

So, what makes a great leader?

Characteristics of great leaders.

If you took a random poll asking for a list of great leaders both past and present, you will notice that some consistently are named. I teach a class at James Madison University and each year I have asked my students to not only name the five greatest leaders in their view, but also the characteristics that made them great. It has been concluded that all great leaders possess each quality, but not everyone to the same degree. More importantly, these qualities, though they appear innate, are developable. These qualities are: Integrity, Sense of Duty, Communication Skills, Wisdom, and Vision.

Leadership Qualities

Selected by JMU Public Administration students, 2004-2007.

- ◆ Integrity
- ◆ Sense of Duty
- ◆ Communication Skills
- ◆ Wisdom
- ◆ Vision

Great Leaders

Selected by JMU Public Administration students, 2004-2007.

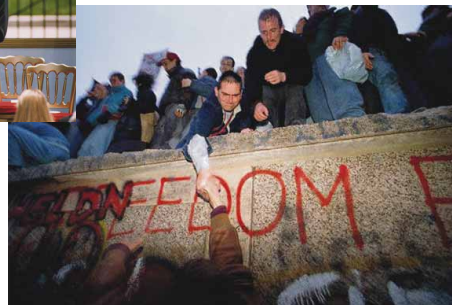
- ◆ Martin Luther King
- ◆ Winston Churchill
- ◆ Abraham Lincoln
- ◆ Jesus
- ◆ George Washington

SENSE OF DUTY: "There is a worse alternative and that is if I don't build up our defense I will be the last president of the United States."

– Franklin Delano Roosevelt when he implemented a military buildup in spite of popular opinion against it.



COMMUNICATION: Gorbachev, tear down that wall!"
– Ronald Reagan



Reagan's hard stance, albeit unpopular, against Communism eventually led to the removal of the Berlin Wall. However, the Wall came down after he completed his terms of office.

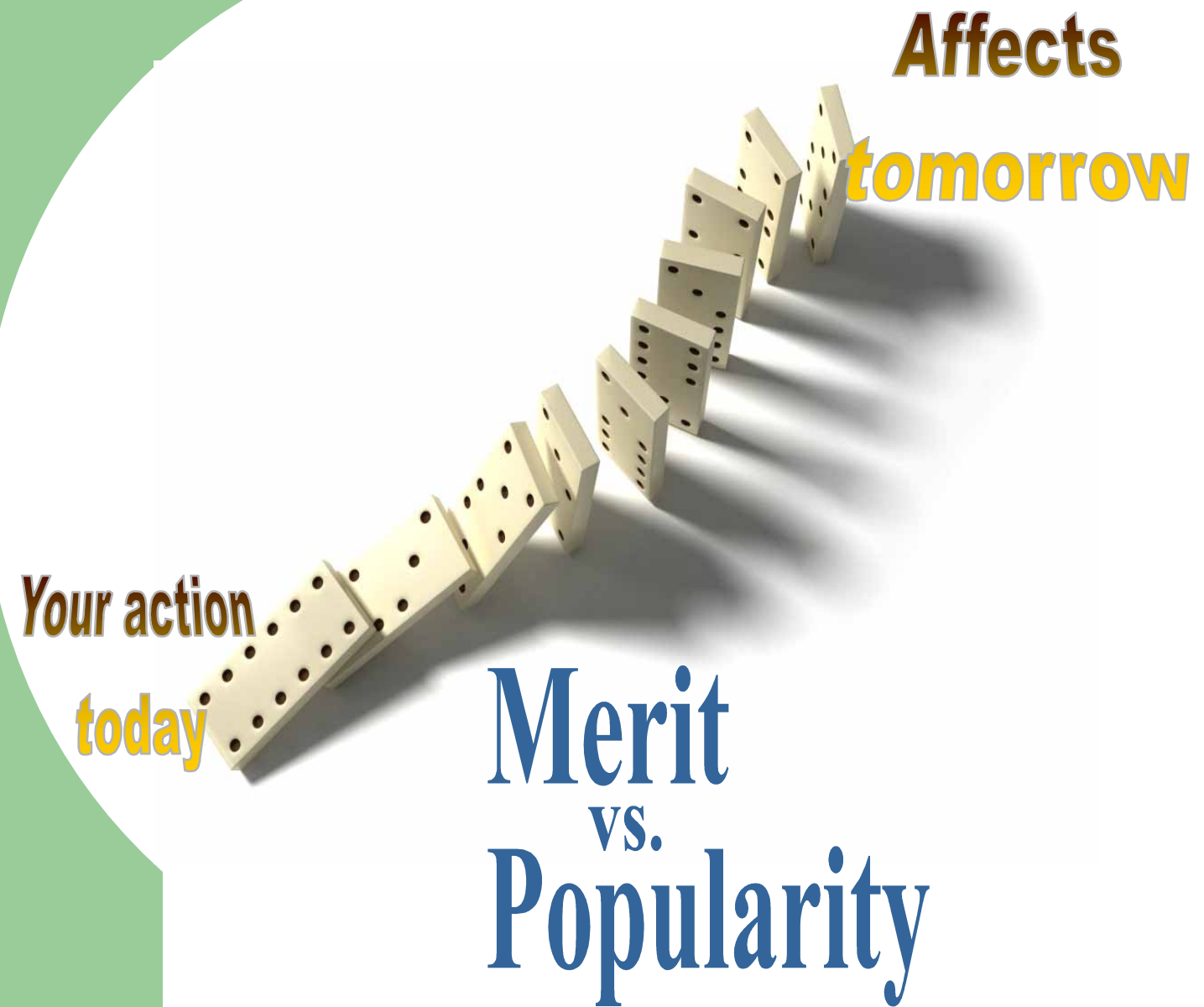
Greatness can also be found on the local level.

"One man with courage makes a majority." - Andrew Jackson

For 50 years Don Litten served as Town Attorney and led our community through crises both big and small. He was at his best during difficult times and could face a hostile crowd without losing his vision for the Town. A prime example is Bridgewater's 1985 annexation. One hundred fifty-five citizens showed up for the Public Hearing with all but two strongly opposed to this move. Mr. Litten didn't waver. Instead he calmly and effectively explained that our community would not survive without this bold move. While not everyone was convinced, the Council voted in favor and our town has blossomed as a result. This is just one of many issues where his leadership has guided us in a better direction than public opinion would have led us. He is an example that you don't have to be a president, general or CEO of industry to achieve greatness. It can be found in the largest of cities or the smallest of towns.



VISION: -Donald D. Litten, Attorney for Town of Bridgewater



- ◆ Decisions that impacted history
- ◆ NIMBYISM
- ◆ Founding Fathers intent
- ◆ Characteristics of great leaders
- ◆ Greatness can also be found on the local level

Where are today's leaders?

Decisions that impacted history

Virginia has a rich history in providing leadership for our nation. She has often been referred to as the "Mother of Presidents" and the "Father of Greatness". But as we look at today's politics, there often appears to be more effort expended on appeasing the noisy crowd than making tough decisions whose rewards may only be seen long after that politicians seat has been filled by others.

Remember the film classic, "It's a Wonderful Life"?



Cemetery scene where George Bailey (played by Actor Jimmy Stewart) realizes that his seemingly inconsequential decisions earlier in life had a huge impact on events that occurred years later.

On the brink of financial disaster and imprisonment, George Bailey despairs of the worth of his life. An angel is sent to help him refocus. A brief review of his life begins to show all the things that would

have never happened had he not been born. Among these was the rescue of his brother from drowning. In later years this brother went on to save 26 men during World War II. But the angel reminds him this couldn't happen if he had not been born. Of course, the movie ends 'happily ever after', but the point that it is making is still valid today. What you do has an effect....one thing is tied to another.

What has changed?

Today, with a few exceptions, it seems that governing has changed from making tough decisions based on their merit, to responding to and pacifying the most vociferous of the populace. Though a host of reasons could be cited for this change, some that we might blame are the rise and power of political parties, special interest groups, campaign monies, etc. However, an obvious example of this trend is the protests during the Vietnam War. Although there have always been those who desire to be heard, influence and eventually control the decision making process,

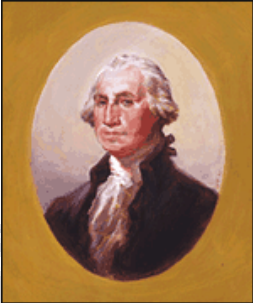


sometimes the merits of the issue gets lost in the noise of the protest. From the 1960's to now, it seems that those elected to represent our country began to respond more to political pressure than the merits of the issue.

Vietnam protests marked a shift in governing policies from leadership to appeasement.

Let's take a look at history.

Washington enjoyed immense popularity when he began serving as president. However, he made a very unpopular decision during his second term in office. When England began efforts to recolonize America, he realized that we were still recovering from our war for independence and that another war so close at hand would destroy our nation. Despite harsh criticism, he chose to enact a one-sided treaty with England. He retired from office feeling the burden of this very unpopular decision. Some speculate that the resulting stress may have shortened his life. However, because of his meritorious action, our nation grew in strength and unity. When faced with a similar attempt in 1812, we were prepared to go to war and preserve our liberty.



Lincoln is another example. Political advisers told him not to sign the "Emancipation of Proclamation" as that would be political suicide. He signed anyway. The result...extreme unpopularity and possibly one of the reasons for his



An artist's rendition of the signing of the "Emancipation Proclamation".

assassination. Yet, because of his decision, not only were the slaves freed, but we remained a unified nation...one that was well prepared to take on future challenges as a world power. Indeed, the case can be made that a divided United States could not have persevered through World War II.

Whatever it is, I'm against it.

NIMBYISM (Not In My Back Yard)



NIMBYISM could be defined as expecting you to take public transportation so I wouldn't have to deal with the traffic when I drive on the freeway.



NIMBYISM could be defined as expecting alternative methods of energy to be developed, but I don't want those ugly wind turbines obstructing my view.

We've all heard it, and may have even been guilty of it ourselves. Some decisions that are for the greater good are just plain inconvenient, uncomfortable or foreign to our way of thinking. But being familiar with the concept does not make us immune to the toxins it can pour into our decision making process. It would be well to remember that the majority does not always make it right. Did you know that the majority of the population favored slavery? The majority felt that women should not have the right to vote. Prior to 1960 the majority felt that virtually every aspect of life should be segregated according to race. So this brings us to the question of democracy.

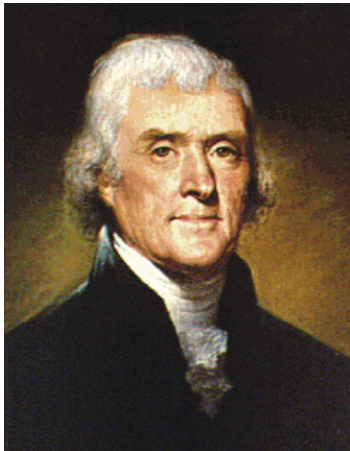


Comedian Groucho Marx expresses NIMBYISM well in his movie, "Horse Feathers" with his famous line... "Whatever it is, I'm against it".

Isn't our government a democracy?

Intent of our Founding Fathers

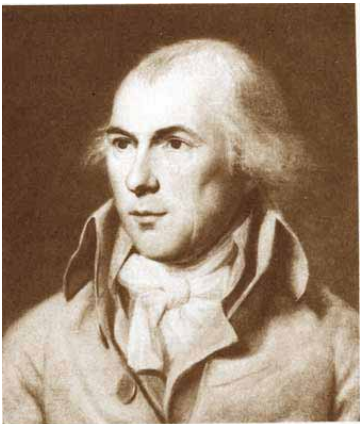
One common misconception today is that our government is a democracy where the will of the majority (or most vocal) rules. However a closer look at the intent of our Founding Fathers reveals an entirely different aim. This is a representative form of government where it falls on the shoulders of those of us who are in governmental leadership to make decisions not based on the vacillating whim of the populace, but on the ultimate good for our locality, state, or nation.



The majority oppressing an individual abuses its strength... acting on the law of the strongest breaks up the foundation of society. -Thomas Jefferson (paraphrased)



I've learned to hold popular opinion of no value. -Alexander Hamilton



Measures are too often decided, not according to the rules of justice and the rights of the minor party, but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority. -James Madison