



## **‘TIS THE SEASON OF GRATITUDE**

Our Founding Fathers gave us a form of government that has withstood wars, financial crises, weak presidents and difficulties with the legislative and judicial branches. We have just witnessed our constitutional process in action. The power of the citizen’s vote. Our Democracy in a Republic has been messy from the beginning. As George Washington, then the commander of the Continental Army said in his Farewell Orders to his army on November 2, 1783:

“Who, that was not a witness to the Revolutionary War, could imagine that men who came from the different parts of the continent, strongly disposed to despise and quarrel with each other, would instantly become but one patriotic band of brothers.”

And indeed they fought together: woodsmen, farmers, hunters, tradesmen, merchants, the educated and the uneducated. In their hearts was a desire for freedom from the monarchy and a desire to be free to form a new kind of government, unseen in the world’s known history. The heart of the American Patriot was born.

Recently I traveled to Philadelphia, not for the first time, and entered the room in Independence Hall where the founders met to create our government. All of the original colonies were represented. Their purpose was to consider the case for independence. Together they pledged to each other, “their lives, fortunes and their sacred honor.”

As I stood in the Assembly Room of the Pennsylvania State House, now known as Independence Hall, and recalled that the Declaration of Independence was drafted here, I was struck by the power and sacredness of the room. The Declaration explains to the world why the Thirteen Colonies regarded themselves as independent, sovereign states no longer subject to British Colonial rule. The 56 Delegates ratified the Declaration on July 4, 1776.

It is important to note that the Constitutional Convention, assembled in May of 1787, in the same Assembly Room where the Declaration of Independence was drafted, worked through a long, hot summer with windows shuttered so that those present could speak freely. The Founders bypassed the State Legislatures, reasoning that their members would be reluctant to give up power to a national government. The men present were as diverse in opinion as American citizens are today. They were federalists, liberals and conservatives, those who believed it was their duty to end the abuses of parliament and some who believed that imperial sovereignty should be held by a new government. The diverse concerns have been part of our history and the foundation of our way of government which has endured a lot in almost 250 years. The Constitution was ratified in 1788, and remains the supreme law of the land today.

In two years, our nation will celebrate the 250th Birthday of America called the Semiquincentennial! (Please see attached Governor DeSantis's Executive Order ) Our founding Patriots need to be honored for the wonderful government that they gave us and for their many sacrifices. Okaloosa County was honored to receive the first America 250! Patriot Marker in Florida. This marker celebrates the brave Patriots who founded our nation and can be found in Women Veterans Park on Okaloosa Island. These markers are placed across the nation in celebration of our nation's Semiquincentennial.

As we approach Christmas, let us remember a Christmas of long ago, when, in 1776, George Washington and the Continental Army crossed the Delaware River during a brutal snow storm. A few hours later Washington attacked Trenton, defeated the Hessians, and turned the tide of war. The misery of these soldiers cannot be understated.

I recently finished reading *A Memoir of a Revolutionary Soldier* written by Joseph Plumb Martin. This is the only first-person account of what it was like to be a Revolutionary War Soldier. I wish every American citizen, and those on the path to citizenship, had the opportunity to read this book to learn about the misery and hunger experienced by those who fought for the freedoms we enjoy. Did you know we have two Revolutionary War Soldiers buried in Okaloosa County, Privates Snowden and Horne?

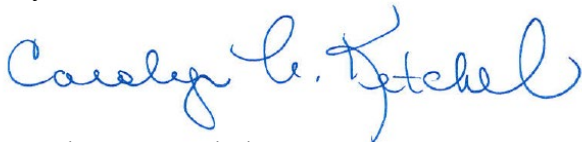
Standing in the presence the Liberty Bell, framed by the Continental Hall in the background, I thought 'let freedom ring' and the words of the song "America" came to me,

"Our fathers' God to Thee, Author of Liberty, to Thee we sing; long may our land be bright with freedom's Holy Light, protect us by Thy might, Great God our King. (Fourth verse by Samuel Francis Smith).

As Ben Franklin, the oldest of the Delegates, left the Constitutional Convention stairs in 1787, he was approached by a well-known socialite, Elizabeth Willing Powel, who asked him what did you give us a Republic or a Monarchy? His famous response, "A Republic if you can keep it." These words haunt us or at least should, because our fight to keep our Republic continues today by American citizens.

Merry Christmas!  
It is an honor and privilege to serve as your commissioner.

My Sincere Thanks,



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