Article II, section 1, paragraph 5:

No person except a natural born citizen, or a citizen of the United States, at the time of the adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any person be eligible to that office who shall not have attained to the age of thirty five years, and been fourteen years a resident within the United States.

The prisoners were all chained to each other, facing the wall. Their heads were bound so they could not move to the left or to the right. Behind them was a burning flame that cast light and shadows on to the wall they faced-the only vision they knew of life. Other men would pass by the flame on a raised walkway carrying various items-animal heads, wooden sculptures, and figures of other men, and although the shadows that were cast would reflect what was being carried-to the prisoners ignorant of the truth, they believed that the images they saw were real. This is Plato’s story known as the “Allegory of the Cave.” One prisoner manages to break free in order to lead the way for the others to follow. The one who breaks free is the philosopher-the one with the open mind and the will to explore, dare, and lead the rest of the population.

Plato’s allegory can be used to illustrate the passions of the framers of our constitution. In many ways, the people of the 13 colonies were chained to a wall and had limited scope and vision of what life in an independent country might be like. Our founding fathers knew that any leader of this new country must have its best interests at heart and must be passionately committed to the cause of freedom, and the best interests of the new nation and its people.

As the Constitution was being drafted, naturally, the issue of who shall be allowed to lead the people was an essential point. Although Alexander Hamilton offered the wording, “No person shall be eligible to the office of President of the United States unless he be now a Citizen of one of the States, or hereafter be born a Citizen of the United States,” it was John Jay who felt that more distinction needed to be made. He wanted to make sure that whoever led the United States “owed his allegiance **solely** to the United States” and in his letter to George Washington, pleading his case, urged, “Permit me to hint, whether it would be wise and seasonable to provide a strong check to the admission of Foreigners into the administration of our national Government; and to declare expressly that the Command in Chief of the American army shall not be given to nor devolve on, any but a natural born Citizen.” In short, the President of the United States must be a natural born citizen with unity of citizenship and sole allegiance to the United States at birth.

The individual serving as President of the United States must be at least 35 years of age. The framers believed that any person interested in being President would, at the age of 35, have had enough life experience to handle the job, as maturity and wisdom are non-negotiable qualities for this role. Any candidate must also have lived on US soil for at least 14 years. If one is to lead effectively, he or she must be one of the people and with the people and know to the very core of his or her being, what it truly means to be an American.

We may choose to see the prisoners in Plato’s Allegory of the cave as the citizens of the original thirteen colonies before those rare few ”philosophers” broke free from the pack and gave their spirit and passion to the calling of creating and framing our Constitution. The people of this country may not have been shackled literally, but they were bound to obey a government that did not represent them. Thanks to the efforts of those who led the revolution and created our Constitution, we have a mandate to elect a President who is, hopefully wise enough, mature enough, and who as a naturally born citizen, swears his sole allegiance to the United States and its people.

Thank you all.