

## Andrew Jackson, "Veto of Maysville Road Bill" (1830)

*Although Jackson vetoed a bill in 1830 providing for a federal government subscription of stock, in the amount of \$150,000, in a company that proposed to build a sixty-mile road near Maysville, Kentucky. Jackson's veto message offered some thoughtful commentary on the question of the relationship between the federal government and the states and on the role of government in society more generally. As you read, consider how Jackson defends his veto of the Maysville Road Bill. And, think about how Jackson's veto reflected the ideology of the Democratic Party at the time.*

To the House of Representatives:

Gentlemen, I have maturely considered the bill proposing to authorize a "subscription of stock in the Maysville...Road Company," and now return the same to the House of Representatives, in which it originated, with my objections to its passage...

Such grants [of money by the federal government] have always been [passed] under the control of the general principle that the works which might be thus aided should be "of a general, not local, national, not State," character. A disregard of this distinction would of necessity lead to the subversion of the federal system.... I am not able to view [the Maysville Road Bill] in any other light than as a measure of purely local character.... It has no connection with any established system of improvements; [and] is exclusively within the limits of a State [Kentucky]....

...As great as this object [goal of internal improvements] undoubtedly is, it is not the only one which demands the fostering care of the government. The preservation and success of the republican principle rest with us. To elevate its character and its influence rank among our most important duties, and the best means to accomplish this desirable end are those which will rivet the attachment of our citizens to the Government of their choice by the comparative lightness of their public burthens [burdens] and by the attraction which the superior success of its operations will present to the admiration and respect of the world. Through the favor of an overruling and indulgent Providence our country is blessed with a general prosperity and our citizens exempted from the pressure of taxation, which other less favored portions of the human family are obliged to bear; yet it is true that many of the taxes collected from our citizens through the medium of imposts have for a considerable period been onerous. In many particulars these taxes have borne severely upon the laboring and less prosperous classes of the community, being imposed on the necessaries of life, and this, too, in cases where the burden was not relieved by the consciousness that it would ultimately contribute to make us independent of foreign nation articles of prime necessity by the encouragement of growth and manufacture at home. They have been cheerfully borne because they were thought to be necessary to the support of government and the payments of debts unavoidably incurred in the acquisition and maintenance of our national rights and liberties. But have we a right to calculate on the same cheerful acquiescence when it is known that the necessity for their continuance would cease were it not for irregular, improvident, and unequal appropriations of public funds?...

...How gratifying the effect of presenting to the world the sublime spectacle of a Republic of more than 12,000,000 happy people, in the fifty-fourth year of her existence, after having passed through two protracted wars one for the acquisition and the other for the maintenance of liberty free from debt and all her immense resources unfettered! What a salutary influence would not such an exhibition exercise upon the cause of liberal principles and free government throughout the world! Would we not find ourselves in its effect an additional guarantee that our political institutions will be transmitted to the most remote posterity without decay? A course of policy destined to witness events like these cannot be benefited by a legislation which tolerates a scramble for appropriations that have no relation to any general system of improvement, and whose good effects must of necessity be very limited...

...If different impressions are entertained in any quarter; if it is expected that the people of this country, reckless of their constitutional obligations, will prefer their local interest to the principles of the Union...indeed has the world but little to hope from the example of free government. When an honest observance of constitutional compacts cannot be obtained from communities like ours, it need not be anticipated elsewhere... and the degrading truth that man is unfit for self-government [will be] admitted. And this will be the case if expediency be made a rule of construction in interpreting the Constitution. Power in no government could desire a better shield for the insidious advances which it is ever ready to make upon the checks that are designed to restrain its action...