



VETERANS FOR RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP

For Release: Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Veterans For Responsible Leadership Calls On All Veterans To Support The Peaceful Transition Of Power

Veterans for Responsible Leadership calls on all veterans to join us in rejecting violence against our fellow Americans and supporting the American hallmark of the peaceful transition of power this week. We invite fellow Veterans to recommit to our common oath through [The Veteran Code of Conduct](#). We hope that Veterans can help all Americans respect the tradition and history of our democratic process.

Veterans for Responsible Leadership, a nonpartisan organization run by a bipartisan group of veterans with a mission to uphold the integrity of American democracy, re-commits to holding leaders accountable to our constitution as we support with pride the peaceful transition of power.

Since 1801, when two parties competed in a bitter election and our nation's second President, John Adams quietly left Washington D.C. so that his rival, President-Elect Thomas Jefferson, could take his oath and the presidency, this process has happened willingly and bloodlessly. Honoring this long history of peaceful transition of power, regardless of the outcome of the election for the sitting president, is a distinction of American democracy. As veterans, we believe our duty to this tradition and our oath to the constitution, means we should be the leading voices defending this process and reminding Americans of our united goals against tyranny and any enemies who seek to undermine our basic values.

While we were active duty, we took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution, not to promise fealty to any one commander or political administration. We served under Democrats, we served under Republicans. It didn't matter – we were loyally serving our country. Our duty was to support the tenets of our Constitution, chief among them being the democratic process and the peaceful transition of power. As veterans, we know serving that mission sometimes meant not agreeing with politicians, but always protecting our values and being focused on serving the country we love.

"Our duty as citizens and former service members of the world's oldest democracy is to the Constitution of the United States. There is no ambiguity, and no possible interpretation where this oath includes a cult of personality or the use of violence to achieve an electoral outcome. We must remain on guard and committed to the absolute

defeat of nascent fascism in our country." says Daniel Barkhuff, President of Veterans for Responsible Leadership and former Navy SEAL.

Former Navy FA-18 pilot and Veterans for Responsible Leadership Director of Operations, Mike Smith said, "The United States is the greatest experiment in self-government in the history of the world. At its foundation is the adherence to the Constitution's peaceful transition of power. We charge our fellow veterans and all Americans to honor this transition with the same integrity and commitment to protecting our Constitution as we always have."

In the shadow of the national holiday honoring the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we ask our brothers and sisters who served to heed his words: "The time is always right to do what is right."

About Veterans for Responsible Leadership (VFRL)

VFRL is a fully inclusive, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to uphold the integrity of American democracy from those who seek to undermine and subvert its institutions, the rule of law, and electoral system for personal or political advantage. We, like our military, hold a broad spectrum of political views. Yet we set aside those differences to defend the institutional and ideological foundations that underpin our nations' open and inclusive political arena.

Now, we will help heal our institutions and keep Trumpism, fascism, and authoritarianism from rising again in this country. VFRL brings to America's political discourse the steady, respectful, and measured voice and actions that define great military leaders. We will use our voice and efforts to uphold the oaths we took to support and defend the United States of America's Constitution and take to task those who fail to honor their oaths regardless of party or position. For more information, visit Veterans for Responsible Leadership at www.vfrl.org or Twitter @VetsForRL.