitutional Convention, George Washington challenged delegates to "raise a standard to which the wise and the just can repair." Let us, too, now answer that challenge. Let us pledge to raise that standard, honor his memory, and inspire one another to build character, trust, and civility here in our nation's Capitol and with our constituents across the land.

Signature, Member of Congress

Date

Print Name

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