



Remembering Our Nation's Fight for Freedom

JEFFERSON CITY — Thomas Jefferson, our third U.S. president and primary author of the Declaration of Independence, wrote a letter in praise of the document for its 50th anniversary as he lay gravely ill and could not attend an anniversary celebration planned in Washington, D.C. In his letter dated in June of 1826, Jefferson expressed hope that the nation would never lose sight of why it must celebrate this marvelous document and significant milestone in American history. He said:

“May it be to the world, what I believe it will be...the signal of arousing men to burst the chains...and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. That form, which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man...For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them.”

Coincidentally, Jefferson died on the July 4, just days after penning the letter, and on the same day as another Founding Father and president — John Adams. (Five years later, President James Monroe also died on the Fourth. Calvin Coolidge, our 30th president, is the only president who was born on July 4, in 1872.)

But this country did not achieve its independence with just the signing of that bold statement in 1776. The blood, sweat and tears of our forefathers went into writing and then defending the Declaration. These men sacrificed everything they had, including their lives. The British charged some with treason, while others fought and died in the Revolutionary War. Many witnessed their homes and livelihoods taken from them and destroyed. Yet all stood proud and pledged their devotion to the cause of this new nation.

“For the support of this Declaration, with the firm reliance on the protection of the divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.” With the stroke of a pen, 56 men created the United States of America, the emblem of democracy and freedom across the globe.

Our forefathers gave us a nation that believes in its people — a government of the people and by the people — whose freedom will be defended against all enemies.

So while you celebrate this patriotic holiday filled with family, friends, food and fireworks, please take a moment to remember that our freedom came with a price and also remember to say a prayer for our military members and nation's leaders who are still defending our rights and freedoms today.

Happy Birthday, America!

If you have any 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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