

250 YEARS, what does it mean to you?

Hello and welcome to this amazing day. I want to thank the Sons of the American Revolution, the Daughters of the American Revolution for collaborating with the Warrior Run Fort Freeland Heritage Society on this event and I would like to thank each and everyone one of you here today for attending.

Here we are planting an American Elm today, after 250 years of The United States of America, there it is planted. The Liberty Tree. A symbol of American Independence. Fun Fact: The original liberty tree stood at the intersection of Washington and Essex in Boston common. It became the center of public meetings; it became a powerful symbol of colonial defiance. It was cut down to show force and snuff out the rebellion and yet the rebellion continued. Liberty Poles and other Liberty Trees materialized throughout the colonies, even towns around here in central PA, Symbols of defiance. A symbol, that united as a nation and community we can endure, we can continue and we will survive. And there it stands today. A symbol of our complex, rich history. A simple reminder that we are not descendants of fearful men.

250 years that this great nation has existed. The American Experiment lives on, or so we believe. The principle that a nation can be governed by its people based on individual liberty, equality and constitutional democracy rather than hereditary rulers, or by force. Here we are after 2 and half centuries, something no one believed would survive, still in motion and still existing to this day. What an amazing concept. What an amazing history we have here in this great nation. And what a privilege we have to be citizens, and whether we realize it, we are a part of this country's history. As a registered voter regardless of party, we have a chance to participate in our governing. The key word as in any function though is participation.

Let me ask you this, when you look at the United States of America, when you think of 250 years of this great nation what comes to your mind? What do you visualize? Do you visualize the history? The future? The culture? some people when they think of America have a montage of thoughts, various presidential figures, some think of the scandals, the negative things. When you think of 250 years are you filled with patriotic pride? You should be.

My immediate thought of 250 years of America takes my mind to the patriot. Like the ones buried here. I think of my ancestors, their tenacity, strength and courage to fight. To engage in a war to create a better way of life not for themselves, but for what they believed would be a future for their family name, they thought of their future generations and what life they could have. With Hope, they left their homes, their farms and jobs, left their families to fight in a war against a true king, against foreign rule making their lives harder. Something not one citizen today in this country will ever have to endure, thanks to these patriots.

250 YEARS, what does it mean to you?

They put their lives, their livelihoods, they put their name on the line for our future. 250 years ago.

When I think of 250 years of America, I think of the constitution, and how it has been changed, how it was put in place not just to declare our rights but for protection of the citizens from the government. How people forget its true purpose. The framework and undeniable efforts they put into protecting the people of this land from future threats by its own governing force. The founding fathers of this nation had incredible intelligence to think ahead and try to prevent future struggles. And I think of how it's interpreted now, by our own government, and courts.

Back to the real question from earlier, when you think of 250 years of our country, do you have pride? Are you patriot? And this where it gets interesting. A Gallup Survey conducted in February of 2026, show that out of a 1000 Americans only 58% plan to even celebrate the anniversary of our nation. 42% had no intent or interest. And it gets worse with age. The same poll when introducing demographics shows 38% of Gen Z had interest in it at all compared with millennials and Gen X in the 60% ranges. The younger the individual is, the less interest they have. Which makes the question where is the pride? What has our youth been taught about our history? What could have eroded the patriotism that should fill every citizen young and old?

As complex and for lack of better understanding ugly as the history might be this is still our country. It's not *yours*, it's not *mine*, it's not *theirs*... It is ours. It was created this way for a purpose. It is *our* country to fight for. It is *our* rights that we have in this country. It is in *our* best interest that we delegate our peers to represent us in congress. It is our country. So many forget this. So, I ask you, if you have patriot pride, (which I believe you do because you are here today) I ask you to share that pride. Talk to those around you. Spread that patriotism. No matter the party lines we are Americans first. Take pride in your country, take pride that this is the last stand of freedom. There is no place else on earth like it. Take pride knowing that this country has endured 250 years of ups and downs.

Take pride knowing that it's a light in this world of freedom, that it does not support terrorism, that it does not falter to a king. Take pride that this country has defended itself and others for 250 years. Remember the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, remember the Alamo, The Civil War, Spanish American war... take pride that we are back-to-back World War Champs, that we fought against communism for decades, that we fought against terrorism and stood as a beacon in this world against it.

For God sakes take pride in something about this nation. There is so much to be proud of if you look. Because once the pride is gone, once the cynicism, pessimism and antagonism about our nation sneaks in, once the interest for our nation or the fight to keep this republic is gone, the wolves will creep in. History has taught us this much. No matter what you feel, make sure you

250 YEARS, what does it mean to you?

take pride in our country, and have respect for what this country means, what it truly is. because you should. The Patriots lying behind you in this cemetery and in cemeteries all across the country have earned that. What they fought for, what our servicemen past and present have sacrificed for us, and our country should not go unrecognized and never be forgotten. Show that with Pride. Patriotism isn't some relic of the 80's attitude, it's not some ancient or even a null concept. It is in fact a privilege for every American citizen to have. Pride in our country, patriotism is something everyone of us should participate in.

Before I walk off, I want to share some pride with you... This is something you can ponder, something you can share, but it's about a notable figure in US History. George Washington. General Washington believed in patriotism. It was his view that patriotism was a profound unifying affection for our country, prioritizing national identity over local or regional allegiances. Patriotism, the love for our country, was a core component of our unity. He even said so in his farewell address in 1796 when he urged citizens to cherish their shared identity as Americans as it is their freedom to do so, in effort to preserve our union. **CHERISH OUR IDENTITY AS AMERICANS...** Something so forgotten and taken for granted in our current times. He felt Patriotism was our citizen duty to our country, that it was essential to maintaining the constitution and was a blessing of our liberty. True love of our country should not be overshadowed by factionalism or admiration for other foreign nations and above all else be aware of and resist foreign influences which could divide our loyalties. George Washington gave the ultimate example of patriotism, an integral part of the grand recipe to keep this nation secure, stable and united. He said:

"The name of AMERICAN, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of Patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations"

– Hallmark could not have written a better card for the Fourth of July... and yet, in todays news Patriotism and Pride in our Nation is falling near lowest levels of all time. Which is why it is so important that every citizen realize, regardless of political views, left or right, regardless of color or ethnicity, regardless of religious beliefs **we are Americans First**. 250 years and counting here in this great land. Against all odds, here we are. Americans. Take Pride, take heart, be ***American.***

I will end with hope, the Hope that our nation continues to endure and prosper though out any challenge that it could and will face, Hope that every American takes pride in our history, pride in our country because it is patriotism that unifies us, I have high hopes for our youth, that they take the time to learn our history and share it so it may be preserved for eternity, and I have high hopes for you.

250 YEARS, what does it mean to you?

Thank you for your time and may God Bless America.