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Karen Blanco  
Americanism  
Luncheon 3/1/2024

Hello, Everyone! It's lovely to be with you today.

Webster's Dictionary defines Americanism as "attachment or allegiance to the traditions, institutions, or ideals of the United States." In that spirit, let's honor our first President, George Washington, whose 292nd birthday was last week.

George Washington was born on Feb. 22, 1732 in Virginia, the oldest of six children. A tall and athletic youth, he loved hunting in the woods and riding his horse, when he was not doing farm chores.

He attended formal school for a total of only about 7 years, but he was an avid and serious reader and scholar over his lifetime. His father died when George was only 11 years old, leaving George's widowed mother to raise their children by herself.

As he matured, George decided to become a surveyor, since he had a talent for mathematics and mapmaking.

As a surveyor, George was a thrifty, self-made man who spent most of his wages on land. At one time, he owned 70,000 acres between the Potomac and Ohio Rivers.

Washington's military life began during the French and Indian War, when he was in his 20s. He fought for Britain against France for control of N. America.

Washington was well respected for his bravery during the war. Concerning one battle, he later wrote, "I luckily escaped without a wound, though I had four bullets through my coat and two horses shot under me."

After his war duties ended, Washington married widow Martha Custis, and adopted her two children as his own. They settled at Mt. Vernon, where Washington happily farmed, made business deals, and attended balls and fox hunts like other Virginians.

In 1775, he represented Virginia at the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, where he was elected Commander in Chief of the newly formed Continental Army. Although he was not a signer of the Declaration of Independence, he said he "hoped the document would inspire his troops to win the war for independence against England."

Washington overcame tremendous challenges with his Continental soldiers. His largest army was 20,000 men, compared to 50,000 British soldiers. Congress could not afford to arm, clothe, or feed the troops properly. There were times when the barefoot Continental troops raided beehives, and shot squirrels to keep from starving.

Finally, after 6 years of preparation and intense training, Washington's forces, with French help, defeated the British at Yorktown. Washington was hailed as the greatest hero of the American Revolution.

At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Washington was elected convention president. Although he mostly kept quiet, his dignified presence helped to minimize disputes and craft the new government.

To no one's surprise, he was elected to serve as our nation's first president under the new Constitution.

Sadly, George Washington passed away on Dec. 12, 1799, at the age of 67 from a throat infection, probably what we would today call "strep throat." He had been out on horseback for two days in cold weather, supervising activities at Mt. Vernon. He became increasingly ill, with laryngitis and a severe sore throat. In the following days, doctors were called, who performed all kinds of medical treatments of that time, but to no avail.

As his condition worsened, he reviewed his will. He told his secretary, Tobias Lear, "I find I am going, my breath cannot last long. I believed from the first that this disorder would prove fatal." He asked Mr. Lear to gather all of his military letters and papers, arrange his accounts, and settle his books.

At one point, Washington told the family physician, "Doctor, I die hard; but I am not afraid to go."

Washington died between 10 and 11 at night, with his wife Martha sitting at the foot of his bed.

Let's remember, admire, and emulate our courageous, dignified, and patriotic first President of the United States.

Americanism talk

April 5, 2024

Whenever I see Donald Trump give a speech at one of his rallies, I am reminded of former President Ronald Reagan. Granted, Mr. Trump can sometimes be a bit brash and offensive to some, unlike Mr. Reagan, with his title of The Great Communicator.

But, there are many similarities between the two men. Mr. Reagan came from the private sector, and was not a professional politician. He made a living with his God-given talents, through hard work and perseverance. Mr. Trump is also a private sector man, in the demanding world of real estate, where one needs common sense and the courage to pursue risky business opportunities.

Both outsiders to the Washington DC political scene, they each got involved in politics because of their love for America, and their desire to see America thrive.

Both men have demonstrated and still demonstrate, in the case of Mr. Trump, a deep and sincere love for America, along with an intense desire to preserve our freedoms and opportunities. Each man has shared his love and respect for America openly for all to hear and to see.

It would be wonderful to attend a Donald Trump rally, don't you agree? The music, the people dressed in red, white, and blue, hearing Mr. Trump tell how hard he will work to Make America Great Again. We need him, his talents, and his bold patriotism now more than ever.

When I was a graduate student at Cal State Northridge, I was fortunate to attend the last political rally that President Reagan gave during his re-election campaign. It was Nov. 5, 1984, and I went to Pierce College in Woodland Hills to hear him speak. I found a photo on the Internet of that rally, and it was just as I remember it. Lots of red, white, and blue decorations in the campus amphitheater, patriotic music, a sunny afternoon.

I sat on the hillside above the amphitheater, so I was able to see the President's motorcade drive up right behind the stage, watch Mr. Reagan climb up the few

steps to the stage, and give his speech. Right after the last bit of applause, the Secret Service hustled him off the stage, quickly bundled him back into the limo, and off he went.

The atmosphere in the rally was electric. There were large signs that read, "We are the Reagan generation." Mr. Reagan filled me with hope and encouragement when he spoke, with his patriotism and love of America spreading out over the large crowd. He unashamedly proclaimed the greatness of America. He reminded us of how fortunate we were to be Americans, and how this was the land of opportunity for us. All we needed to do was to work hard, persevere, follow the law, and never give up. He was a wonderful inspiration to me.

When I hear former President Trump speak now, I remember Mr. Reagan's encouraging and patriotic words. I hope to God that Mr. Trump wins four more years in the White House. We need him so badly now.

We in this room are all roughly the same age group, so we were "The Reagan Generation" in 1985. Now, we are Donald Trump supporters, and some of us call ourselves MAGA Republicans. I call myself a "proud MAGA Republican Trumpster," and I am speaking out to my younger family members about how we must re-elect former President Trump, if we want to preserve our precious freedoms.

In closing, let's stay strong and dedicated, let's keep fighting and working hard during this important election season. And let's take heart from these two final quotes:

President Reagan, in his Inaugural message as California governor in 1967, said,

"[Freedom] must be fought for, and defended constantly by each generation, for it comes only once to a people."

President Trump, on his Truth Social account, posted recently,

"When we win, the curtain closes on their corrupt reign, and the sun rises on a bright new future for America."

Karen Blanco

Americanism talk for May 3, 2024

Every year, I enjoy watching bald eagles in their nests via websites such as Friends of Big Bear Valley, and Explore.org. One can enjoy watching eagle pairs build or refurbish their nests, sit on their eggs, feed fish to the eaglets, and teach them to fly. The cameras are small and unobtrusive so as not to disturb the eagle families, and the nature views in the background are beautiful. I highly recommend this relaxing pastime -- just google "bald eagle cameras," and enjoy.

This made me think -- How did America come to choose the bald eagle for our national symbol, to use in our Great Seal? The story began in 1776, lasted 6 years, and involved several people's design ideas. The new Continental Congress first chose three of the Founding Fathers to come up with a Great Seal design.

Benjamin Franklin's design featured a Biblical scene with Moses and Pharaoh, while Thomas Jefferson's scene depicted the children of Israel and two Anglo-Saxon mythical figures. John Adams proposed a design depicting the mythical figure Hercules. Congress quickly nixed those ideas.

Two more committees, one in 1780 and the other in 1782, proposed two new designs, which were also rejected. Finally, the Secretary of the Continental Congress, a man named Charles Thomson, was asked for his ideas. It was he who made sure that the majestic American Bald Eagle was the focus of the front of the Great Seal.

As a short aside, one famous story tells of Benjamin Franklin preferring the turkey as the national symbol, rather than the eagle. In a letter, Franklin wrote, "...I wish the bald eagle had not been chosen the representative of our country. He is a bird of bad moral character...The turkey is, in comparison, ... though a little vain and silly, a bird of courage..." Franklin never explained how he came to those particular observations and later, he actually proposed using a rattlesnake as our national symbol.

At any rate, Thomson's bald eagle design was gratefully accepted by Congress and, in three short months, was put into use.

On the front of the design, the eagle holds a banner that reads "E pluribus Unum," which roughly translates to "Out of many, one," and describes the formation of our nation out of 13 separate colonies. Covering the eagle's breast lies a shield, showing 13 red and white stripes, which stand for valor and purity.

A blue region on the shield represents vigilance, perseverance, and justice. A cloud floats above the eagle's head, with 13 stars, again representing the formation of our new nation from the original colonies. The eagle clutches a bundle of 13 arrows in its left talon, representing war, and an olive branch in its right talon, which represents peace.

On June 20, 1782, Congress approved and finalized the first Great Seal of the United States. The Presidential Seal resembles the Great Seal in that it also features an eagle. In 1945, President Harry Truman officially mandated the use of the eagle in the Presidential Seal.

A native species of North America, the bald eagle is an impressive bird, with a wingspan of 7 feet, who often reaches speeds of over 30 miles per hour when in flight. It builds its nest in tall trees near bodies of water, using large sticks, grass, and feathers. These nests can span 10 feet in diameter. In Native American culture, the eagle is a sacred being associated with wisdom, courage, and the Divine Being. When European settlers arrived in America, they were impressed by the bald eagle's grace and majesty.

Currently, these are very hard times for our country, when so many internal and external forces are trying to dismantle our freedoms, destroy our economy, and dishearten patriots like us, who love America so much.

Let's keep fighting for America, and let's take strength for this fight from the majestic bald eagle, the symbol of our best ideals --- freedom, strength, perseverance, and courage.

Karen Blanco

Americanism talk for July 5, 2024

Theodore Roosevelt once wrote, "Americanism means the virtues of courage, honor, justice, truth, sincerity, and hardihood -- the virtues that made America."

Last month, we commemorated the 80th anniversary of D-Day, June 6, 1944, when some 156,000 American, British, and Canadian soldiers landed on the beaches of Normandy, France.

At the time, the D-Day invasion was the largest naval, air, and land operation in history.

The website [History.com](https://www.history.com) shows a short clip of Mr. Frank DeVita who, at 19 years old, served as a gunner's mate on Omaha Beach. He describes the moment of landing with a small boat full of young men, many of them teenagers. DeVita's job was to drop the ramp on the boat as soon as they came near the beach.

As they approached, DeVita could hear the Germans' bullets hitting the raised ramp, which served as a shield for the nervous soldiers. When it came time for him to lower the ramp, he froze and could not do it, until the boatswain yelled, "Damn, DeVita, drop the ramp!", and he reluctantly did.

The first 7 or 8 young men who left the boat were, as DeVita poignantly says, "mowed down like cutting wheat." As the day progressed, his job changed from letting them off the boat, to pulling the wounded and fallen soldiers back into the boat.

May we never forget those brave men who fought for freedom so far from home. Their bravery is indescribable, and their stories are heartbreaking, admirable, and profound.

Here we are, 80 years later, fighting not a military war, but a war nonetheless, for the future of our constitutional republic. I understand that there is little comparison of the grueling, horrendous WWII, to the modern battle we are in now. However, I want us to take heart from those brave soldiers fighting back then, and continue to fight courageously today for our great country.

An American writer named Scott S. Powell has authored over 250 published articles, and has over 25 years of experience as a founder, entrepreneur, and leader in several industries. One of his articles, which can be found on [thefederalist.com](https://thefederalist.com) (for April 29 of this year) outlines the Four Stages of Subversion, used by Communist dictators from China and the former Soviet Union, as described by defectors from those countries. Powell says we are now on the last stage. Hence, as you know, we are in dire straits.

Briefly, the four stages, in order, are: Demoralization, Disorientation, Crisis, and Normalization. They comprise a systematic plan used by Communists to take down countries, and to establish a communist-type regime.

Stage 1, Demoralization, seeks to undermine America's foundational beliefs, customs, habits, and traditions. The main target is the family, as well as our loyalty and love for our country. Our enemies within denigrate our founders and heroes. The goal of this stage is to disconnect us from the virtuous past, and keep us from assessing truth.

Stage 2, Disorientation, is a stage where the masses feel bewildered and helpless. The Covid pandemic with its lockdowns, the destruction of our statues and memorials, and riots and lawlessness where police seem to stand down -- all these have served to confuse us, so that we don't recognize our own country.

Stage 3, Crisis, involves the 2020 election irregularities, along with media censorship and propaganda thwarting discussion among us. Lately, of course, "lawfare" against Donald Trump, as well as other examples. The American people are now seeing that large parts of our justice system resemble those of a "banana republic."

Stage 4, Normalization, the final stage, is when the new world of communist, global, and elite control will be normalized. We are still in Stage 3, the Crisis stage, rapidly moving toward a time when the constitutional republic that is the United States will be gone. What can finalize our place in this last stage?

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According to Mr. Powell, our continued wide open borders, limitations on our free speech, rigged elections, the re-writing of our history, the inability of our citizens to access information -- the list goes on and on.

We are fighting hard to keep our country as we have known it -- safe, strong, free, and stable. We are all feeling discouraged now, and many of us are tired of the fight. It seems as though we conservatives are always on the defensive, never winning, being driven to exhaustion and despair.

But we must not stop, at all, for any reason. We must find ways we can each contribute our own parts to the fight.

We the people are awake, and aware, and we are fighting back. We are turning the tables now on the elite destroyers of our constitutional republic, so let's keep going!

We cannot stop now, we cannot tire, we cannot give up. Our constitutional republic was founded on Judeo-Christian principles, so let's always remember that God's strength and guidance are with us, and He will not desert us.

Thank you.

Karen Blanco  
Americanism talk  
8/16/2024  
Declaration of Independence

The First Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in 1774, to discuss the troubles the colonies had been experiencing with Britain for years. The thirteen colonies' grievances against King George III included no trial by jury, being required to quarter British armed troops in their homes, and taxation without representation. As stated by the colonists in the Declaration of Independence, "He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people."

In April 1775, war erupted at Lexington and Concord between the colonies and England, so the American leaders met again in Philadelphia. At that time, most Americans hoped that peace could be reached with England, and that the colonies would return to British rule.

However, by spring 1776, the colonists had suffered the King's abuses for long enough. As the Declaration reads in Paragraph 2, "The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object, the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states."

On June 7, 1776, at the Second Continental Congress, a delegate from Virginia named Richard Henry Lee proposed that the colonies absolve themselves from all allegiance and political connection to the British Crown. Mr. Lee said, "...these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states..."

Many of the delegates were shocked -- they had discussed independence in private, but never as formally presented in Congress. They knew that declaring independence was the easy part -- winning it from powerful England might be impossible.

Congress delayed voting on independence until early July. A five man committee of John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert R. Livingston, Roger Sherman, and Thomas Jefferson set about producing a paper, explaining America's desire for

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freedom. Jefferson wrote the Declaration in two weeks, then Franklin and Adams suggested a few changes.

For the proposal to be approved, a majority of the colonies -- 7 out of 13 -- had to vote for independence. The Founding Fathers wanted a unanimous vote, otherwise the colonies would appear to be split, and fighting among themselves.

How could the new nation survive with one or more colonies still loyal to England?

On July 1, 1776, Congress debated, and took a trial vote. Nine colonies favored the measure. Over the next 24 hours, a series of events occurred, which facilitated the unanimous vote desired. Men in favor of independence convinced undecided delegates that all the colonies must stand together. One Delaware delegate named Caesar Rodney even rode his horse eighty miles non-stop, overnight and in rainy weather, back to Philadelphia, to swing Delaware's vote over to independence.

Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. That evening, John Dunlap, the official printer to the Congress, printed about 200 paper bulletins of the Declaration, called "broad-sides." These copies had only the signatures of John Hancock, President of the Congress, and Secretary Charles Thomson. The broadsides were distributed among members of Congress, to various committees, assemblies, and to commanders of the Continental Army, so that the colonists could see the important document.

On July 19, 1776, the Declaration was engrossed on parchment, making it an official document, and it was signed by most members of Congress on August 2, 1776.

How did King George III respond to the Declaration? On October 31, 1776, the king acknowledged in a speech before Parliament that all was not going well for Britain in its war with the colonies, now known as the United States. He called the

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signers "daring and desperate," saying that, since the revolutionary leaders only wanted "dominion and power ... they have now openly renounced all allegiance to the Crown, and all political connection with this country."

King George III further declared, "No people ever enjoyed more happiness, or lived under a milder government, than those now revolted provinces."

There were attempts at reconciliation with the new United States, with the stipulation that they remain "subject to the Crown of Great Britain." But, the Americans demanded independence.

By placing their names on the Declaration of Independence, the 56 brave signers were targeted for special punishment by the British. Twelve of the signers' homes were burned, and nearly 20 of them lost many of their possessions. Some historians maintain that at least 9 signers died, due to the hardships they suffered during the Revolution.

Yet, not one of the signers ever publicly changed his stance on independence. The signers gallantly kept their brave promise, as stated in the Declaration's final sentence:

"And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our Sacred Honor."

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Americanism Talk  
September 6, 2024  
The US Constitution

Eleven years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, after shedding precious blood to gain its freedom, our young country appeared close to collapse.

America's first constitution, called the Articles of Confederation, gave Congress power to make rules, and to request money from the states. However, Congress had no enforcement powers, could neither regulate commerce, nor print money. The entire US Army contained only several hundred men, and was very weak.

The states bickered among themselves over war pensions, territory, trade, and taxation. In the fall of 1786, George Washington wrote to James Madison, "The superstructure we have been seven years raising at the expense of so much blood and treasure, must fall. We are fast verging to anarchy and confusion!"

Alexander Hamilton helped to convince Congress to convene state delegates once again, this time to revise the Articles of Confederation. The Constitutional Convention assembled in Philadelphia, over the course of a sweltering hot summer, from May 25 to Sept. 17, 1787, to hammer out a better government for our nation.

Oh, to have been a fly on the wall of the Pennsylvania State House at that time! To begin the proceedings, the delegates shuttered the windows so that outsiders could not hear their debates, and they swore secrecy, so that they could speak freely among themselves.

Thus ensued four long, hot summer months of arguments, debates, compromises, re-writing, and more compromises. It was a gathering of distinguished men who represented a cross section of 18th century American leaders. Most of them were well educated, active participants in their state governments, as well as in national affairs. Almost all of them had participated in the Revolution, and at least 23 had served in the Continental Army, most of them in command positions.

Of the 39 signers of the Constitution, six men had signed the Declaration of Independence, and five had signed the Articles of Confederation. Twenty-two

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signers were trained attorneys, and eleven individuals were businessmen, merchants, or shippers. Eleven owned or managed large farms or plantations. A few of the men had been born into leading Colonial families, while others were self-made men who rose from humble beginnings. They had diverse educational backgrounds: Benjamin Franklin received scant formal education, and was largely self-taught. Conversely, about half of the men had attended college, and a few held advanced degrees.

As a whole, they were relatively youthful -- the average age was 45 years old. The youngest delegate was 26 years old, and Mr. Franklin was in his eighties.

It would have been fabulous to have observed these dedicated patriots work so diligently to craft the new and better government for the United States.

Briefly, there were three main topics of heated debate. First, how should they construct the national legislature? Should representation be defined by a state's geography, or its population? Clashes ensued between the more populous and less populous states about the best number of legislators to have.

The second area of debate involved the role of the Executive Branch. Should the Presidency be held by one man, or divided among several different men? How long a term in office? How many terms allowed?

The third thorny issue was slavery, which was dying out in the North, but growing in the South. Should Congress ban slavery outright? It was agreed to table that volatile issue until a later date.

Laboriously, energetically, point by detailed point, the delegates created the new Constitution, a feat that George Washington called, "little short of a miracle." One final committee condensed 23 articles into seven in fewer than three days. The final version was complete, and was voted on by the delegates.

It was officially inscribed on parchment by Jacob Shallus, a professional engrosser or penman, who copied the document clearly and accurately in about 40 hours. He was paid \$30 for his efforts.

On September 17, it was ready for signing. Thirty- nine of the 42 men present signed the new US Constitution. George Washington signed first, as president of the convention, followed by each state delegation, descending from North to South. Several copies were printed, and it was published in newspapers for public review. The Constitution was then ratified by a series of state conventions held in 1787 and 1788.

In conclusion, as Republicans, we are working enormously hard to elect Donald Trump in a few weeks, a proven President who is committed to Make America Great Again. He strives to preserve our great and special nation, created in part by our tremendous US Constitution. Mr. Trump is a true patriot.

Along those lines, in November 1787, two months after the signing of the Constitution, another great American patriot by the name of Benjamin Franklin wrote to a friend, "Our new Constitution is now established, everything seems to promise it will be durable." Franklin continued, "But, in this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes."

As we all know, death and taxes are unavoidable, to be sure, but our job in this particular space of time in US history is to fight as hard as we can, each in our own way, to defend and protect our precious Constitution.

Let's continue to help each other to summon the energy, strength, and commitment needed to save our precious country now. Let's keep going!

Karen Blanco  
Americanism Talk  
The Bill of Rights  
Oct. 4, 2024

I have always enjoyed learning about American history, chiefly because of our unbelievably young age as a country, compared with other world nations. We are built on concepts and ideas, not on lineages of royalty or strongmen. At least, that is how we were set up.

As dedicated Republicans, we are working overtime to save our republic from the actions of those who would snuff out our freedoms in an instant.

To me, the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the US Constitution, is a beautiful document. It takes only about one minute and forty seconds to read it, and yet it is brimming with timeless, profound, and irreplaceable protections for the American citizen.

Each of the amendments is a jewel in its own right. The First, of course, with its promises of free speech, free press, freedom of assembly, and religious freedom. The Fourth, with its protections against unreasonable search and seizure, and no warrants without probable cause.

The Fifth and Sixth, with their emphases on due process of law, the right to a speedy and public trial, and to legal counsel for one's defense. The Seventh, with the right to trial by jury. The Eighth, with no excessive bail or fines, or cruel and unusual punishment.

Each amendment is simple, easy to understand, and absolutely crucial for our society to remain free, against an overbearing government trying endlessly to manage and control us to their liking.

The roots of the Bill of Rights point back in time to England's King John who, under pressure from rebellious barons, signed and sealed the Magna Carta in 1215. This document protected his subjects from royal abuse of power.

In 1689, England's Parliament adopted a Bill of Rights, and charters in the early American colonies gave colonists the same privileges and rights as if they still lived in England.

At the writing of the US Constitution, some of its supporters realized that a separate bill of rights was necessary to achieve full ratification by all the states. James Madison drafted the amendments comprising the Bill of Rights and, within six months of the states' receiving them, nine states had ratified them. The Bill of Rights became part of the US Constitution on Dec. 15, 1791.

Before ratification, in late 1787-1788, controversy had raged in Congress about the need for a Bill of Rights. Endless discussions and debates had taken place in taverns, coffee houses, newspapers, and at ratifying conventions.

Trusted friends Thomas Jefferson and James Madison corresponded with each other during this time of controversy. Jefferson was 3000 miles away in France at the time, so each letter took 6-8 weeks to cross the Atlantic. The exchange of their ideas was hampered by these delays.

When he wrote to Madison, Jefferson used a code he devised for privacy, but he was not consistent in this practice. Hence, he was horrified when certain of his letters were published, as he never wished to be "the focus of a partisan brawl" (Bernstein 77).

Here are a few wonderful snippets of their letters to each other.

Jefferson wrote to Madison in 1787: "Let me add that a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth ... and what no just government should refuse." Jefferson also wrote, "I am not a friend to a very energetic government. It is always oppressive."

Madison to Jefferson in 1788: "My own opinion has always been in favor of a bill of rights... to counteract the [government] impulses of interest and passion."

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Madison also wrote of the danger of a government which might strive for "the subversion of liberty," emphasizing the need to guard against this danger.

Jefferson to Madison in 1789: "The Declaration of rights is like all other human blessings ... alloyed with some inconveniences ... But the good in this instance vastly outweighs the evil."

A final timeless quote from Jefferson to Madison in 1789: "Half a loaf is better than no bread. If we cannot secure all our rights, let us secure what we can."

In conclusion, the original US Constitution has been amended several times. But the Bill of Rights has never been amended.

Individual liberty. Limited government. The rule of law.

These are the precious concepts embedded in our Bill of Rights, which we fight so hard to protect. So, let's keep fighting!

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Karen Blanco  
Americanism Talk  
Nov. 1, 2024 Luncheon

On Veterans Day, held each year on November 11, we honor our selfless patriots who have served our country in war and peace. This national holiday is largely intended to thank living veterans for their sacrifices.

Originally called Armistice Day, it commemorated the end of World War I. The term "armistice" comes from a Latin word meaning "a stopping of arms."

On November 11, 1918, World War I came to a close when the Allied Powers signed a cease fire agreement with Germany. This led to an armistice, initiated at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. Hence, the holiday's occurrence in the month of November.

One year later, on November 11, 1919, President Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation, commemorating the end of the World War I fighting, as Armistice Day. In issuing the proclamation, Wilson said, "To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service."

In 1938, Congress recognized Armistice Day as an official holiday. Unfortunately, World War II and the Korean War then occurred so, on June 1, 1954, Congress changed the title from "Armistice" to "Veterans" so that American veterans of all wars would be honored.

On October 8, 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed Thursday, November 11 to be the official Veterans Day holiday. He wrote, "On that day, let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom... Let us consecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace, so that their efforts shall not have been in vain."

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan spoke at Arlington National Cemetery on Veterans Day. He honored American veterans, reminding us that, "... the living

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have a responsibility to remember the conditions that led to the wars in which our heroes died."

Reagan continued, "Peace fails when we forget that our Republic is based on firm principles ... that have real meaning, [hence], we are the last best hope of man on Earth."

Reagan asked his audience to "pray for freedom and justice and a more stable world."

Finally, last year on Veterans Day, Donald Trump, the man we hope and pray will be elected into the presidency next week, wrote on Truth Social: "To our heroic veterans, I am grateful for your service to our country...The full measure of your sacrifice and your family's dedication in support of your service ... will never be forgotten."

President Trump continued, "On this Veterans Day and always, may God bless you and your family ... and may He bless and uphold the United States of America. Make America Great Again!"

A heartfelt thank you to the special veterans who are with us today. We honor and respect you immensely. God bless you and your families!

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