



July 5, 2004
Donald B. Crawford, President

THE STAND
JULY 4

INDEPENDENCE DAY

What a day for the United States of America. Freedom, free at last from the yoke and bondage of Great Britain.

The greatest expression of that freedom was the Constitution of the United States and the Amendments thereto. That combined document defines freedom, the rights and privileges of American citizens like no other in the world. That document is our political bible. It is sacrosanct, the law of the land.

The Constitution per se is a brilliant, creative and energetic document, well reasoned, intellectually and philosophically conceived but practical in verbage and understanding. It is a working document, made to apply to the real world, an absolute philosophic and political marvel. It along with its Amendments should be read once a month by every American citizen. But the state conventions which convened in Philadelphia to form and ratify that Constitution were not content with the finished product. There were Amendments, more definition, more rights and duties which had to be formed. On September 25, 1789, two-thirds of the Senate and the House of Representatives sent the text of the first ten amendments to the Constitution to the various states for ratification. Those ten amendments were in fact ratified by three quarters of the states as required by the Constitution on December 15, 1791. America was off and running. The charter and by laws, the Constitution and the Amendments were the finest ever conceived by mankind.

Of all the rights and privileges conferred, in the Constitution itself and the Amendments, the highest, the best, the most noble rights were contained in the First Amendment. Hear then these magnificent words which represent the meaning of July 4, Independence Day better than any others:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

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The First Amendment put absolute restrictions on Congress, House of Representatives and Senate, forbidding either to make any law, no law, which would in any way establish, endorse, support or sustain any religion. In short, American politicians were required to be neutral regarding religion and make no laws of any kind. That became known as the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Our forefathers ordained that anything and everything political stay out of the business of religion.

Nor said that authors of The Amendment can Congress prohibit in any way the free exercise of religion. Practice what you preach, and what you believe in any lawful way, at any time, anywhere. Worship as you please! No one in America has the authority or the power to prevent the free exercise and practice of religion. What an absolutely marvelous provision, a right and a privilege like nothing else.

The First Amendment then goes on to forbid Congress from abridging freedom of speech. That means Federal or any other law for that matter cannot prevent speech of any kind nor can it interfere, restrict, censor or penalize free speech no matter what. Freedom of speech applies to all speech, speech of any kind whether offensive, untruthful, hateful, prejudiced, discriminatory, ignorant or any other type or kind of speech. THERE CAN BE NO RESTRICTIONS ON FREE SPEECH! So says the Constitution and its most prized Amendment.

The First Amendment then forbids Congress to abridge or restrict freedom of the press. Print and publish what you want, anything you believe. No restrictions.

And, no restrictions on the right to peaceably assemble. Get together anywhere you want, any time you want, with anyone you want without any kind of governmental interference or restriction.

And, petition the government any time you wish to redress the grievances of any citizen, says the First Amendment. If any citizen has a problem, disagreement, grievance or injustice, petition the government or political power at any level without fear of consequence of any kind.

How absolutely fantastic are these freedoms. Religion, speech, press, assembly, petition. Believe what you want, say what you want, print and publish what you want, meet when you want, and complain when you want. All such freedoms are awesome, incredible in this day and age and with the world as it is, and must be protected with all of our might. They more than anything else are the meaning of July 4. They are the foundation of our freedom. They are the finest expression of our independence. They are our most cherished rights and privileges, these First Amendment guarantees. We should know by memory every word of that First Amendment, and carry those words with us in mind and heart every single day. They are what America is and should be. They are our rights

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forever. There are so many who died to protect and preserve them, for us. It is now our duty some 220 years later to protect and defend them with all our might. Without them, or with any abridgment, restraint or restriction of those rights, there will be no America.

On July 4, and everyday:

GOD BLESS AMERICA

FOR OLD GLORY,
FOR HIS GLORY,

DONALD B. CRAWFORD
President

DBC/dc