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## Celebrating the Birth of Our Nation

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The Fourth of July, Independence Day, the Glorious Fourth — whatever you call it—this is the day we celebrate the birth of our nation, the moment we claimed our independence from Great Britain, and democracy as we know it was born. Families all across Missouri will get together on July 4<sup>th</sup> for backyard celebrations, which have become a cornerstone of our many holiday traditions.

This year, America is celebrating its 232<sup>nd</sup> birthday. Our country was founded July 4, 1776, with the signing of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At the time of the signing, our young nation consisted of 13 colonies that were under the rule of England’s King George III. Many living here at that time had growing concerns about the taxes that were being paid to England, which was also called “taxation without representation.” On top of the worries colonists had about the taxes, King George III had sent additional English troops overseas to the colonies to help control any rebellion.

In 1774, the 13 colonies sent delegates to Philadelphia to form the First Continental Congress. At this time, the delegates were not ready to declare war, even though they were not happy with the conditions implemented by the English that the colonists had to abide by. In April 1775, King George’s troops advanced on Concord, Massachusetts. It was here where Paul Revere sounded the alarm while riding his horse through the streets announcing “the British are coming, the British are coming.” The Battle of Concord and its “shot heard round’ the world” marked the unofficial beginning of the 13 colonies’ war for freedom.

By June 1776, the Second Continental Congress’s efforts to work out its differences with England drew thin, and a committee was created in order to formally declare independence from Great Britain. The committee contained many of our nation’s founding fathers, including Thomas Jefferson, who headed the committee and wrote the first draft of the declaration; John Adams, who represented the colony of Massachusetts; and Benjamin Franklin, who represented Pennsylvania at the Continental Congress.

To make the final version of the declaration official, John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, signed the Declaration of Independence. It has been said that John Hancock signed his name “with great flourish” so “King George can read that without spectacles!”

In the following days after the Declaration of Independence was completed, the document representing our nation’s new-found freedom was read to eager crowds and could be heard in between the sounds of ringing church bells. The bell in Independence Hall, at the time known as the “Province Bell” and later named the “Liberty Bell,” was struck to signal our nation’s independence. Today, if you visit the bell in Philadelphia, you can read its inscription: “Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land Unto All the Inhabitants Thereof.”

The first Independence Day celebration took place July 4, 1777. Since then, traditions consisting of parades, picnics, and fireworks help us celebrate the birth of our nation. However you spend your 4<sup>th</sup> of July, remember those who are still fighting to protect our freedom today. Please keep these brave men and women in your thoughts and prayers. I hope you and your family have a safe and happy Independence Day.

If you have questions or comments about any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: [delbertscott@senate.mo.gov](mailto:delbertscott@senate.mo.gov).

*Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.*

