ASTRONAUTS FOR AMERICA

Young Mr. Lincoln's Prediction

"There is no grievance that is a fit object of redress by mob law.."

Abraham Lincoln, age 28, Address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, 1838

THE SPEECH

On January 27, 1838, a 28-year-old lawyer stood before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois, and made a prediction. Abraham Lincoln told his audience that America would never be conquered from abroad. ***"All the armies of Europe, Asia and Africa combined,"*** he said, ***"could not by force, take a drink from the Ohio, or make a track on the Blue Ridge, in a trial of a thousand years."*** If the American experiment ever failed, he said, we would be the ones to kill it: ***"as a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide."***

Lincoln then named the mechanism: trading ***"the sober judgment of Courts"*** for ***"wild and furious passions."*** Describing a mob that lynched men in Mississippi and burned a free Black man alive in St. Louis, he called its justification ***"correct reasoning"***: reasoning that marched, one plausible-sounding step at a time, from hanging gamblers to burning innocent men, each step defended as sensible.

That is the part of Lincoln's speech Americans don't usually quote: a warning about the misuse of reason itself, how cruelty, fraud, and lawlessness can be dressed in the language of logic, for an audience that trusts numbers enough to follow along. We are astronauts. Our training runs on evidence: math that has to be right the first time, because there is no partial credit in orbital mechanics. When we watch our government substitute bad arithmetic and worse logic for evidence, and count on the public not noticing, we recognize the pattern Lincoln named. Here is what it looks like today.

"IMMUNE": TRUMP v UNITED STATES

Trump v. United States (2024) held that former presidents have broad immunity from criminal prosecution for ***"official acts"*** taken in office. The majority worried that prosecution might chill a president from taking the ***"bold and unhesitating action"*** the office requires, even though no former president had ever faced criminal charges for an official act before this case. That danger had zero statistical history behind it. The real, already-observed danger, a president's supporters storming the Capitol on January 6, 2021 to block certification of an election he had lost, drew no comparable weight in the majority's reasoning. In dissent, Justice Sotomayor asked a plainer question: if a president orders Seal Team 6 to assassinate a political rival, is that an official act? Under the majority's reasoning, she wrote, the answer is ***"Immune."*** She called the ruling ***"a mockery of the principle, foundational to our Constitution and system of Government, that no man is above the law."*** That is a warning about where legal reasoning leads when a court weighs a speculative harm more heavily than a demonstrated one.

"25,000 AMERICAN LIVES PER BOAT": OPERATION SOUTHERN SPEAR

Since 2025, the administration has killed more than 200 people in lethal boat strikes in the Caribbean and Pacific near South America it says target drug smugglers, without trial, public evidence, or, in most cases, proof of what the boats carried. To justify the killings, the President repeats a specific number: every boat destroyed saves 25,000 American lives. Fact-checkers and current and former counternarcotics officials say the arithmetic doesn't hold up: the boats struck mostly carry cocaine bound for Europe, not fentanyl bound for America. Fentanyl, which drives most U.S. overdose deaths, comes almost exclusively overland from Mexico. As RAdm W. Baumgartner USCG (ret) former Chief Counsel of the service put it, ***"These boats do not carry fentanyl. They are carrying cocaine."***

The numbers bear this out. U.S. overdose deaths have been falling since 2023, and cocaine deaths, the drug these strikes actually intercept, fell sharply in 2024, before the strikes even began. Street prices have stayed flat. Researchers call the strikes symbolic at best, and warn they may push cartels toward deadlier, harder-to-detect drugs instead.

Nor is the statistical misdirection the only problem. In September 2025, U.S. forces struck a boat, then struck it again to kill two survivors clinging to the wreckage. A group of former military Judge Advocates General concluded that the order, and its execution, amount to ***"war crimes, murder, or both."*** The law requires a military that has just destroyed a vessel to rescue survivors, not finish them off, and no repeated "25,000 lives" statistic changes that duty.

"$215 BILLION IN SAVINGS": DOGE'S LEDGER

When the Department of Government Efficiency wound down in mid-2026, its year-long tally of federal savings eventually claimed roughly $215 billion, down from the $2 trillion first promised. Reviewers, journalists, and Congress's own investigators found the total riddled with duplicate entries, arithmetic errors, and contract "ceiling" values counted as real spending. A Senate investigation could verify only a fraction of it.

The savings claim also left out what the cuts cost to make. An estimated 137,000 employees took the deferred resignation offer, drawing full pay for months while performing no work; the nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service puts that price tag at $4.5 billion, Public Citizen at $11 billion to $15 billion. The Government Accountability Office documented one piece of that bill: after the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights lost half its staff to a reduction in force, it paid $28.5 million to $38 million in salary and benefits (nearly $1 million a week for one sub-office of one agenc) to employees on paid leave doing no work, before the RIF was rescinded,.

Then came the rehiring. Brookings Institution senior fellow Elaine Kamarck estimated that roughly 25,000 fired federal workers were brought back once agencies found they could not function without them; courts separately ordered the reinstatement of more than 24,000 workers at 18 agencies. Where contractors filled the gap instead, POGO has long found that the government pays contractors 1.83 times the full compensation of a federal employee for comparable work, nearly 3 times for defense roles, a gap topping a billion dollars a year across tens of thousands of positions. By NPR's count, total federal spending rose $376 billion, about 6 percent, in the year DOGE operated. When DOGE closed, the White House told Congress there would be no final accounting. A number repeated often enough starts to sound like a fact. It is still a number nobody can verify.

"THE ELECTION WAS STOLEN": A CLAIM THAT OUTLIVED ITS EVIDENCE

More than five years after the 2020 election, some in the administration and its allies still call it fraudulent. At the time, the president's own attorney general, William Barr, said the Justice Department found "no fraud 'on a scale that could have affected a different outcome.'" His own government's cybersecurity agency called it "the most secure [election] in American history." More than five dozen lawsuits, before judges of both parties, found no basis to overturn results. None of that ended the claim: it persists not because the evidence changed, but because repetition has substituted for proof.

REASON ISN'T ENOUGH: THE FOUNDERS ON VIRTUE AND NORMS

Lincoln's mob in 1838 used words to make lawless killing sound reasonable. Today's version doesn't need a rope or a torch. It needs a statistic delivered with enough confidence that people stop checking it, and a legal argument complicated enough that people assume someone smarter already has. The tools are new; the trick is the one Lincoln described: passion dressed up as reason, aimed at an audience assumed too ignorant, too indifferent, or too intimidated to ask whether the numbers actually add up.

Lincoln thought he knew the cure: ***"Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defence,"*** built into ***"general intelligence, sound morality, and … a reverence for the constitution and laws."*** That is necessary, but Lincoln never addressed what happens when officials get the law technically right but the spirit of it

wrong, or what guards the institutional norms that protect the constitution itself. For that half of the answer, we borrow from a few founders who thought harder than almost anyone about exactly this problem.

James Madison, defending the Constitution's design in Federalist No. 51, wrote that elections are only ***"the primary control on the government,"*** and that ***"experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions."*** He understood that a constitution survives only if both the people running it and the people watching them treat its unwritten norms (restraint, mutual tolerance, honesty) as seriously as its written text. As he said in the Virginia Ratifying Convention in 1788, ***" Is there no virtue among us? If there be not…no form of government can render us secure."***

In his Farewell Address, George Washington reminded us that ***"honesty is always the best policy,"*** and called virtue and morality a ***"necessary spring of popular government."*** John Adams warned us in a 1798 speech that human passions, like avarice, ambition or revenge would ***"break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net."*** Finally, Benjamin Franklin emphasized that keeping a free government requires daily vigilance, duty and responsibility from the citizenry, ***"a republic, if you can keep it."***

WHAT LINCOLN ASKS OF US

Lincoln gave us the discipline: reverence for law, and reason over passion. The Founders gave us the mechanism: institutional norms and elections that only work if we use them to counteract ambition instead of reward it. Put together, the assignment for us as citizens is not complicated. Do the arithmetic before repeating a "statistic." Check the evidence before believing a claim. Read the dissent, not just the court decision. And on election day, hire people "of virtue and wisdom" who show their evidence, real regard for the law, and respect for the unwritten norms both Lincoln and the Founders knew our Constitution depends upon.

Lincoln thought the American experiment would only die by suicide. At Astronauts For America, honoring our oath, checking the math, and following the Founders' advice on norms and voting is how we choose to support our democratic republic in its time of need.

Appeal to Our Crewmates: We need your help. Sober judgment and honest arithmetic aren't partisan skills. Use our website's "Contact Us" feature to flag places where government substitutes bad numbers and clever legal arguments for evidence, so we can hold every administration, of either party, to Lincoln's standard of "cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason."