

“We the People”
Remarks by John C. Bogle
Founder, The Vanguard Group
On Receiving the Philadelphia Good Citizenship Award
At the Centennial Celebration of The Committee of Seventy
Philadelphia, PA
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Thank you all for the high—if hardly fully-deserved—honor you bestow on me for my work as Chairman of the National Constitution Center.

Let me be clear: My achievements as Chairman pale by comparison with those of my predecessor, then-Mayor Edward G. Rendell, whose leadership was essential in getting the Constitution Center project underway. But the man who deserves the lion’s share of the credit for actually taking the Center from an idea to a reality is our former President and CEO—and my partner for nearly five years—Joseph M. Torsella. In the resolution passed by the Board of Trustees on Joe’s departure, we could think of no more fitting words to define his accomplishment than those written at the tomb of Sir Christopher Wren in the crypt of his masterwork, St. Paul’s Cathedral in London (translated from the Latin): *If you would see his monument, look around.*

Last evening, when I spoke at the New York Historical Society, I did my best to inform our largely uninformed brethren and sisters there about our splendid new Constitution Center. There, I found an especially fine anecdote that is remarkably appropriate for tonight’s historic Centennial celebration of the Committee of Seventy, that has so ably fostered citizen commitment to good government for one hundred years.

In commemoration of last evening’s event, two original versions of our great Constitution were on exhibit in the Society’s auditorium. The first was the draft of August 6, 1787. *We the people*, it began, *of the States of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode-Island, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, . . . and so on, clearly running in a north to south order . . . and Georgia, do ordain, declare and establish the following Constitution for the Government of Ourselves and our Posterity.*

Yes, that was the *entire* preamble! But by another miracle at Philadelphia, just a month later, on September 17, 1787, the final version of the document’s text had changed drastically. (Actually, Benjamin Franklin’s personal copy of that Constitution, signed by that oldest and wisest of our Founding Fathers, was also shown at last night’s event in New York City.)

It read, of course, *We, the People of the United States*—not the individual states, but the United States—*in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

That is the inspiring preamble we have all come to love. Indeed, as directed by my predecessor as Chairman, now-Governor Rendell, it is inscribed in giant lettering on the outside front wall of the center, directly facing Independence Hall. The preamble itself is the message about citizen commitment to good government that we ought to heed tonight.

For in our own magnificent monument on Independence Mall, we see citizen commitment writ large. And only if the Committee of Seventy and all of us citizens here tonight share, in our own

individual ways, in maintaining a deep and abiding—and active!—commitment to good government, shall we continue the values of our 1787 heritage: *to seek an ever more perfect union, to fight even harder for justice, to insure our domestic tranquility, to promote the general welfare of our community and Nation, and thus continue to enjoy the incredible blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity.*

But let us never forget that should our commitment falter or flag or fail, we will no longer be worthy of our Constitution, the priceless gift of our founding fathers. Yes, the National Constitution Center stands as a symbol of our own commitment to remind our citizens, all over the United States of America, of the need to preserve, protect, and defend that priceless legacy.

Thank you again for honoring my modest contribution to doing exactly that.

Note: The opinions expressed in this speech do not necessarily represent the views of Vanguard's present management.
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