



July 4, 2020

Dear Friends,

More than 20 years ago I shared my first reflection on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday with you. Writing that letter has become an annual tradition and if you are new clients of The Jester Group or new professional associates of ours, we welcome you to this tradition.

While we often think of The Declaration of Independence as the single spark that ignited the 13 Colonies to declare war on King George and the British Empire, it is very important to remember that the fires of revolution began with the simmering coals of protest which started more than a dozen years before Jefferson penned The Declaration of Independence.

Following the end of the French and Indian Wars in 1764, the British began looking for ways to keep their standing army back home intact while providing for 10,000 troops on American soil. The result was a series of tax Acts on the Colonists. The first, the Sugar Act, cut taxes on molasses but imposed strict rules for collecting taxes that Americans had avoided before. Protests and challenges to the presence of English troops on American soil quickly sprang up around the Colonies.

The protests reached a much higher level in March of 1765 after Parliament passed the Stamp Tax, which created both a tax on every page of printed paper the people used, and a fee on playing cards and dice. The response came quickly and was anchored in the legal principle that only the Colonial legislatures had the power to tax their residents. The Stamp Tax on the other hand was assessed by Parliament. Two months after it was passed, Patrick Henry of Virginia, another protestor, wrote the “Virginia Resolves”, a formal statement of the “taxation without representation” argument. Across the Colonies the fever of the protests of the Stamp Tax was heating up, and in the summer of 1765, still 11 years before The Declaration of Independence, Massachusetts called for a “Stamp Act Congress” in October in New York.

By August, however, the boiling pot caused by the increasingly hostile British Acts, boiled over, and Samuel Adams, a Boston brewer and cousin of John Adams, led a group of protestors called “The Sons of Liberty” in the most defiant act yet. Adams described it this way: “The Sons of Liberty on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1765, a Day which ought to be forever remembered in America, animated with a zeal for their country then upon the brink of

destruction, and resolved, at once to save her.” It was not a peaceful protest, but it was one that delivered its message.

Gathered under what was then known as the Liberty Tree near Boston Common, Adams and the Sons of Liberty, hoisted an effigy of Andrew Oliver, the city’s Stamp Tax Agent, on the tree as several thousand people attacked Oliver’s home and office. It was not long before the news had spread throughout the Colonies, carrying with it a new level of anger at the British, and causing the formation of other groups kin to the Sons of Liberty. Ten years later, a year before Jefferson wrote The Declaration, the protests were still going on, and the Liberty Tree once again was a historic site when it hosted the planning of the Boston Tea Party in 1775. (Source “The seeds of Revolution: The Stamp Act Protests in Boston,” The National Constitution Center).

After just a year, in 1766, the Stamp Act was repealed , but the next 10 years would bring even more protests, more boycotts, more acts of civil disobedience. Eventually there was no path forward but revolution. The Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776, itself a Colony wide protest, was the point of no return. Let us not forget that this is what happened. Let us not forget that even then there were people who were still loyal to the Crown who grew weary of the folks protesting in the streets and were glad when the Red Coats were sent into the streets to break up the crowds. But let us also not forget that if it were not for the protestors like Samuel Adams, the Sons of Liberty, and Patrick Henry, the United States of America might have never come to be.

Now 244 years since the Declaration of Independence, I still give thanks for those early protestors and for the country that was born from their acts. And, I still give thanks for the right to protest.

For the 28 years that I have lived in our old Mebane house, the American Flag has waved from one of the columns of our front porch.

The Flag means much to me—my dad and his brothers served in foreign lands to protect the liberty that Flag stands for. Some friends have said to me that “extremists who wave the flag promote hate, division, and racism and we don’t want to be identified with them.” My response to them is that “I refuse to let those folks rob me of all that the Flag truly means. It does not stand for hate, division, and racism. It stands for sacrifice, unity, and respect for all.” The Flag is aspirational and inspirational for me. It helps me aspire to a time when all people in our land are living fully under the promises of the Declaration of Independence for equality, unalienable rights, and the pursuit of happiness. And it inspires me to work with others for justice, so that the yokes of slavery, prejudice, and discrimination have no room to exist in our land.

The Flag that flies in my front yard reminds me of our unity as a nation, of our diversity, and of our common goal to become what James Madison called for in The Preamble to the Constitution: “A More Perfect Union.” We still have a long way to go but that remains our destination. God bless us on our way.

Happy Fourth of July,

Gene

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gene Jester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

P.S. On behalf of our team I want to express how much we miss seeing you in person. We hope you are safe and healthy and taking all the precautions to protect yourself and your loved ones from Covid-19. We do not have a timetable yet for opening the office. Baird has taken a very cautious and wise approach because our first responsibility is to protect you and our employees. We are wearing our masks, washing our hands, and keeping social distance. We continue to work online from home daily, with one person usually in the office each day. We all check our email and voice mail regularly so please do not hesitate to reach out to us. Thank you for your patience and your loyalty.

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