

## New Year's Resolution

“An empire of laws, and not of men.”

- James Harrington, as quoted by John Adams

John Adams served as our nation's first vice-president and our second president, taking office in 1797. He is best known for his active role in the United States' war of independence from England. John Adams believed fervently in the rule of law and the checks on power and balances of power enshrined in the U.S. Constitution.

But what does it mean to be a nation of laws and “not of men” and women?

The rule of law ensures that power is not concentrated in the hands of any one individual or group. It ensures that no one individual, such as an imperial president, may make and enforce the laws according to his or her whim.

Rather, the law in a democracy is crafted through debate and compromise between two houses of an independent legislature and the executive, and interpreted and enforced by an independent judiciary. It ensures that the law applies equally to everyone and is not applied arbitrarily depending on the desires of a single individual.

Nearly 230 years after John Adams' presidency, the rule of law in our democracy is battered and threadbare. Economic disparity in the U.S. exceeds even that of the notorious Gilded Age. Billionaires are preparing to run our government, control our military, and cut the benefits for which each of us pays. And, sadly, the law does not apply equally to rich and poor alike.

In the coming year, we Americans must recommit ourselves to the rule of law and to the Constitution and to the principles for which it stands: liberty, equality, and justice for all. These principles do not apply only to the majority of Americans or only to people in favor. They apply to all, without exception, without regard to ancestry, nationality, color, religion, or gender.

In this law firm, we take seriously our oath of office. As lawyers, we will continue to uphold the Constitution and as officers of the court we will continue to conduct ourselves with dignity, courtesy, and integrity.

Long live the rule of law.