



Office of Ellis County Judge Todd Little
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“Fourth of July Message from Ellis County Judge Todd Little”

Intended as a “Letters to the Editor” Submission

“The Most American Word,” a Special Fourth of July Message from Ellis County Judge Todd Little:

“Hearing the words ‘Fourth of July’ conjures images in my mind of glimmering fireworks, backyard barbeques, and family time. I am grateful to live in the United States of America, and despite all that we have seen happening in our country lately, I think that most Americans are still proud of the reasons why we celebrate Independence Day.

Independence for the United States in 1776, of course, is the origin of our celebration, but I think the idea of ‘independence’ is not fully understood and appreciated by the public today. America is associated with many important words – ‘freedom,’ ‘justice,’ and ‘strength,’ just to name a few – but could it be that the most American word is actually ‘independence?’

Around the world, nearly all people seek to be ‘free.’ All nations seek to be ‘just.’ All governments seek to be ‘strong.’ Yet, it was only in America that people first sought to be ‘independent.’

On that fateful morning in the summer of 1776, Americans declared their national independence. They fought and sacrificed for that independence for five more years. For the next one-hundred fifty years, Americans pressed onward into the Western frontier on a quest for individualized independence – self-sufficiency for each and every pioneering spirit – and all the while, the tired, the poor, and the huddled masses of Europe immigrated to the United States to establish an independent life for their families.

In the middle of the 19th century, we suffered through our bloodiest conflict over the issue of independence – the South seeking independence for itself, and the North seeking independence for those in bondage. In the middle of the 20th century, we passed the baton to nations seeking independence in other ways – independence from regimes, and independence from totalitarianism – and we Americans committed our blood and treasure to upholding this right of independence for all freedom-loving nations.

As Americans, we are a fiercely independent culture as well. It was in America that women were first able to assert independence from their traditional role, if so desired, and it was in America that our youths first developed an independent culture of ‘rock & roll.’ For better or for worse, we are a people that won’t tolerate the idea of social constraints and predetermined destiny.

As Americans, we have done and continue to do all of these things because we know, almost by instinct, that independence IS freedom. ‘Independence’ means that each and every person is the master of his or her own destiny. ‘Independence’ means that each and every person is beholden to no worldly entity – only to God.

Independence Day is not merely the celebration of a specific historical event on July 4th, 1776. It is a celebration of the American essence – who we are, and why we do what we do. As we celebrate this Fourth of July, may we strive to be the kind of bold Americans that our predecessors were – the kind of ‘rugged individualists’ who wouldn’t have known how to ‘bend the knee’ to malignant forces even if they had wanted to (and they certainly didn’t!).

As Ellis County Judge, I am beyond proud of this community and all the wonderful people that I enjoy the privilege and honor of representing. In Texas, and especially in Ellis County, independence is a lifestyle. We work hard to build the things that matter for our families and our neighbors. In moments of hardship, we turn to each other – not to those who make promises, but with strings attached – and we always support one another in the ongoing effort to build a bright future for ourselves and our posterity.

May each and every one of you have a FUN-tastic Fourth of July – however you choose to spend it in your own, independent way. As for me, I plan to enjoy a backyard barbeque with my family in Red Oak, and then I will enjoy taking them to watch spectacular, glimmering fireworks – our Independence Day tradition.

May God bless you, and may God bless America!”

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