



# Candidate Endorsement Criteria Restoring Trust in America's Leadership

## *Executive Summary*

American public trust in the federal government has collapsed to just 17% — at its lowest point in seven decades — while partisan polarization, institutional erosion, and civic disengagement threaten the republic's foundations. In this crisis, the **Coalition of Independent Voters** for an **Inspired Congress (CIVIC)** is endorsing Congressional Candidates who embody the timeless virtues of the four presidents memorialized on Mount Rushmore: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt — the "Rushmorian."<sup>[1]</sup>

Each Rushmorian articulated, in speeches and in practice, specific principles of character, constitutional fidelity, and public service. These criteria synthesize their collective wisdom into a comprehensive endorsement framework — a "Rushmore Standard" — that CIVIC will use to evaluate candidates for Congress and other offices. The criteria are organized into five pillars drawn directly from the Rushmorian's own words, writings, and leadership practices.

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## *The Crisis Demanding a Rushmore Standard*

The context for CIVIC's formation is stark. Trust in the federal government peaked at 77% in 1964 and has since fallen to 17% in 2025. Partisan polarization now means that opposition-party trust in government has essentially collapsed — from moderate levels in the 1970s to single digits today. Trust in the media, organized religion, education, and big business has all declined dramatically over the past 50 years.<sup>[1]</sup>

Scholars warn that the United States is experiencing measurable democratic decline, classified by multiple international monitoring organizations as a backsliding democracy — still democratic, but with weakened guardrails. The patterns observed — weakened oversight, expanded executive power, politicization of institutions, and rising polarization — match warning signs that political scientists identify as precursors to democratic breakdown.<sup>[2]</sup>

These conditions make CIVIC's mission urgent. The Rushmorian foresaw precisely these dangers and left guidance on the qualities leaders must possess to preserve the republic.

# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

## Pillar I: Integrity, Moral Character & Transparency

### *What the Rushmarians Taught*

**Washington** made integrity and moral virtue the twin foundations of leadership and governance. He believed that "consistent ethical behavior is the key to earning people's trust" and practiced strict leadership principles and ethical conduct throughout his life. As a young man, he memorized 110 Rules of Civility that emphasized respect, self-control, and honesty in all dealings. His most famous rule: "Associate with men of good quality if you esteem your own reputation; for it is better to be alone than in bad company". In his Farewell Address he elevated morality to a governing principle: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism who should labor to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness". Virtue and morality, Washington declared, were "a necessary spring of popular government".<sup>[3][4][5][6][7][8][9]</sup>

**Lincoln** embodied this principle absolutely: "I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live by the light that I have". His character was defined by integrity, humility, and compassion, with a deep-seated commitment to treating everyone equally. He demonstrated the courage to accept blame for failures while sharing credit for success. In the Lyceum Address he warned that lawlessness and disregard for institutions would erode public trust until "the feelings of the best citizens will become more or less alienated" from their government — and the republic would be "left without friends, or with too few". His remedy was "reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason" to guide national discourse.<sup>[10][11][12][13][14]</sup>

**Roosevelt** insisted that morality and ethical reasoning were non-negotiable for leaders. He "constantly strove to avoid corruption and actively fought it," which earned the trust of politicians and citizens alike. He went after corrupt officials regardless of party affiliation, and insisted on personal accountability: "What we must have is some one man to hold to a definite responsibility". He initiated 146 indictments against a bribery ring in his administration, demonstrating that anti-corruption was not rhetoric but practice.<sup>[15][16][17][18]</sup>

**Jefferson** held that every human person "was endowed with a sense of right and wrong" and that this moral sense was "as much a part of man as his leg or arm". He championed the "diffusion of information and arraignment of all abuses at the bar of the public reason" — in other words, an informed citizenry as the essential check on government power. He warned that moral virtue, while innate, "could be strengthened or weakened" and that "its weakening could occur rapidly". He demonstrated strength of character through selflessness, honesty, patience, and a willingness to listen to others.<sup>[19][20][21]</sup>

### *Endorsement Criteria*

- **Personal Integrity:** Demonstrated pattern of honesty, ethical conduct, and consistency between words and actions
- **Moral Courage:** Willingness to take unpopular stands on principle, even at personal political cost
- **Accountability:** Accepts responsibility for failures; shares credit for successes
- **Freedom from Corruption:** No pattern of self-dealing, conflicts of interest, or use of public office for private gain
- **Transparency:** Supports open government, public disclosure, and freedom of the press
- **Truth-Telling:** Committed to honest communication; rejects disinformation and deliberate deception
- **Reasoned Discourse:** Engages in fact-based, civil debate rather than inflammatory rhetoric or personal attacks
- **Character in Adversity:** Demonstrated ethical conduct under pressure, not just in easy circumstances

# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

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## Pillar II: Constitutional Fidelity and Rule of Just Laws

### *What the Rushmoriens Taught*

**Lincoln** delivered perhaps the most powerful defense of constitutional governance in his 1838 Lyceum Address, warning that America's destruction could come only from within: "If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide". His remedy: "Let reverence for the laws be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe... let it become the political religion of the nation". He warned explicitly against the rise of an autocratic figure who might exploit lawlessness to seize power.<sup>[13][14][22]</sup>

**Washington** established the most consequential constitutional precedent in American history — the voluntary surrender of power. His decision to hand over authority to a civilian administration at the end of his tenure set an essential precedent for the peaceful transfer of power. In his Farewell Address, he urged Americans to preserve the constitutional system of checks and balances as essential to liberty.<sup>[4][23]</sup>

**Jefferson** insisted upon "a wise and frugal Government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement". He articulated the principle that "though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate would be oppression".<sup>[24][20]</sup>

**Roosevelt** operated under a robust but constitutionally grounded vision of executive power, using the presidency as a "bully pulpit" to champion reforms while working through Congress and the courts. He insisted on the supremacy of civilian authority and used legal processes — not unilateral action — to break up corrupt trusts.<sup>[25][26]</sup>

### *Endorsement Criteria*

- **Constitutional Oath as Sacred Obligation:** Treats the oath of office as a binding commitment, not a formality
- **Separation of Powers:** Respects the independence of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches
- **Rule of Just Laws Above Party:** Supports equal application of fair and just laws regardless of political affiliation.
- **Electoral Integrity:** Upholds free and fair elections; rejects manufactured crises to expand executive authority
- **Peaceful Transfer of Power:** Unequivocal commitment to accepting legitimate election outcomes
- **Protection of Minority Rights:** Ensures that majority rule does not become majority tyranny
- **Respect for Oversight:** Supports independent inspectors general, auditors, and watchdog institutions
- **Institutional Stewardship:** Works to strengthen — not undermine — the institutions of democratic governance

# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

## Pillar III: National Unity Over Faction and Party

### *What the Rushmarians Taught*

**Washington** devoted the most impassioned portion of his Farewell Address to warning against the dangers of political factions. He viewed parties as a direct threat to national unity and stability, capable of leading to "despotism and societal unrest". He urged: "Your Union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other". He argued that Americans' shared identity should "always exalt the just pride of patriotism, more than any name derived from local discriminations".<sup>[27][28][23]</sup>

**Lincoln** practiced unity in the most dramatic fashion — assembling a "Team of Rivals" by appointing his fiercest political opponents to his cabinet because they were the best minds available. His personal qualities "enabled him to form friendships with men who had previously opposed him; to repair injured feelings... to assume responsibility for the failures of subordinates, to share credit with ease, and to learn from mistakes". His Second Inaugural urged the nation forward "with malice toward none, with charity for all".<sup>[29][30][31]</sup>

**Jefferson** in his First Inaugural declared: "Let us, then, fellow-citizens, unite with one heart and one mind... every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists".<sup>[20]</sup>

**Roosevelt** believed his role was to serve as "a mediator between opposing forces" and that the federal government should be "a steward of all Americans," not a tool for any one faction. He attacked corruption and monopoly regardless of party affiliation.<sup>[26][18]</sup>

### *Endorsement Criteria*

- **Bi-Partisan Collaboration:** Demonstrated record of working across the aisle to solve problems
- **Rejection of Demonization:** Refuses to treat political opponents as enemies of the nation
- **National Interest Over Party Loyalty:** Willing to break with party when principle and the public good demand it
- **Reconciliation Mindset:** Seeks to heal divisions rather than exploit them for political advantage
- **Inclusive Representation:** Represents all constituents, not just those who voted for the candidate
- **Willingness to Innovate:** Embraces differences in thinking as opportunities to engage in Creative Problem Solving and New Solution to Old Problems
- **Building Trust:** Recognizes that two core principles of trust is 1) placing public service and the good of the country above any personal gain, 2) having the courage to reject pressures that would jeopardize the "Soul of America."

# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

## Pillar IV: Civic Virtue, Public Service, and Duty

### *What the Rushmarians Taught*

**Roosevelt** was the most explicit on the duties of citizenship. In his 1883 address "The Duties of American Citizenship," he declared: "The first duty of an American citizen, then, is that he shall work in politics; his second duty is that he shall do that work in a practical manner; and his third is that it shall be done in accord with the highest principles of honor and justice". In his 1910 Sorbonne address, "[Citizenship in a Republic](#)," he insisted that "the average cannot be kept high unless the standard of the leaders is very much higher". The good citizen, he said, "must have those qualities which make for efficiency; and that he also must have those qualities which direct the efficiency into channels for the public good".<sup>[32][33][34][35]</sup>

**Washington** exemplified selfless service, sacrificing personal comfort and fortune throughout the Revolution and his presidency. He put his people's welfare above his own and believed in individual freedom and treating everyone with respect regardless of station. His willingness to step down from power — when he could have been president for life — remains the ultimate act of civic virtue.<sup>[36][4]</sup>

**Jefferson** believed that government should be dedicated to the common good. His 17 principles of republican government included "jealous care of the right of election," "economy in the public expense, that labor may be lightly burdened," and "honest payment of our debts and sacred preservation of the public faith".<sup>[37]</sup>

**Lincoln** described his entire political career as an effort "to be worthy of the esteem of others" through service. His political purpose was guided by the values of the Founding Fathers in the Constitution, creating an inner compass that "built good character".<sup>[38]</sup>

### *Endorsement Criteria*

- **Service Orientation:** Demonstrates that seeking office is motivated by desire to serve, not personal ambition, power, or wealth
- **Practical Competence:** Has the knowledge, skill, and work ethic to legislate effectively
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Committed to responsible stewardship of public resources
- **Electoral Guardianship:** Actively protects the right of citizens to vote and to have their votes counted
- **Accountability to Constituents:** Maintains transparency, holds regular constituent engagement, and explains votes
- **Strenuous Citizenship:** Expects and models active civic participation, not passive spectatorship



# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

## Pillar V: Fairness, Justice, and the Common Good

### *What the Rushmarians Taught*

**Roosevelt's** Square Deal was built on the foundational principle: "When I say that I am for the square deal, I mean not merely that I stand for fair play under the present rules of the game, but that I stand for having those rules changed so as to work for a more substantial equality of opportunity and of reward for equally good service". He championed consumer protection, corporate accountability, and environmental conservation — and fought corruption regardless of who benefited from it.<sup>[25][26]</sup>

**Jefferson** placed "Equal Justice to all men of whatever state, persuasion, religion or politics" as the first of his 17 principles of republican government. He committed his presidency to "the protection of civil liberties and minority rights" and insisted on "freedom of religion; freedom of the press, and freedom of person under the protection of the habeas corpus, and trial by juries impartially selected".<sup>[37][24][20]</sup>

**Lincoln** fought the Civil War to vindicate the principle that all people are created equal, as enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. He governed with extraordinary empathy, extending mercy even to political enemies, understanding that "moral authority, not retribution, was essential to rebuilding a fractured nation".<sup>[11]</sup>

**Washington** treated everyone with respect regardless of station, demonstrating empathy to bring people together and find common ground. He earned the loyalty of those he led by consistently showing that he was "a man of his word".<sup>[36]</sup>

### *Endorsement Criteria*

- **Equal Justice:** Supports equal application of the law regardless of wealth, status, race, religion, or political affiliation
  - **Opportunity for All:** Advocates for policies that expand opportunity rather than entrench privilege
  - **Consumer and Citizen Protection:** Willingness to hold powerful interests accountable when they harm the public good
  - **Compassion and Empathy:** Demonstrates genuine concern for the vulnerable and disadvantaged
  - **Anti-Corruption Commitment:** Actively opposes corruption, cronyism, and self-dealing in government and the private sector
  - **Moral Leadership:** Demonstrates that public life should be guided by ethical principles, not expedience
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# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

## The Rushmore Endorsement Scorecard



To operationalize these principles, CIVIC will evaluate each candidate using the following framework.

Each pillar will be scored on a scale (e.g., 1–5) based on the candidate's record, public statements, and conduct.

Pillar	Core Question	Key Indicators
<b>I. Integrity, Moral Character &amp; Transparency</b>	Is this person honest, ethical, courageous, and transparent?	Track record of honesty; freedom from corruption; accountability for mistakes; truth-telling; support for open government
<b>II. Constitutional Fidelity &amp; Rule of Law</b>	Does this person revere the Constitution and its institutions?	Commitment to separation of powers; acceptance of election outcomes; protection of rights; support for independent oversight
<b>III. National Unity</b>	Does this person seek to unite or divide? To Rebuild Trust in American Institutions	Cross-partisan collaboration; refusal to demonize opponents; "malice toward none" posture
<b>IV. Civic Virtue &amp; Service</b>	Is this person a genuine public servant?	Service motivation; competence; fiscal responsibility; constituent engagement; electoral guardianship
<b>V. Fairness, Justice &amp; the Common Good</b>	Does this person champion equal justice and opportunity for all?	Commitment to equal rights; anti-corruption stance; willingness to hold power accountable; moral leadership

# Candidate Endorsement Criteria



## Red Flags: Disqualifying Characteristics

Drawing from the Rushmorian's explicit warnings, certain characteristics should automatically disqualify a candidate from CIVIC endorsement:

- **Participation in or Support for Efforts to Overturn Legitimate Election Results** — violates Washington's and Lincoln's most fundamental principles <sup>[4][13]</sup>
- **Refusal to Accept the Peaceful Transfer of Power** — contradicts Washington's greatest precedent <sup>[4]</sup>
- **Pattern of Deliberate Deception or Disinformation** — incompatible with every Rushmorian's insistence on honesty and truth. This includes manipulative use of Propaganda Techniques. <sup>[16][3][10]</sup>
- **Demonstrated Corruption or Self-Dealing** — violates Roosevelt's and Jefferson's anti-corruption commitments <sup>[16][37]</sup>
- **Efforts to Weaken Independent Oversight Institutions** — directly contradicts the checks-and-balances framework all four presidents championed <sup>[23][15]</sup>
- **Demonization of Political Opponents as Enemies of the State** — violates Lincoln's "malice toward none" and Washington's warnings against faction <sup>[30][27]</sup>
- **Advocacy for Expanding Executive Power Beyond Constitutional Limits** — antithetical to Jefferson's principles and Washington's voluntary restraint <sup>[37][4]</sup>
- **Support for Politicizing the Military or Judiciary** — violates Jefferson's principle of civilian supremacy over the military and Roosevelt's insistence on independent, accountable institutions <sup>[15][37]</sup>



## Ladies of Liberty Speak

### Women's Voices Affirming the Five Pillars

#### *Introduction*

The Rushmore Standard draws its authority from four great presidents — but the principles they championed were never theirs alone. Throughout American history, women of extraordinary courage, intellect, and moral vision articulated the very same ideals, often at far greater personal cost. From the Revolutionary era through the early twentieth century, these women fought for integrity, constitutional fidelity, national unity, civic virtue, and justice — frequently while being denied the full rights of citizenship themselves.



#### **Liberty's Message**

*"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

[Emma Lazarus](#) November 2, 1883

This section, "**Ladies of Liberty Speak**," honors eleven American women whose words powerfully affirm and deepen each of the Five Pillars.

Their quotations are not decorative additions — they are foundational testimony.

Together with the Rushmorianians, they form a complete American chorus calling for the kind of leadership CIVIC seeks to champion.

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# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

## Pillar I: Integrity, Moral Character, and Transparency

*The Rushmorianians insisted that honesty, virtue, and moral courage are the bedrock of self-government. These women said the same — and lived it.*

### **Abigail Adams (1744–1818) — "The Conscience of the Founders"**

Abigail Adams, trusted counselor to her husband John and to an entire generation of founders, placed moral character at the center of public life. She wrote to her son John Quincy Adams:

*"The only sure and permanent foundation of virtue is religion. Let this important truth be engraven upon your heart... May your mind be thoroughly impressed with the absolute necessity of universal virtue and goodness, as the only sure road to happiness."<sup>[39]</sup>*

She had no patience for leaders who talked well but acted poorly:

*"We have too many high sounding words, and too few actions that correspond with them."<sup>[40]</sup>*

And she drew a direct line from private morality to public trust:

*"He who neglects his duty to his Maker, may well be expected to be deficient and insincere in his duty towards the public."<sup>[41]</sup>*

Her words echo Washington's insistence that morality is the "indispensable support" of good governance — and serve as a timeless warning against leaders whose words outstrip their character.

### **Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962) — "The First Lady of the World"**

Eleanor Roosevelt — humanitarian, diplomat, and architect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — understood that democratic governance is only as strong as the people who sustain it:

*"In the final analysis, a democratic government represents the sum total of the courage and the integrity of its individuals. It cannot be better than they are."<sup>[42]</sup>*

She insisted that integrity required the moral courage to speak uncomfortable truths:

*"We must know what we think and speak out, even at the risk of unpopularity."<sup>[43]</sup>*

Roosevelt's words reinforce the Rushmore Standard's demand that candidates demonstrate truth-telling and reasoned discourse, not just when it is convenient, but especially when it is not.

### **Ida B. Wells (1862–1931) — "The Sword of Truth"**

Born into slavery, Ida B. Wells became one of America's most fearless journalists, exposing the epidemic of lynching at a time when doing so meant death threats and the destruction of her newspaper office. Her guiding principle was transparency as moral imperative:

*"The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them."<sup>[44]</sup>*

*"The people must know before they can act, and there is no educator to compare with the press."<sup>[44]</sup>*

Wells's life demonstrates that transparency is not merely a procedural value — it is an act of courage. Her words affirm the Pillar's demand that candidates support open government, freedom of the press, and honest communication.

### **Sojourner Truth (c. 1797–1883) — "The Voice of Moral Power"**

Sojourner Truth — born into slavery, emancipated, renamed by her own conviction — stood before hostile crowds and declared:

*"I feel safe in the midst of my enemies, for the truth is all powerful and will prevail."<sup>[45]</sup>*

Truth's unwavering confidence in the power of truth itself is the ultimate expression of Pillar I: integrity needs no army — it prevails by its own moral weight.

# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

## Pillar II: Constitutional Fidelity and Rule of Just Laws

*The Rushmoriens revered the Constitution as sacred covenant. These women — often denied its protections — fought even harder to defend its principles.*

### **Mercy Otis Warren (1728–1814) — "The Conscience of the Revolution"**

Mercy Otis Warren was the first woman historian of the American Revolution, a political playwright who used satire to rally colonists to the cause of independence, and a fierce advocate for the Bill of Rights. She warned that tyranny never announces itself openly:

*"It is necessary for every American, with becoming energy to endeavor to stop the dissemination of principles evidently destructive of the cause for which they have bled. It must be the combined virtue of the rulers and of the people to do this, and to rescue and save their civil and religious rights from the outstretched arm of tyranny, which may appear under any mode or form of government."<sup>[46]</sup>*

Warren's insight — that tyranny can emerge *under any form of government*, including a republic — directly mirrors Lincoln's Lyceum Address warning. Her words remind CIVIC that constitutional vigilance is not a one-time act but a permanent obligation.

She also shared Washington's skepticism about unchecked power:

*"I am more and more convinced of the propensity in human nature to tyrannize over their fellow men."<sup>[47]</sup>*

### **Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) — "The Constitutional Warrior"**

Susan B. Anthony, arrested for the "crime" of voting in 1872, transformed her trial into a constitutional argument that still resonates. She grounded her defense in the founding documents themselves:

*"Our democratic-republican government is based on the idea of the natural right of every individual member thereof to a voice and a vote in making and executing the laws."<sup>[48]</sup>*

At her sentencing, she delivered a defiant indictment of constitutional betrayal:

*"Your honor, you have trampled under foot every vital principle of our government. My natural rights, my civil rights, my political rights, my judicial rights, are all alike ignored."<sup>[49]</sup>*

Anthony's words powerfully affirm the Pillar's criteria: the Constitution is not a tool of convenience — it either protects all citizens equally, or it betrays its own promise.

### **Abigail Adams — On the Danger of Unchecked Power**

Abigail Adams articulated the founding generation's deepest fear about power:

*"I am more and more convinced that man is a dangerous creature; and that power, whether vested in many or a few, is ever grasping."<sup>[50]</sup>*

*"Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could."<sup>[51]</sup>*

Her words are the feminine echo of Washington's Farewell Address and Jefferson's insistence on limited government — a reminder that the Constitution exists precisely because power must be constrained.

### **Eleanor Roosevelt — On Watchful Governance**

Eleanor Roosevelt understood that constitutional governance requires perpetual vigilance:

*"The very weaknesses of human nature are what make it so important that we keep a constantly watchful eye on our government, and that in turn our government watches us with equal care."<sup>[42]</sup>*

This is the Lady Liberty version of the Pillar's demand for "respect for oversight" — independent watchdogs are not obstacles to governance but essential to its integrity.

# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

## Pillar III: National Unity Over Faction and Party

*The Rushmorianians warned against faction and practiced reconciliation. These women built unity not through rhetoric alone, but through the radical act of bridging divides.*

### ***Dolley Madison (1768–1849) — "The Great Unifier"***

Dolley Madison transformed the role of First Lady into a force for national cohesion. During an era of intense political division between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans, she created weekly "drawing rooms" — receptions that welcomed leaders from all factions into civil conversation. Historians credit her with building coalitions and connections that formal politics could not achieve.<sup>[52][53]</sup>

When the British burned Washington in 1814, Dolley risked her safety to preserve George Washington's portrait — a symbol of national identity that transcended party:

*"Mr. Carroll has come to hasten my departure... I insist on waiting until the picture of Washington is secured... And now, I must leave this house, or the army will make me a prisoner."<sup>[54]</sup>*

Her actions embody Pillar III: unity is built through personal courage, civil dialogue, and the preservation of shared symbols that bind a nation together.

### ***Jane Addams (1860–1935) — "Democracy as a Way of Life"***

Jane Addams — Nobel Peace Prize laureate, founder of Hull House, and America's greatest civic reformer — believed that democracy was not merely a system of government but "a way of life". At Hull House, she brought together immigrants, workers, intellectuals, and politicians of every background to practice what she called "socialized democracy":<sup>[55]</sup>

*"The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain, is floating in mid-air, until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life."<sup>[56]</sup>*

Her words are the perfect complement to Washington's plea for unity and Lincoln's "malice toward none" — a reminder that national unity is not uniformity but the shared commitment to one another's well-being.

### ***Clara Barton (1821–1912) — "The Angel of the Battlefield"***

Clara Barton — Civil War nurse and founder of the American Red Cross — demonstrated unity in its most powerful form: compassion that transcends division. On the battlefield, she served without distinction of faction:

*"I bind the wounds of the soldiers, regardless of which side they fought for."<sup>[57]</sup>*

Barton's words and actions are the living embodiment of Lincoln's Second Inaugural. When candidates pledge to represent *all* their constituents — not just those who voted for them — they echo Clara Barton's example.

# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

## Pillar IV: Civic Virtue, Public Service, and Duty

*The Rushmorianians demanded that leaders serve with selfless devotion and practical competence. These women exemplified service at its most sacrificial.*

### **Abigail Adams — On Disinterested Patriotism**

Abigail Adams offered perhaps the most powerful definition of true patriotism — selfless service rendered without expectation of reward:

*"Patriotism in the female sex is the most disinterested of all virtues. Excluded from honors and from offices, we cannot attach ourselves to the State or Government from having held a place of eminence... Yet all history and every age exhibit instances of patriotic virtue in the female sex; which considering our situation equals the most heroic of yours."<sup>[58]</sup>*

Her words challenge every candidate: Are you serving for the title, the power, the pension — or for the republic itself? True civic virtue, Adams reminds us, requires no reward.

She also understood that great leaders are forged in difficulty, not comfort:

*"These are the times in which a genius would wish to live. It is not in the still calm of life, or the repose of a pacific station, that great characters are formed. The habits of a vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulties. Great necessities call out great virtues."<sup>[40]</sup>*

### **Clara Barton — On Duty Without Recognition**

Clara Barton drove supply wagons to the front lines when no one else would, arriving at the Battle of Antietam when surgeons were using corn husks for bandages. Her conception of service was absolute and selfless:<sup>[57]</sup>

*"I may be compelled to face danger, but never fear it, and while our soldiers can stand and fight, I can stand and feed and nurse them."<sup>[59]</sup>*

*"I ask neither pay nor praise, simply a soldier's fare and the sanction of your Excellency to go and do with my might, whatever my hands can find to do."<sup>[59]</sup>*

Barton exemplifies Roosevelt's demand for "strenuous citizenship" — the belief that service is not passive spectatorship but active, courageous engagement.

### **Dorothea Dix (1802–1887) — "The Voice of the Voiceless"**

Dorothea Dix spent decades traveling alone across the country, documenting the abuse of mentally ill prisoners in jails and poorhouses, and persuading fifteen state legislatures to build or expand hospitals. She understood that public service means confronting truths others prefer to ignore:<sup>[60]</sup>

*"I tell what I have seen, painful and shocking as the details often are, that from them you may feel more deeply the imperative obligation which lies upon you."<sup>[60]</sup>*

Her sense of calling was unshakable:

*"In a world where there is so much to be done, I felt strongly impressed that there must be something for me to do."<sup>[61]</sup>*

Dix's life is a rebuke to every politician who avoids difficult issues. Civic virtue, she demonstrates, means going where the suffering is — not where the cameras are.

# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

## ***Eleanor Roosevelt — On the Hard Work of Democracy***

Eleanor Roosevelt understood that self-governance is not a gift but a discipline:

*"Democracy requires both discipline and hard work. It is not easy for individuals to govern themselves... It is one thing to gain freedom, but no one can give you the right to self-government. This you must earn for yourself by long discipline."*<sup>[43]</sup>

Her words reinforce Pillar IV's insistence that candidates demonstrate practical competence and sustained commitment — not just campaign-season enthusiasm.

## ***Harriet Tubman (c. 1822–1913) — "The Moses of Her People"***

Harriet Tubman — escaped slave, Underground Railroad conductor, Civil War scout, and lifelong activist — is the ultimate embodiment of service through courage. She made thirteen trips back into slave territory, risking death each time, to lead approximately seventy people to freedom. Her words distill the essence of civic duty:<sup>[62]</sup>

*"Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars, to change the world."*<sup>[63]</sup>

*"If you hear the dogs, keep going. If you see the torches in the woods, keep going. If there's shouting after you, keep going. Don't ever stop. Keep going. If you want a taste of freedom, keep going."*<sup>[64]</sup>

Tubman's words are the purest expression of Roosevelt's "Man in the Arena" — the belief that service demands persistence, courage, and the refusal to quit.

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## **Pillar V: Fairness, Justice, and the Common Good**

*The Rushmorianians championed equal justice and the Square Deal. These women — who lived under systems of profound injustice — fought to make those principles real for everyone.*

## ***Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) — "The Architect of Equality"***

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, author of the Declaration of Sentiments at Seneca Falls in 1848, rewrote the Declaration of Independence to include the other half of humanity:

*"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal."*<sup>[65]</sup>

She insisted that justice was not a privilege to be granted but a right to be claimed:

*"The great truth that no just government can be formed without the consent of the governed."*<sup>[66]</sup>

Stanton's words remind CIVIC that Pillar V is not about charity — it is about the foundational promise of the republic itself.

## ***Sojourner Truth — On the Universality of Justice***

Sojourner Truth's 1851 "Ain't I a Woman?" speech remains the most powerful challenge to the selective application of justice in American history:

*"And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman?"*<sup>[67]</sup>

## Candidate Endorsement Criteria

She also expressed an unshakable faith that justice would ultimately prevail:

*"If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again!"<sup>[45]</sup>*

Truth's words demand that candidates be measured against the Pillar's standard: Do they fight for justice for *all* people — or only for those who look, think, and vote like them?

### ***Ida B. Wells — On Vigilance and Moral Courage***

Ida B. Wells risked her life to expose injustice, and she understood that rights are never permanently won:

*"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, and it does seem to me that notwithstanding all these social agencies and activities there is not that vigilance which should be exercised in the preservation of our rights."<sup>[68]</sup>*

*"One had better die fighting against injustice than to die like a dog or a rat in a trap."<sup>[44]</sup>*

She also articulated a principle that transcends all divisions:

*"Virtue knows no color line."<sup>[44]</sup>*

Wells's words affirm the Pillar's demand for equal justice, anti-corruption commitment, and the moral courage to hold powerful interests accountable.

### ***Harriet Tubman — On the Right to Liberty***

Harriet Tubman framed her fight in the language of the Declaration of Independence itself:

*"There was one of two things I had a right to: liberty or death. If I could not have one, I would take the other, for no man should take me alive."<sup>[64]</sup>*

Her words remind us that the "common good" is not an abstraction — it is the lived experience of freedom and dignity for every person.

### ***Jane Addams — On Democracy as Shared Life***

Jane Addams understood that justice is not a legal technicality but a way of living together:

*"The identification with the common lot which is the essential idea of Democracy becomes the source and expression of social ethics."<sup>[69]</sup>*

*"Civilization is a method of living, an attitude of equal respect for all men."<sup>[56]</sup>*

Addams's vision — democracy as mutual respect and shared responsibility — is the deepest expression of what the Rushmore Standard demands of every candidate.

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# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

## The Women of Lady Liberty: A Summary

Woman	Era	Known For	Pillars Affirmed
<b>Abigail Adams</b> (1744–1818)	Revolutionary	Counselor to founders; advocate for women's rights and moral virtue	I, II, IV
<b>Mercy Otis Warren</b> (1728– 1814)	Revolutionary	Historian of the Revolution; advocate for the Bill of Rights	II
<b>Dolley Madison</b> (1768–1849)	Early Republic	Builder of national unity through civil dialogue	III
<b>Sojourner Truth</b> (c. 1797–1883)	Antebellum– Reconstruction	Abolitionist; women's rights orator	I, V
<b>Harriet Tubman</b> (c. 1822–1913)	Antebellum– Progressive	Underground Railroad conductor; freedom fighter	IV, V
<b>Elizabeth Cady Stanton</b> (1815– 1902)	Antebellum– Progressive	Author of Declaration of Sentiments; suffrage leader	V
<b>Susan B. Anthony</b> (1820– 1906)	Antebellum– Progressive	Constitutional warrior for voting rights	II
<b>Harriet Beecher Stowe</b> (1811– 1896)	Antebellum	Author whose moral voice awakened a nation's conscience	I
<b>Clara Barton</b> (1821–1912)	Civil War– Progressive	Founder of American Red Cross; battlefield nurse	III, IV
<b>Dorothea Dix</b> (1802–1887)	Antebellum–Civil War	Mental health reformer; advocate for the voiceless	IV
<b>Ida B. Wells</b> (1862–1931)	Reconstruction– Progressive	Anti-lynching journalist; crusader for truth and justice	I, V
<b>Jane Addams</b> (1860–1935)	Progressive	Nobel laureate; founder of Hull House; civic democracy pioneer	III, V
<b>Eleanor Roosevelt</b> (1884– 1962)	20th Century	"First Lady of the World"; champion of human rights and democracy	I, II, IV

# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

## Conclusion: A Standard Worthy of the Republic

The Rushmore Standard is not a partisan litmus test. It does not prescribe positions on specific policy debates — taxes, healthcare, immigration, or defense spending. Instead, it asks a prior question: *Does this candidate possess the character, constitutional commitment, and sense of duty that make self-government possible?*

Washington warned that "the spirit of party" would be the republic's most dangerous internal enemy. Jefferson insisted that virtue was the prerequisite for self-government. Lincoln declared that the Constitution must be the "political religion of the nation". Roosevelt demanded that leaders meet a standard "very much higher" than ordinary citizens.<sup>[33][19][27][13]</sup>

These four presidents — carved into the granite of Mount Rushmore as permanent reminders of what American leadership can be — left a clear and consistent message, affirmed by the Ladies of Liberty: **The republic survives only when its leaders place integrity above ambition, the Constitution above party, unity above faction, service above self, and justice above power.**

That is the standard by which CIVIC should measure every candidate it considers endorsing. In an era when public trust has fallen to historic lows and democratic erosion is well documented, the Rushmore Standard offers a non-partisan, historically grounded framework for restoring the kind of leadership Americans deserve — and that the founders designed the republic to produce.<sup>[2][1]</sup>

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## CIVIC: Coalition of Independent Voters for an Inspired Congress

### *Restoring Trust in America's Leadership*

#### *Our Vision*

A Congress worthy of the American people — where **Integrity**, the **Constitution**, **Unity**, **Service**, and **Justice** guide every decision.

#### *Our Mission*

To mobilize Independent Voters to elect and support leaders who put **Integrity Above Ambition, the Constitution Above Party, Unity Above Faction, Service Above Self, and Justice Above Power** — restoring public trust in our democracy.

#### *Our Purpose*

To be the **Non-Partisan Civic Bridge** that:

- Lifts up candidates who meet the **Highest Standard** of American Character,
  - Gives citizens a clear, **Non-Partisan** way to recognize **Trustworthy Leaders**,
  - Revives the **Founding Promise** of a **Government truly: of, by, and for the people.**
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# Candidate Endorsement Criteria

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