

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

*Edwin Meese III\**

As you know, the theme of the Convention is limited government. We have had Showcase Panels on limited government and spreading democracy, a panel talking about the economic aspects of things like taxes and regulation, and before this, a panel on the question of whether constitutional measures are necessary in order to achieve limited government. This final panel is an interesting one, I think, because it centers less around governmental things per se than it does around the relationship between government and the everyday lives of people. The topic is: “The role of government in defining our culture.”

The initial question, of course, is: What should that role be? We can think about it in terms of what the Founders had in mind, and what that role is today—is there a difference between the original concept and how it has worked out a little over two hundred years later? We might consider what other institutions of society perhaps are competing with government in defining our culture, and to what extent more attention should be given to them when limited government is one of our objectives. We might ask: What principles do we use to determine when government should intervene in defining culture? And can you ever have a governmental role in culture that is outcome neutral? Finally, we might debate whether there is some consensus among the people generally as to what that role of government is in defining the culture, or if this a matter of continual tension, perhaps what the Founders had in mind when Publius, or Madison, wrote in *The Federalist* that ambition would counter ambition?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> THE FEDERALIST NO. 51 (James Madison).

Is there a consensus today as to the role of government in defining culture? To answer this question in Federalist Society tradition, we have a number of people here gathered who do not always agree with each other. And so, as a result, I think we will have a lively discussion.