

George Washington's Second Inaugural Address Offers an Admonition for President-Elect Trump

President George Washington, at the occasion of his second inauguration, was less inclined to make a big show than he was about continuing to set a precedent for future presidents to follow.

He spoke briefly—it's the shortest inaugural address ever—but powerfully, delivering a message every president who followed should take to heart. Time will tell if it's a message that resonated with President-elect Donald Trump.

Here's the complete speech (135 words):

Fellow citizens, I am again called upon by the voice of my country to execute the functions of its Chief Magistrate. When the occasion proper for it shall arrive, I shall endeavor to express the high sense I entertain of this distinguished honor, and of the confidence which has been reposed in me by the people of united America.

Previous to the execution of any official act of the President the Constitution requires an oath of office. This oath I am now about to take, and in your presence: That if it shall be found during my administration of the Government I have in any instance violated willingly or knowingly the injunctions thereof, I may—besides incurring constitutional punishment—be subject to the upbraidings of all who are now witnesses of the present solemn ceremony. {eo}