



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Session 8: Democratic election and electoral observation Right of Reply**

As delivered by Ambassador David Johnson  
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Warsaw, September 30, 2011

Mr. Moderator,

I must admit I feel a bit odd taking the floor for a “right of reply” on account of a mention of George Washington, our first president, but an individual who has long passed on. Nonetheless, this is a political discussion and earlier today another delegation raised the issue of President Washington’s having been labeled the “Father of His Country,” and asking why his current president should not be labeled the “Father of His Country?”

In my mind, that raised the question as to why we described Washington as the “Father of His Country.” I’ve done some brief research, and according to the information I have been able to find:

“Throughout his Presidency, Washington passed by opportunity after opportunity to assume and consolidate power. Arriving in the Capitol city before most of the members of the newly elected Congress, Washington chose to wait for the Congress to convene before committing any official acts as President. Instead of succumbing to popular sentiment that he be treated as something of a king, Washington downplayed his stature as President. He did so through dozens of actions, some purely symbolic--such as wearing a simple brown broadcloth suit to his Inauguration--and some very substantive--such as stepping down after two terms to set the precedent of timely and orderly transitions in political power and leadership.”

Given that background, one can only conclude that it is this kind of selfless abnegation of power which leads one to be labeled the “Father of His Country.”

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.