

# THE CHRISTIAN POST

## Don't Be Concerned About Government Tyranny, Obama Tells Grads

By Napp Nazworth May 8, 2013

---

Reject the voices that warn against government tyranny, President Barack Obama told Ohio State University graduates Monday. The commencement speech has helped bring into stark relief one of the main differences between conservatives and liberals over the proper role of government.

"Unfortunately, you've grown up hearing voices that incessantly warn of government as nothing more than some separate, sinister entity that's at the root of all our problems. Some of these same voices also do their best to gum up the works. They'll warn that tyranny is always lurking just around the corner. You should reject these voices," Obama said, "because what they suggest is that our brave, and creative, and unique experiment in self-rule is somehow just a sham with which we can't be trusted."

Rather than guarding against tyranny, he urged the graduates to understand that government can be a resource to solve many, but not all, of their problems.

"We have never been a people who place all our faith in government to solve our problems," Obama continued. "We shouldn't want to. But we don't think the government is the source of all our problems, either. Because we understand that this democracy is ours. And as citizens, we understand that it's not about what America can do for us, it's about what can be done by us, together, through the hard and frustrating but absolutely necessary work of self-government. The Founders trusted us with this awesome authority. We should trust ourselves with it, too."

Conservative critics countered that government tyranny should be a concern and should be guarded against. In a Wednesday Wall Street Journal editorial, Roger Pilon, director of the Center for Constitutional Studies at Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, countered that the Founders did not trust citizens to have "awesome authority," and that is exactly why they put limits on government power.

"Actually, the Founders distrusted us, at least in our collective capacity. That's why they wrote a Constitution that set clear limits on what we, as citizens, could do through government," Pilon wrote.

Follow us

Obama was also criticized for the implicit assumption in his speech that the only place citizens work collectively for their betterment is through government, rather than through other non-government groups, such as civic organizations, religious groups and families.

"I don't know of any conservatives who don't think government can do some good," Jonah Goldberg, a conservative columnist for National Review, said Tuesday on Fox News' "Special Report." "What Obama's formulation is ... the government is going to take the role of essentially providing all of those functions of civil society, of families, of churches ... and it is the only thing. If you listen to his second inaugural, basically, his entire formulation is there is government and there is the individual, and there is nothing in between."

Also on "Special Report," Kirsten Powers, a liberal columnist for The Daily Beast, pointed out that the debate highlights the differences between Republicans and Democrats.

"This is just a philosophical argument. It's what separates Democrats from Republicans – what is the role of government?" Powers said.