

**David Baker, First Place Winner in the East North Central
Cornerstone High School (homeschool); Bexley, Ohio; Teacher: Shannon Baker**

Without a tremendous amount of ingenuity the United States of America would not exist as we know it today. Ingenuity means trying new ways of doing things, new uses for past ideas and developing them until you find a better way. The Founders had to use creativity and ingenuity to develop a system of government for such a diverse people. They were also able to balance the government so that it would treat all citizens and all States equally.

The writing of the United States Constitution required our Founders to take their many ideas and form them into a better government. When the Constitutional Convention first met there were many opposing ideas on government; some Founders called for the British system, however, others wanted a weak government with no leader. Many colonists wanted to crown George Washington as their king, but he said that he would not be the king or support a monarchy in America. There were some that wanted no connection between the States making them just a group of sovereign colonies. They would form alliances in time of war, like they had done during the American Revolution under the Articles of Confederation, when the federal government could only make suggestions not any real laws. There were other Founders who pushed for a central federal power with almost no States rights. If the Founders had chosen any one of those systems our country would have had civil wars constantly, with some States going back to Great Britain or becoming French colonies, a dictatorship (and most likely other revolutions), anarchy or a police state. Instead the Founders created a system with checks and balances and a rather limited federal government, but strong enough to prevent inter-state strife while still allowing State and personal freedoms. They also found ways to balance the amount of power between a small State and a large State so that the small State was not powerless or disproportionately powerful to a larger State. The Founders had to use much ingenuity to create our Constitution so that it would allow the federal government to function well and not become an Orwellian big brother figure or lead to anarchy. Our Constitution took the best of each idea and created an entirely new republic.

Our country has shown an amazing amount of ingenuity throughout its history. Benjamin Franklin, at age 81, was the oldest member of the Constitutional Convention. He had many other ingenious ideas that still influence everyday life today such as bifocals, the "Franklin Stove", the first police and fire departments, as well as the public library. Another great American who embodied this same type of ingenuity was Henry Ford. Among other things, he gave the world the first assembly line and an affordable car. Many of the things we use every day and take for granted are manufactured in the assembly line. Without all these ideas and many other innovations throughout our history, American culture would not be what it is today. Mr. Ford said, "To do more for the world than the world does for you—that is success." Without the willingness to take ideas and inventions of the past and change or remold them, neither Mr. Ford nor our Founders could have been successful in their enterprises.

I have used my own ingenuity by designing inventions to help make life easier or better and also while programming my FIRST robotics team's robot. A couple of my inventions are the Twister Resister, a device that protects people from flying debris during a tornado; and the Stuffed Crutch, an add-on to your crutch so you are able to carry things with you while you crutch. In programming, ingenuity is very important. There are many problems in programming that do not have easy solutions and you must try many different ideas to find the best one. Without being able to "think outside the box" when looking at a problem in order to find unique ways to solve it, or looking at an item to find a new use for it, you will never create anything. I enjoy trying to solve problems as well as finding better ways to do things.

In conclusion, without ingenuity, the United States of America might not be 232 years old and counting. I believe that ingenuity, past, present and future, is the most important American value. Without ingenuity, America would not have led the world in science and technology these many years.