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Wishing You a Meaningful Independence Day

By Pat Duncan

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Millions of Americans peacefully protested our wannabe dictator on June 14. With that accomplishment behind us, we can—and must—now plan for more days of action intended to wake up millions more people to Trump’s disrespect for the Constitution and the rule of law. In preparation for the next big nationwide protest, consider regarding your Fourth of July gathering as an opportunity to remind your friends and families of the meaning of the Declaration signed on July 4, 1776 and its relevance to the abuse of power that is going on in our federal government today.

The Declaration of Independence was about the colonists’ commitment to separating themselves from a mad king. It listed these complaints: cutting off trade with all parts of the world; imposing taxes without the people’s consent; depriving many people of the benefits of trial by jury; and transporting some “beyond Seas” to be tried for alleged offenses. Sound familiar? In just his first four months in office, Trump has recklessly messed with global trade by imposing tariffs that effectively raise taxes on us, detained people without due process, and transported some of those people to faraway countries.

The Declaration asserted that the king “has erected a multitude of new offices and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.” How can we not think of Trump’s invention called the Department of Government Efficiency and its swarms of disruptors set loose on hundreds of thousands of federal employees with the purpose of ending their careers and illegally terminating programs funded by Congress? The Declaration also stated that the king “has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our Legislatures.” Trump’s deployment of the California National Guard without that state’s governor’s agreement comes to mind.

The Declaration of Independence was a justification for the Revolutionary War, but a revolution is not what I am encouraging. What ultimately resulted from the patriots’ victory in the Revolutionary War was the United States Constitution, respect for which has allowed our country to thrive for nearly 250 years and to be a leader among democracies for a century. Adherence to the Constitution is what I am urging. But the administration under Trump’s second term started—in the opinion of many judicial experts—violating that Constitution and our laws in January and has continued to do so frequently. Courts will decide, ultimately, on the constitutionality and/or legality of his acts, but such rulings come too late to prevent countless cases of misery, financial hardship, and irreversible harm.

So far, the Republican-led Congress hasn’t stood up to Trump, even though Congress has the power of the purse, and Trump cannot withhold funding that Congress appropriated. Nor

are Republicans publicly complaining about the dangerous policies of the Trump administration, such as the on-again-off-again tariffs placed on our trading partners, and Trump's egregious corruption, carried out in broad daylight for all to see. We need to change that. Our democracy relies on its citizens to call out injustices and engage with our elected officials to voice our concerns.

Our power to influence governance by complaining to Congress is extremely important to exercise at this time in our history, when presidents are protected from criminal prosecution for official acts, and Congress refuses, so far, to call for impeachment. From now until Trump leaves office, we have an obligation to call or email our senators and congresspeople weekly, at least, to tell them to rein Trump in and to vote against bills that are disastrous for this country. The staffs of our elected officials keep track of our calls/emails, and if enough constituents keep voicing their concerns and thereby keep the pressure on, a sufficient number of officials will do what we ask or be voted out of office.

On the Fourth of July, consider engaging your friends in conversation about the parallels between a British tyrant's actions that provoked the Declaration and the actions of our current tyrant. Connect the dots between the Declaration and our Constitution. Raise the fact that Trump violates his oath of office every day—if you count his abuse of his position to sell cryptocurrency and merchandise. Ask your friends to keep calling their elected representatives and to attend peaceful protests. Suggest that they wave an American flag at protests to symbolize our reverence for our nation despite our disdain for its current president. And have a happy and safe Independence Day. Here are some links to exercise your freedoms: 5Calls.org, [Contact Your Lawmakers | Democratic Party of Lee County, FL](#).