



# LETTER TO JAMES WARREN

SAMUEL ADAMS  
FEBRUARY 12, 1779



*Samuel Adams (1722-1803) was a major figure during the American Revolution. He was the leader of the Massachusetts “radicals,” a delegate to the Continental Congress, likely planner of the Boston Tea Party, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. During the war, he often corresponded with James Warren, the president of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress and a paymaster general of the Continental Army. As the war dragged on in the early months of 1779, Adams penned a letter to Warren, who was encamped near Boston. The following is an excerpt.*

**A general dissolution of principles and manners will more surely overthrow the liberties of America than the whole force of the common enemy.** While the people are virtuous, they cannot be subdued – but when once they lose their virtue, they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external, or internal, invader.

**How necessary, then, is it for those who are determined to transmit the blessings of liberty as a fair inheritance to posterity** – to associate on public principles in support of public virtue. I do believe that the principles and manners of New England produced that spirit, which finally has established the independence of America. Nothing but the opposite principles and manners can overthrow it.

**If you are of my mind – and I think you are – the necessity of supporting the education of our country must be strongly impressed on your mind as well.** It gives me the greatest concern to hear that some of our gentlemen in the country begin to think the maintenance of schools too great a burden. I wish they could hear the praise that is given to New England by some of the most sensible and public-spirited gentlemen in the Southern states, for the care and expense that have been freely borne by our ancestors and continued to this time, for the instruction of our youth.

If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, the people will never be enslaved.

