

# Thomas jefferson essay example

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## **Introduction**

Widely regarded as the author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson is a pre-Civil War president who is immortalized on Mount Rushmore. Jefferson had always been on the national scene serving as delegate to the Virginia House of Delegates and also serving two years as the Governor of Virginia. His national service life also saw him become America's Minister to France after the war. While serving as the Secretary of State in Washington's administration, Jefferson often had quarrels with Alexander Hamilton over his view on a centralized national bank. After becoming president in 1800, Jefferson made tremendous efforts to reduce the national debt. This paper examines three things that Jefferson did in his presidency to pay off the national debt. With these measures, America would have freed herself from national debt.

## **Three Things**

Jefferson was guided by a commitment to limited government, popular sovereignty and social egalitarianism. His belief was that men should have the freedom of regulating their own affairs by minimizing the influence of the central government. One of his main goals after assuming the presidency was to reduce the national debt. Together with his secretary of treasury known as Albert Gallatin, Jefferson undertook several steps in reducing the national debt. First, he opposed public borrowing because it led to increased spending. The government was increasing its expenditures without increased taxes. Public borrowing also shifted the payment burden to posterity, but Jefferson termed the act as immoral since it would impose financial burden

on future generations. Public borrowing also created a clique of bondholders with vested interests in funding and growing the debt and opposing its reduction. This is one reason why Jefferson was against the Bank of the United States, terming it as a deadly hostility that existed against the forms and principles of the American Constitution.

Second, Jefferson made significant reductions on federal expenditures. For example, the number of foreign missions in the State Department was reduced to 3-Paris, London, and Spain. All inspectors and collectors of the internal revenue in the Treasury Department were dismissed. These changes led to a reduction of the figure of federal employees by about one-third. Most federal expenditure cuts targeted the War and Navy Departments. The size of the regular army was reduced by almost half by early 1802. War Department expenditure figures dropped from \$1.9 million in 1800 to \$1.3 million between 1801 and 1808 (Divine et al. 156). Spending in the Naval Department also reduced, with Jefferson's government spending an average of \$1.5 million each year as opposed to John Adams' \$2 million a year.

The third measure put up by Jefferson was the reduction of federal taxes. The government's three tax sources in 1800 included custom duties, public land sales and internal taxes. Jefferson's government recommended the repeal of taxes on commodities such as tea, coffee and sugar, while reducing taxation on whiskey stills, auction sales, legal documents, carriages and domestic liquor sales (Divine et al. 164). Jefferson's administration reduced and repealed internal taxes and this saw the abolition of collectors and inspectors of revenue. Duty on imported salt was also repealed, and was later abolished in 1807. These measures were boosted by an annual sinking

of fund of about \$7. 3 million that would be used to pay interest on the debt, and reduce the principal through the purchase of outstanding bonds in the market and retiring maturing bonds.

## **Conclusion**

The paper has addressed the three things that Thomas Jefferson implemented so as to reduce the national debt. Indeed, during his tenure, the national debt shot reduced to \$57 million by 1808 from \$83 million in 1800. This was a remarkable achievement for Jefferson. Basically Jefferson set out to stop public borrowing, reduce federal expenditures and lower federal taxes. These measures were helped by an annual sinking fund that had been created. All these measures were not well received by the federalists, but they were extremely instrumental in reducing the national debt. If these measures would have been enforced until today, the national debt would be a thing of the past.

## **Works Cited**

Divine, Robert., Williams, Hal., Gross, Ariela., Roberts, Randy, and Fredrickson, George. America Past and Present, Brief Edition, Volume I: To 1877. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2011.