

The Jester Group
Private Wealth Management

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July 4, 2018

Dear Friends,

Thank you again for the privilege of sharing my thoughts and love of the 4th of July with you in this annual Independence Day letter. Our nation is a wonderful treasure to all of us and I hope that every one of us is making sure our children and grandchildren grow up with that same sense of hope and gratitude that we have been blessed to experience.

It was 242 years ago this July 4th that the Declaration of Independence announced the birth of our country to the world. Written primarily by Thomas Jefferson, this amazing document of only 1337 words is still as timely as ever because its call to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness remains our national goal. Its proclamation that all of us are created equal continues to shine a bright light on our dark places where prejudice, hatred and fear seek to deny that equality.

The Declaration of Independence is full of hope and optimism and it launched a nation unafraid to dream big dreams. Jefferson's words were meant to inspire greatness and break the cords of oppression; they were positive and uplifting and remain so today. I think that most Americans believe that his words must still guide our national actions, aspirations, and conversations. Thomas Paine's words that "we have it in our power to begin the world over again" are still alive for us now.

However, forging a nation built on these optimistic principles did not come easy. For the next 11 years—from 1776 to 1787—the fledgling collection of 13 colonies fought the Revolutionary War against Great Britain and tried to become a unified body. Their guide was "The Articles of Confederation" which tried to make every colony happy but gave no authority or centralization of power to the new nation. Thus it was that in 1787 a Constitutional Convention was called in Philadelphia to come up with a plan to govern our country. What resulted, mainly due to the work and brilliance of James Madison, was unlike any such document produced either before or after that May to September gathering.

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From the Constitution came our Bill of Rights, our three-prong system of government, and the checks and balances that are to exist between the Executive Branch (the Presidency), the Legislative Branch (Congress), and the Judicial Branch (The Supreme Court). So it was that in 1789 George Washington was sworn in as our first President, Congress gathered, and the Court Justices were appointed.

The Constitution has been an amazing blueprint and roadmap for our republic and our democracy. The genius of Madison is that the Constitution was written in a time when the world was so different than it is now, and still he has kept us anchored as a nation, regardless of the occupants of the White House, the actions or inactions of Congress, and the rulings of the Supreme Court. Whether Divine Providence or pure coincidence, if Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Franklin, Adams, Hamilton and a host of others, had not been together in that one small window of time, we might not have ever become The United States of America.

It has not always been smooth sailing for our nation. Perhaps our greatest test came in 1861 when the southern states seceded from the Union and the Civil War began at the Battle of Ft. Sumter, South Carolina on April 12th. Only a few months before President Abraham Lincoln in his first Inaugural Address, anticipating the War, spoke these words:

“We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies.
Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection.
The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

“The better angels of our nature” call on us always to remember that we must be friends not enemies. The optimism of our founders encourages us to live with hope that leads us upward and onward, and to overcome the tactics of fear mongers who preach conspiracy theories that divide us. It is “the better angels” among us who point us to what the Preamble to the Constitution calls “a more perfect Union.” Clearly Madison and his colleagues knew that aspiring to “a more perfect Union” would keep us moving forward and would make us a better society and nation.

That is our challenge in these tumultuous times. Over the years the politics of fear have often gripped American life. It was certainly the case during the Great Depression when Franklin Roosevelt reminded us once again of “the better angels of our nature” when he said, “this great nation will endure and will thrive...the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Roosevelt understood that leaders such as Hitler and others, both before and after, have manipulated the fears of the people to polarize them and to propagate hate and insecurity since time began. We saw this in 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia when the KKK once again reared its ugly head, yet there was no Roosevelt or Lincoln to voice a reminder that “We must not be enemies” and that the “better angels of our nature” must prevail.

All of us have a responsibility to serve as these “better angels,” to keep our country moving towards “a more perfect union” where there is equality, liberty, and justice for all. Let us pledge ourselves anew this 4th of July that we will live by the hope and optimism of the Declaration of Independence and remain true to the Constitution.

Happy 4th of July, dear friends,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gene Jester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

C. Gene Jester, CFP®, CPWA®, CRPS®
Director