
THE KANSAS CITY KANSAN

Post-Independence Day Blues

There's so much build up for it. There are t-shirts with flags on them to purchase. Firework stands on nearly every corner to peruse. And then there are the hotdogs and ice cream---and possibly even a trip to the lake. Finally, in one night, it's all over. So maybe it is not quite so dramatic for everyone. It is not the same as the post-Christmas letdown you might say, but for me it's a big deal; it's the post-independence day blues.



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This year my annual 4th of July celebration started early. A couple of weeks before the holiday I traveled out to Denver, Colorado. It was there that I attended my first ATF party. The ATF party is an annual event hosted by Jon Caldara of the Independence Institute, a Colorado-based think tank. This year nearly 200 people came to celebrate the right to partake in alcohol, tobacco, and firearms---“vices” that the nanny state seeks to take away from the people. I will admit that my first time shooting a firearm---and hitting three out of five clay pigeons---was more intoxicating than my single glass of wine, but it was more than a party of consumption; it was a celebration of freedom.

As we wind down from the “high” of shooting off all those fireworks this year and the party buzz of the holiday, it's important to not let the celebration fizzle out with that last sparkler. Everyday we should remain cognizant of the rights and freedoms we enjoy because we live in a country that recognizes that individuals possess the right to live freely.

But those freedoms should not be taken for granted. If we allow them to, they will fizzle out as well.

Today we live in the luxury time of fast food, reality TV, and constant electronic communication. It's easy to let ourselves get caught up in those aspects of life, but brace yourself, even those things are regulated by government and they could be regulated and restricted even more than they are now. So, even if you don't particularly care about the latest Supreme Court case or what's going on in the state capitol, you really should.

The bottom line is that government is involved in nearly every aspect of our lives, and it is up to us to decide how much intrusion we are going to allow. And it's not unpatriotic to question our government and to push it to remain accountable to the people. Actually, it's unpatriotic not to do so.

The founders of this country fought hard to create a government of the people, for the people, and by the people. But if the “people” stop paying attention then this all falls to the wayside.

Next time you are watching international news have an awareness of the stories of people in other countries fighting hard just to secure the right to fairly elect their leaders. We all know that in many other countries people lack the same basic rights that we have, but do we really think about that? On television when we see the smile of the person who is at the poll booth, which is usually surrounded by guards you might notice, finally able to have a voice in their government, that should not only touch us, but also motivate us.

We take it for granted that we have a representative government where we have a say in who is elected, and who governs us. We must exercise that right, but the responsibility does not end at the ballot box. In order to truly appreciate and ensure the continuation of our representative government, it requires us to remain vigilant. How do we know if our representatives are truly representing us if we do not pay attention to the policies they are supporting, and just as importantly, fighting?

Some people do not think that government affects them, but it does, it affects everyone. Fortunately, none of us had to fight in the war for Independence or come up with a form of government that could unite people and ensure freedoms. But, that does not diminish our duty to ensure that this country remains great.

The ATF party is over and all my fireworks have been used, but as I combat this post-independence day blues, I realize that every day should be a celebration, because we live in a country where we are free and prosperous---let's make sure that continues.

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