Should a government be stronger than its people or weak enough so that the people can overthrow it? This is the question Lincoln asked on July 4, 1861. We believe that neither extreme is the answer to the question but that we should have a balanced government.

The second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence states that people are guaranteed the right to life. Our government’s first duty is to guard life under any circumstance. In order to protect us from our enemies and others who could harm us, they have to keep surveillance and eliminate all threats. However, the same paragraph also states our right to liberty. Liberty is the state of being free from direct control by our government. A government, like a parent, struggles to give us the protection we need and the freedom we want.

Undoubtedly there are times when we have to sacrifice freedom and liberty for security. Speed limits and airport security are two examples. Both limit our liberty but protect our lives. Likewise the government has limitations on their powers; checks and balances keep one branch from having too much power over the others, and citizens choose who makes up the government by voting.

The one right the United States government cannot take away from its citizens is voting. Even when it may seem like a good idea for security purposes, like in times of war, the people’s voice should still be heard. As stated in Amendment 26 in our constitution, citizens over the age of 18 cannot be denied or have their right to vote limited. Voters determine the fate of our country even when times are hard.

Historically, the United States has struggled with keeping liberty and security in balance. The internet has made this balancing act even harder. As citizens we want to be able to go online to social networks and our emails to communicate in private. However, we want our information protected from people who could use it to harm us. It is the government’s duty to protect us from harm and eliminate threats even if the threat is a virtual person on the internet.

Domestic and international terrorists have become aware of the advances in technology and our preparation for physical attacks. They can do more harm through an internet cable than with a loaded gun. As a result, the government uses passwords, encryption, and constant surveillance to guarantee protection. This means the government has a lot of knowledge about what we do in our private lives. With this great power comes great responsibility.

While technology has advanced since Lincoln’s time, his question stays the same. We believe the answer is still balance. As citizens we have to sacrifice our right to complete privacy to ensure our safety, but the government should not watch us unnecessarily. If we are behaving responsibly, the government should let us do as we wish. Their duty is to ensure security, while still remaining the land of the free.