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## **This Independence Day, Recognize Your Freedoms**

JEFFERSON CITY — July 4 of this year marks the 230th anniversary of the birth of the United States. Although many of us will celebrate the holiday with backyard barbecues, parades and fireworks, I encourage all Missourians to take time out and think about what this holiday truly means. After 230 years, the American experiment has resulted in the most powerful and liberated country in the world. That remarkable history is worth remembering on the anniversary of our independence from Great Britain.

We must not forget that the gift of freedom that has been handed down to us from our Founding Fathers and subsequent generations was earned at a considerable cost. On July 4, 1776, the members of the Continental Congress who signed their names to the Declaration of Independence recognized that their signatures amounted to an act of treason against the British Empire. This offense was punishable by death; there was no turning back for any of these esteemed statesmen.

However, brave revolutionaries such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams were willing to pay the price for their freedom and that of their countrymen. The document they drafted and signed founded the new nation on the belief that “all Men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

Further, the founders declared that in securing these rights, “Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it...”

This was not merely a political and military revolution — this was a revolution of ideas. Never before had a nation been founded under the tenants of political liberalism, with influences coming from the ancient Greeks and Romans, the Magna Carta, and brilliant political thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Montesquieu. The message was clear — government is formed at the will of the people, and the freedom of those people reigns supreme.

The founders went on to navigate their young nation through a bloody conflict with the world’s strongest empire and unite the republic when the colonies seemed ready to turn their backs on one another. These revolutionaries went on to implement a new Constitution, which has lasted 217 years. Over the course of those years, our nation has consolidated its commitment to freedom by expanding civil rights to all citizens.

On this Independence Day, while we are at war with those who wish to dismantle the foundations of our great nation, I encourage all Missourians to recognize the blessing of freedom that we have been granted.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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