



## NEWSLETTER

May 2026 ISSUE#: HV027

Mercer We the People of Hopewell Valley is a steady source of news to heal the accelerating erosion of our fundamental freedoms nationally and locally.

### Embrace our First Amendment

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.

Source: <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/primary-sources/bill-of-rights>

Kind regards,  
Publius Bonhomme Richard, Publisher & Co-Editors

#### HOW TO CONTACT US:

Email us at: [info@mercervethepeople.com](mailto:info@mercervethepeople.com)

Please email us to be included for future newsletters.

Printed copies of the newsletter will be made available at Rosedale Mills and local library. Any other suggested location(s) please let us know.

### Call for Contributors!

MercerWe the People of Hopewell Valley is looking for contributors to write articles, especially informing the community about what is happening at local meetings. If you're interested in writing for us about that or any other topic, whether it is monthly or as needed, please reach out to us at [info@mercervethepeople.com](mailto:info@mercervethepeople.com)

### "Paul Revere's Ride"

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (December 18 1860)

**In 1860, the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow immortalized "Paul Revere's Ride" in a poem that generations of schoolchildren across America have read and recited. On this 250th anniversary, we remember the stirring words that so beautifully capture the urgency and heroism of that fateful night (The White House April 18 2025):**

Listen, my children, and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,  
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;  
Hardly a man is now alive  
Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend, "If the British march  
By land or sea from the town to-night,  
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch  
Of the North Church tower as a signal light,—  
One, if by land, and two, if by sea;

And I on the opposite shore will be,  
Ready to ride and spread the alarm  
Through every Middlesex village and farm,  
For the country folk to be up and to arm."

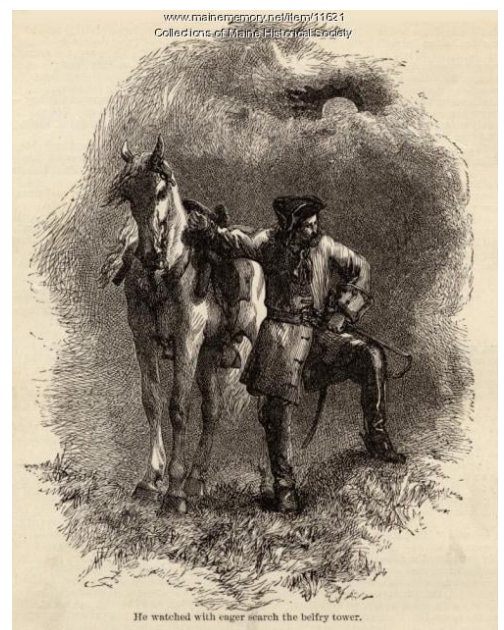


Illustration from 'The Complete Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow with numerous illustrations.' Boston : Houghton, Mifflin and Company; James R. Osgood and Company, 1880.

Then he said, "Good night!" and with muffled oar  
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,  
Just as the moon rose over the bay,  
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay  
The Somerset, British man-of-war;  
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar  
Across the moon like a prison bar,  
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified  
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street,  
Wanders and watches with eager ears,  
Till in the silence around him he hears  
The muster of men at the barrack door,  
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,  
And the measured tread of the grenadiers,  
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

Then he climbed the tower of the Old North Church,  
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,  
To the belfry-chamber overhead,  
And startled the pigeons from their perch  
On the sombre rafters, that round him made  
Masses and moving shapes of shade,—  
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,  
To the highest window in the wall,  
Where he paused to listen and look down  
A moment on the roofs of the town,  
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,  
In their night-encampment on the hill,  
Wrapped in silence so deep and still  
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,  
The watchful night-wind, as it went  
Creeping along from tent to tent,  
And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"  
A moment only he feels the spell  
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread  
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;  
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent  
On a shadowy something far away,  
Where the river widens to meet the bay,—  
A line of black that bends and floats  
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,  
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride  
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.  
Now he patted his horse's side,  
Now gazed at the landscape far and near,  
Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,  
And turned and tightened his saddle girth;  
But mostly he watched with eager search  
The belfry-tower of the Old North Church,  
As it rose above the graves on the hill,  
Lonely and spectral and sombre and still.

And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height  
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!  
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,  
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight  
A second lamp in the belfry burns!

A hurry of hoofs in a village street,  
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,  
And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a spark  
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet:  
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,  
The fate of a nation was riding that night;  
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,  
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

He has left the village and mounted the steep,  
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,  
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;  
And under the alders, that skirt its edge,  
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,  
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock,  
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.  
He heard the crowing of the cock,  
And the barking of the farmer's dog,  
And felt the damp of the river fog,  
That rises after the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,  
When he galloped into Lexington.  
He saw the gilded weathercock  
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,  
And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,  
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,  
As if they already stood aghast  
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village clock,  
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.  
He heard the bleating of the flock,  
And the twitter of birds among the trees,  
And felt the breath of the morning breeze  
Blowing over the meadows brown.  
And one was safe and asleep in his bed  
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,  
Who that day would be lying dead,  
Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,  
How the British Regulars fired and fled,—  
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,  
From behind each fence and farm-yard wall,  
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,  
Then crossing the fields to emerge again  
Under the trees at the turn of the road,  
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;  
And so through the night went his cry of alarm  
To every Middlesex village and farm,—  
A cry of defiance and not of fear,  
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,  
And a word that shall echo forevermore!  
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,  
Through all our history, to the last,  
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,  
The people will waken and listen to hear  
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,  
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.

“Paul Revere’s Ride” is one of Longfellow’s best known and most widely read poems. First published on the eve of the American Civil War and later the opening tale of the 22 linked narratives that comprise Longfellow’s Tales of a Wayside Inn, the poem rescued a minor figure of the Revolutionary War from obscurity and made him into a national hero...

Paul Revere was a silversmith in Boston and a devoted patriot. He was a participant in the Boston Tea Party and creator of an inflammatory illustration of what became known as the Boston Massacre. Revere was also a family man, fathering eight children with his first wife, and, after her death, eight with his second wife. After the events described in Longfellow’s poem, he served with the poet’s maternal grandfather, Peleg Wadsworth, in the failed Penobscot expedition. By 1860, he and his place in history had been largely forgotten.

The basic premise of Longfellow’s poem is historically accurate, but Paul Revere’s role is exaggerated. The most glaring inconsistencies between the poem and the historical record are that Revere was not the only rider that night, nor did he make it all the way to Concord, but was captured and then let go (without his horse) in Lexington, where he had stopped to warn Samuel Adams and John Hancock of the impending attack.

Longfellow’s intention was not to write a history; it was to create a national hero and he was successful at doing so. During a time of great national upheaval, people seized on Paul Revere as an example of the county’s noble past. His is still a household name and today visitors to Boston can visit Revere’s house and follow in Revere’s footsteps as outlined by Longfellow as they walk along the Freedom Trail.

Access the article: [https://www.hwlongfellow.org/works\\_paul\\_reveres\\_ride.shtml](https://www.hwlongfellow.org/works_paul_reveres_ride.shtml)

## **Presidential Message On The 250th Anniversary Of Paul Revere’s Midnight Ride, 2025**

*By The White House originally published in The White House (April 18, 2025)*

On the evening of April 18, 1775, two lanterns were illuminated from the tower of The Old North Church in Boston to alert the colonists that British forces were advancing across the Charles River. With the alert signal in place, Paul Revere, a silversmith dedicated to the cause of independence, mounted a borrowed horse and embarked on a midnight journey that became a defining moment in American history.

The dangerous mission was threefold. First, sound the alarm for colonists in farms and villages throughout the Massachusetts countryside. On the way, stop in Lexington to inform the leaders of the colonial resistance, Samuel Adams and John Hancock, that the British were coming to arrest them. Finally, prevent the seizure of military provisions and munitions stored a few miles west in the town of Concord.

Disregarding personal peril or consequence, Paul Revere rode with urgency into the night. After successfully warning Adams and Hancock, Revere was intercepted by a British patrol just before reaching Concord. Yet, Revere had already achieved his most important mission—relaying the news of the impending British advancement to his fellow patriots. Samuel Prescott and William Dawes evaded detection and carried the news on to Concord, giving the fledgling colonial army a critical advantage against the advancing Redcoats. Paul Revere’s Midnight Ride enabled our troops to prepare for battle and their eventual victory. By early the next morning, the first shots rang out in Lexington Green, signaling the start of the American Revolution.

In 1860, the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow immortalized “Paul Revere’s Ride” in a poem that generations of schoolchildren across America have read and recited. On this 250th anniversary, we remember the stirring words that so beautifully capture the urgency and heroism of that fateful night:

“Listen my children, and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere...

A cry of defiance, and not of fear,  
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,  
And a word that shall echo forevermore!”

With these timeless verses, Longfellow ensured that Revere’s harrowing ride for freedom would never be forgotten.

Paul Revere was a master craftsman, a husband, a father, and a proud son of liberty, who risked his life to help forge a new Nation. His courageous ride ignited patriots across the colonies who rose up to defend their families, their livelihoods, and their sacred liberties. On the 250th anniversary of Paul Revere’s Midnight Ride, we commemorate the enduring legacy of the famed Boston silversmith, patriot, and revolutionary hero, whose passion for independence and bold act of defiance set in motion a war of independence that changed the course of history and transformed the world.

Access the Presidential Message: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2025/04/presidential-message-on-the-250th-anniversary-of-paul-reveres-midnight-ride-2025/>

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## Local News

### Stay Connected With HVRA

Follow us on Facebook for updates on upcoming events and important information:  
<https://www.facebook.com/HVRAGOP>

### Join Or Renew Your HVRA Membership

Become a part of the Republican Association united around addressing issues affecting our valley electorate, promoting responsive transparent government, and electing conservative candidates to represent and meet the needs of all Hopewell Valley residents.

Sign up or renew today at:  
<https://hvrageop.org/hvra-membership/>



COMMUNITY ★ CIVILITY ★ CONSERVATIVE VALUES

# JOIN OUR CAUSE

**HVRA** ™

Hopewell Valley Republican Association

**Join your local Republican association united around addressing issues affecting our valley electorate, promoting responsive transparent government, and electing conservative candidates to represent and meet the needs of all Hopewell Valley residents.**

Promoting accountability, transparency, and fiscal responsibility in local government

Educating residents on important local issues

Building an enduring, vibrant volunteer network

Empowering conservative candidates and helping them win elections

Sponsoring fundraising events to support local candidates and issues

Re-establishing fair and free elections

Protecting our school system and supporting our local police

**Make a difference for your Hopewell Valley community**

**JOIN THE HVRA TODAY!**  
[www.hvrageop.org](http://www.hvrageop.org)



## Courageous Conversations Book Discussion Series

By HVRA

Join us for our next discussion on **May 7th**, part of a 5-part series exploring *Beyond the Politics of Contempt*. Learn practical steps to foster civic friendship and reduce toxic polarization. Attend one session or all! The May 7th focus will be on chapters 4, 5, and 6. View the book trailer here: [https://youtu.be/\\_rH52cLAQyE?si=gyswENA96tqxbC7N](https://youtu.be/_rH52cLAQyE?si=gyswENA96tqxbC7N).

**A Message from event organizer Sylvia Kocses:** Our "first" Courageous Conversations Book Discussion on *Beyond the Politics of Contempt: Practical Steps to Build Positive Relationships in Divided Times* went very well on April 13, 2026. The discussion was lively, people shared with honesty and we left feeling hopeful about being able to restore civil discourse and functional governance in our nation. We discussed how depolarizing ourselves is the first step, the effect of conflict entrepreneurs (media, bloggers, etc.) on the social fabric of society and how strategies like LAPP (Listen, Acknowledge, Pivot and Perspective) can help us engage in healthy disagreement about ideas and policy positions. Everyone wanted to learn how to pivot better! We agreed that good civic relationships are similar to good marriage and parenting relationships in that they take time to build, lots of listening and treating one another with dignity and respect.

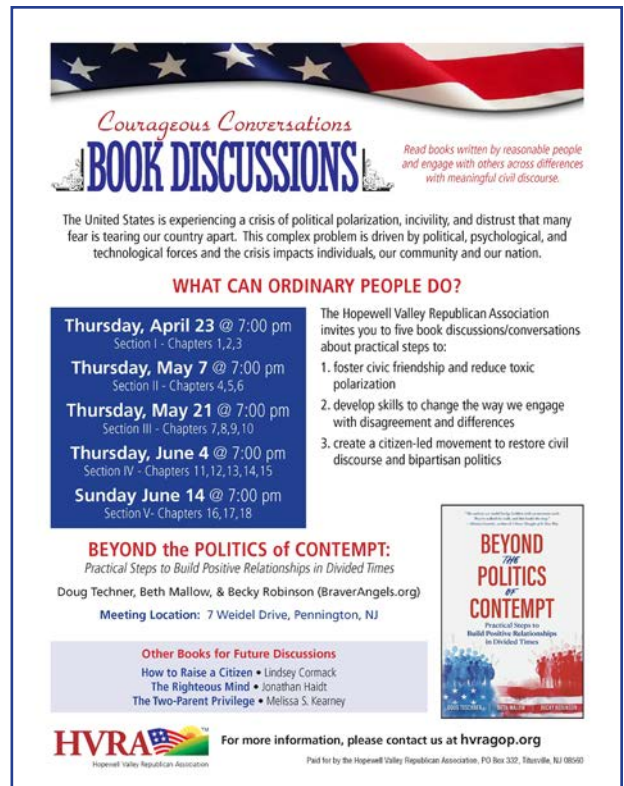
We also recognized that one session was insufficient time to fully discuss all the good ideas, advice, and questions contained in the 18 chapters of the book. For that reason, there will be five follow-up discussions that will focus on each of the five sections of the book. Attached is a flyer that lists the dates and location of these discussions. Even if you were unable to attend the April 13th event please consider coming to one or all five of these meetings to join with other members of the community who are hoping for a better future for America. We are seeking to initiate a "collective action response" for positive change in our political environment so we can solve the complex problems we face as a nation.

This book group is non-partisan. It is for liberals, conservatives, progressives and all community members who want to help reverse the troubling trend of the red-blue divide. Please share this flyer with friends, elected leaders, school PTO members, clergy and others who want to build a culture of kindness, gratitude, hope, togetherness, and meaningful dialogue.

### Book Club: HOLD THE DATE September 24, 2026 6:00-8:00PM

**Author Lindsey Cormack will be speaking at the event.**

READ THE BOOK *HOW TO RAISE A CITIZEN* and *HOLD THE DATE*.



*Courageous Conversations*  
**BOOK DISCUSSIONS**

Read books written by reasonable people and engage with others across differences with meaningful civil discourse.

The United States is experiencing a crisis of political polarization, incivility, and distrust that many fear is tearing our country apart. This complex problem is driven by political, psychological, and technological forces and the crisis impacts individuals, our community and our nation.

**WHAT CAN ORDINARY PEOPLE DO?**

The Hopewell Valley Republican Association invites you to five book discussions/conversations about practical steps to:

1. foster civic friendship and reduce toxic polarization
2. develop skills to change the way we engage with disagreement and differences
3. create a citizen-led movement to restore civil discourse and bipartisan politics

**Thursday, April 23 @ 7:00 pm**  
Section I - Chapters 1,2,3

**Thursday, May 7 @ 7:00 pm**  
Section II - Chapters 4,5,6

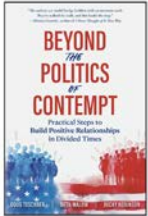
**Thursday, May 21 @ 7:00 pm**  
Section III - Chapters 7,8,9,10

**Thursday, June 4 @ 7:00 pm**  
Section IV - Chapters 11,12,13,14,15

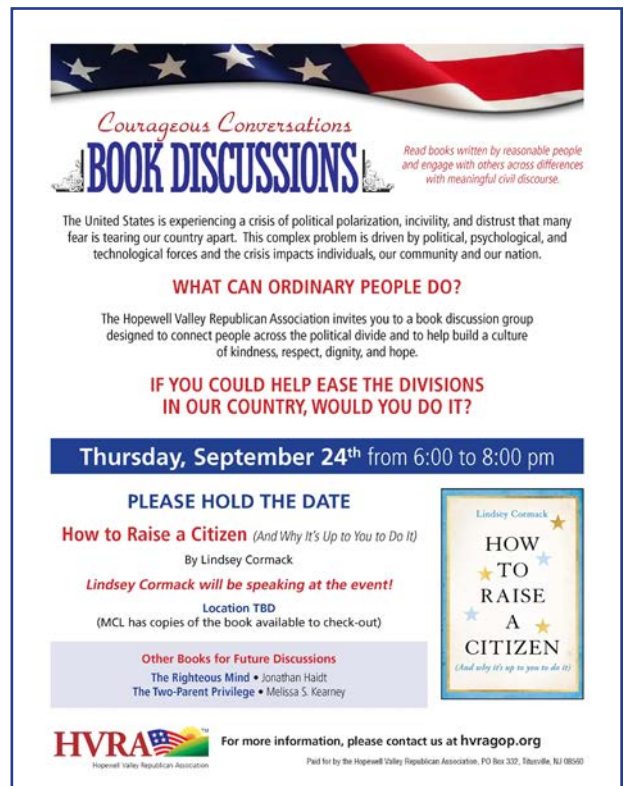
**Sunday June 14 @ 7:00 pm**  
Section V- Chapters 16,17,18

**BEYOND the POLITICS of CONTEMPT:**  
*Practical Steps to Build Positive Relationships in Divided Times*  
Doug Techner, Beth Mallow, & Becky Robinson (BraverAngels.org)  
Meeting Location: 7 Weidel Drive, Pennington, NJ

**Other Books for Future Discussions**  
*How to Raise a Citizen* • Lindsey Cormack  
*The Righteous Mind* • Jonathan Haidt  
*The Two-Parent Privilege* • Melissa S. Kearney



**HVRA** Hopewell Valley Republican Association  
For more information, please contact us at [hvrageop.org](http://hvrageop.org)  
Paid for by the Hopewell Valley Republican Association, PO Box 332, Shrewille, NJ 08609



*Courageous Conversations*  
**BOOK DISCUSSIONS**

Read books written by reasonable people and engage with others across differences with meaningful civil discourse.

The United States is experiencing a crisis of political polarization, incivility, and distrust that many fear is tearing our country apart. This complex problem is driven by political, psychological, and technological forces and the crisis impacts individuals, our community and our nation.

**WHAT CAN ORDINARY PEOPLE DO?**

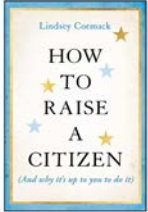
The Hopewell Valley Republican Association invites you to a book discussion group designed to connect people across the political divide and to help build a culture of kindness, respect, dignity, and hope.

**IF YOU COULD HELP EASE THE DIVISIONS IN OUR COUNTRY, WOULD YOU DO IT?**

**Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 8:00 pm**

**PLEASE HOLD THE DATE**

**How to Raise a Citizen** (*And Why It's Up to You to Do It*)  
By Lindsey Cormack  
*Lindsey Cormack will be speaking at the event!*  
Location TBD  
(MCL has copies of the book available to check-out)



**Other Books for Future Discussions**  
*The Righteous Mind* • Jonathan Haidt  
*The Two-Parent Privilege* • Melissa S. Kearney

**HVRA** Hopewell Valley Republican Association  
For more information, please contact us at [hvrageop.org](http://hvrageop.org)  
Paid for by the Hopewell Valley Republican Association, PO Box 332, Shrewille, NJ 08609

## Rejecting The Rejection Of Empathy

**Empathy is more than a feeling; it's a discipline that allows us to humanize those who disagree with us.**

*By John Wood, Jr. originally published in Fair For All (April 23, 2026)*

Empathy is an ancient moral instinct that is relatively new to the English language. From the Greek word *Empatheia* (meaning passion or emotion) and the Greek *Pathos* (meaning suffering and profound feeling), the German language produced the term *Einfühlung* somewhere in the late 19th century — a term describing the projection of one's own feelings onto other human beings and even onto objects. As language evolved, the English term "empathy" came to signify the capacity to understand the feelings of another person as if they were one's own. Yet this new term reflected a very ancient bit of moral wisdom. It is strange that in today's polarized discourse we sometimes discard empathy as if it were the product of experimental social science and not something that in substance echoes all the way back to the gospels and beyond.

There is a story that appears in the first book of Kings in the Old Testament about King Solomon, the wisest king of Israel, and the manner in which he dispensed justice. As the story goes, Solomon was confronted with a dispute between two women, each of whom claimed to be the mother of the same infant boy. The women lived with each other and each had recently given birth to a baby, making their children the same age. During the night as they slept, so one of the women claimed, the other woman rolled over and smothered her own child to death. Waking up and realizing what she had done, the mother who had accidentally killed her son went to the bed of the other woman who lay sleeping with her child, and replaced the living child with the dead one. The woman accused of swapping the children denied this charge. Rather than interrogate the women further to rationally deduce the truth, Solomon, in his wisdom, exposed the heart of a true mother:

"Then the king said, 'Bring me a sword.' So they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, 'Divide the living child in two, and give half to one and half to the other.'" (1 Kings 3:23-25)

Solomon's command was shocking and terrifying to the woman who was the true mother of the surviving child. She pleaded for the child's life and relinquished her claim to him, while the other woman was willing to let Solomon follow through on his intentions. Thus Solomon declared, "Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him; she is his mother." By being able to inhabit the feelings of a true mother, Solomon was able to dispense true justice through an act of empathy as much as an act of wisdom.

In the modern moment we don't usually think about empathy in relation to questions of justice except insofar as it enters the conversation under the heading of social justice. In that context, empathy for the marginalized and downtrodden can translate, in some circles, to a default deference to very liberal policies on immigration, law enforcement, public welfare, national security and DEI — policies that privilege the redistribution of resources while looking askance at the question of accountability for particular groups. It is this tendency that gives rise to a critique of empathy in principle by some on the right, encapsulated by the phrase "toxic empathy." Criticisms of empathy often focus on the tendency to become so absorbed with the struggle and suffering of others that you lose sight of the interests of people (even in your own country or community) who may be harmed by the policies you support on the basis of empathy. "Open borders" policies are frequent targets: empathy for the developing world has opened up flood waves of migration in Europe and the United States that have resulted in the importation of crime, violence, competition for scarce resources and the uneven application of domestic laws against native-born residents.

These are not trivial concerns, but they have never constituted a good basis for rejecting empathy in principle. "Toxic empathy," properly understood, does not reveal a destructive excess of empathy so much as a lack of it — a failure to extend compassion to people who exist beyond the groups whose challenges we find it easier to feel. Ethically speaking, it makes all the sense in the world to empathize with the struggles of undocumented immigrants, but a complete sense of empathy would also recognize the suffering of people subject to cartel violence on the southern border or workers in inner cities who have lost job opportunities or whose wages are suppressed on account of lax border enforcement policies. Any feeling heart should grieve for the Palestinians in Gaza, yet a complete sense of empathy would also hold space for the devastating pain of October 7th and how it shaped the perspectives of those who acted in defense of Israel.

This is where empathy meets listening, and where both become civic virtues. In a culture that promotes civil discourse, empathy is more than a feeling; it's a discipline we must practice to allow ourselves to humanize those who disagree with us. The gospels teach that we are to love each other as ourselves, as if we shared a body together, and as if what you feel, I too in some way feel. That kind of love is not passive. It requires us to listen across differences, to sit with the discomfort of perspectives that unsettle our own, and to resist the temptation to dismiss what we haven't yet tried to understand. Empathy, in this sense, is the foundation of deep listening, and deep listening is the foundation of democratic life.

The skills that make this possible — perspective-taking, active attention, the willingness to be changed by what we hear — are not mere instincts. They are practices. They can be learned, and they can be lost. Empathy does not require agreement. But empathy does require our love for our country to be reflected in our concern for our neighbors. Empathy requires us to take seriously the reality of the person across from us — their hopes, their fears, and the experiences that shape their convictions. That seriousness is what transforms a conversation into a community, and a community into a democracy.

Let this empathy be the substance of how we practice democracy.

Access the article: [https://news.fairforall.org/p/rejecting-the-rejection-of-empathy?utm\\_source=post-email-title&publication\\_id=415200&post\\_id=195174332&utm\\_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=v5y4h&triedRedirect=true&utm\\_medium=email](https://news.fairforall.org/p/rejecting-the-rejection-of-empathy?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=415200&post_id=195174332&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=v5y4h&triedRedirect=true&utm_medium=email)

## Pennington Day — May 16, 2026

Visit the HVRA booth at Pennington Day! Better yet, grab a friend and volunteer to help.

Sign up here: HVRA Pennington Day Volunteers <https://m.signupgenius.com#!/showSignUp/5080A4EADA82AA0FB6-63651302-hvra?useFullSite=false>

For more about Pennington Day, visit: <https://www.penningtonday.org/>

## Studying Long-tailed Salamanders

*By Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space (FoHVOS) originally published in Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space's (Facebook) Post (April 23, 2026)*

Our Long-tailed Salamander surveys have begun, thanks to our dedicated community volunteers! Since 2025, we have monitored the local population of Long-tailed Salamanders at our preserves, a threatened species in New Jersey due to habitat loss and pollution of larval ponds. The species is often found in slow moving streams and swamps, with adults emerging from hibernation in early spring.

From March to May, you can find FoHVOS in the field looking for these amphibians. Last week, volunteers didn't see any Long-taileds just yet but found multiple Two-lined, Red-backed and Lead-backed as well as crayfish and even a Garter Snake! A good sign for the health of the local water ecosystem.

Thank you also to Hopewell Valley Republican Association (HVRA) for supporting these efforts and joining us in the field.

Access the Facebook post: [https://www.facebook.com/FoHVOS/posts/pfbid038JHdPq18QpLjUpvB5eqDuNfiYXDzQP5Qe2KgZudugmTQwR4yrmCFocPTRTU9GKil?blm\\_aid=25470](https://www.facebook.com/FoHVOS/posts/pfbid038JHdPq18QpLjUpvB5eqDuNfiYXDzQP5Qe2KgZudugmTQwR4yrmCFocPTRTU9GKil?blm_aid=25470)



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## Education

### What's Happening In HVRSD Schools?

HVRSD Board Of Education Meeting April 27, 2026

*By The Wall of Ed*

Agenda: <https://go.boarddocs.com/nj/hvrSD/Board.nsf/Public#tab-meetings>

Meeting Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/live/CfTJgIpX8j4?si=WUble5U1xvJm7LWU>

Next Meeting May 18, 2026 at the HVRSD Board Office, 425 Main St, Pennington, NJ

Webinar Redistricting Discussion on May 6, 2026 at 6:30pm

School Safety Discussion on May 7, 2026 at 6PM at HVCHS PAC

### Redistricting Concerns Dominate April BOE Meeting

The April 27, 2026, Hopewell Valley Regional School District Board of Education meeting focused on the annual budget public hearing but was largely dominated by intense public concern over proposed elementary school redistricting.

Parents and students as young as kindergarten voiced significant opposition to plans that would move Bear Tavern Elementary students to Hopewell Elementary. The district has stated that redistricting is necessary to address enrollment growth, driven largely by new housing developments in the area.

Many affected families said they were blindsided by the proposal, learning of their children's potential reassignment through a letter mailed by the district. Parents expressed frustration over the lack of prior communication, absence of community input, and no clear avenue for appeal. Several also raised concerns that students' social and emotional well-being had not been adequately considered, noting the absence of a detailed transition plan.

During public comment, one parent warned that moving forward with the plan could erode trust within the community. She noted that many residents supported the recent referendum to intentionally increase our taxes with the assumption that any redistricting would primarily affect incoming families rather than those already enrolled. "Many of us do feel misled," she said.

When the Hopewell Township Committee approved the new housing units and PILOT program, residents were told the impact on schools would be minimal. In the Q4 2024 Town Crier newsletter (Hopewell Township's newsletter), then Mayor Courtney Peters-Manning cited a demographic study projecting approximately 250 additional students over 10 years from the new developments. The full newsletter can be found here: <https://www.hopewelltpw.org/DocumentCenter/View/15229/Newsletter-Q4-2024-FINAL?bidId=>

In contrast, the district is seeing new students flood into our schools and HVRSD reported that 278 new students had already enrolled by the start of the current school year, with additional students continuing to arrive. A new demographer study was recently conducted and "Attendance Zones" were determined by projected enrollment, transportation, equity in enrollment, and facility capacity. Bus transportation and maintaining balanced class sizes across all four elementary schools is the primary concern of the district administration.

## Update on Lockdown at CHS and TMS

On Friday, April 17, Hopewell Valley Central High School (CHS) and Timberlane Middle School (TMS) were placed in an ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) lockdown while local law enforcement investigated a suspicious object found in a CHS locker room. Due to its proximity, TMS was also placed on lockdown.

During the Board of Education meeting, a parent shared accounts from students describing how classrooms were secured and doors were barricaded with furniture while students gathered quietly out of sight. According to these accounts, at one point doors were opened by a police officer, causing confusion and fear among students who had not all received clear, real-time communication. Some teachers were reportedly informed there was no active intruder and relayed that information to students, but communication was inconsistent.

A CHS senior also spoke during public comment, expressing concern that limited information has left students feeling anxious and uncertain about their safety. He asked for greater transparency and clearer communication from the district.

The investigation required an extensive search of the school, including student belongings, resulting in delayed dismissal. Students and staff remained in place until approximately 4:00 PM, when law enforcement confirmed there was no threat and dismissed students safely. Read HTPD's statement here: <https://hopewellpolice.nj.gov/resident/blotter/312-suspicious-item-hopewell-valley-central-high-school>

The investigation remains ongoing, and officials have indicated that further details cannot yet be released. The district has scheduled a public discussion on emergency protocols for May 7 at 6:00 PM at the CHS Performing Arts Center, where the police chief will be present.

## VOC Student Essay Contest

*By VOC Staff originally published in Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (February 19 2026)*

The Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (VOC) will honor the legacy of the Declaration of Independence with an essay contest that will teach students about freedom movements that directly cited or paraphrased the Declaration of Independence. This will demonstrate to citizens and students the exceptional nature of the American "experiment" in self-government and ordered liberty.

**Essay Prompt: Explain how the U.S. Declaration of Independence inspired a key liberty champion and/or freedom movement in a foreign context.**

Scholar David Armitage suggested that nearly 200 countries and overseas political movements have cited the Declaration, from Haiti to Kosovo. For example, Mahatma Gandhi used the language of the Declaration in 1930. Czech anti-communist, dissident, playwright, and later president of free Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel asserted the transcendent nature of the Declaration: "The Declaration of Independence ... states that the Creator gave man the right to liberty. It seems man can realize that liberty only if he does not forget the One who endowed him with it."

### Upcoming Community Forums

<b>Redistricting Forum</b> <b>Virtual Webinar</b> <b>Wednesday, May 6</b> <b>6:30 PM to 7:30 PM</b>	<b>School Safety Discuss</b> <b>MS/HS Lockdown Debrief</b> <b>In-Person in HV CHS PAC</b> <b>Thursday, May 7</b> <b>6:00 PM to 7:00 PM</b>
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- Intended for those affected by redistricting (and all are welcome)
- Elementary principals will be there
- It will be recorded

- Intended for MS and HS Parents (and all are welcome)
- Police Chief will be present
- Investigation is ongoing, no more specifics will be shared
- Discussion will include other safety topics
- This will not be recorded



The Foundation will recognize up to 52 outstanding student essays that focus attention on how the Declaration of Independence influenced declarations, speeches, and other political writing in foreign contexts during the 20th century. We are especially interested in short essays that focus on those seeking freedom from communist and Marxist systems.

The contest was opened to grades 9-12 and college students from across the United States. The contest closed on May 1, 2026.

Explore the selected essays: <https://victimsofcommunism.org/essay-contest-archive/>

Here is an example of a selected essay.

## **The Velvet Echo Of 1776: How The Spirit Of the Declaration Freed Czechoslovakia**

*By Chloe Lee (February 11 2026)*

In 1989, under the dim lights of Prague's Wenceslas Square, students and playwrights marched without weapons, yet armed with something more dangerous to a totalitarian regime: ideas. Among their chants for freedom and human dignity were echoes of a distant declaration penned two centuries earlier across the Atlantic. The Velvet Revolution, a peaceful uprising that dismantled 41 years of communist rule in Czechoslovakia, found its moral and philosophical grounding not in Marx or Lenin—but in Jefferson. At the heart of this revolution stood Václav Havel, a dissident playwright whose political imagination was shaped not only by his native culture but by the ideals of America's founding. The Declaration of Independence—once a local cry against British tyranny—had become a global anthem, and in 1989, it helped orchestrate a symphony of liberation behind the Iron Curtain.

Havel understood that liberty could not survive without truth. In his 1978 essay "The Power of the Powerless," Havel argued that totalitarian regimes rely on lies—on a system of ritualized falsehoods in which even the green grocer is complicit when he displays a sign reading, "Workers of the world, unite!" not because he believes in it, but because he must. In challenging this system, Havel did not quote Marxist dialectics. Instead, he turned to moral absolutes—the same kind found in the Declaration of Independence. "We hold these truths to be self-evident..." Jefferson had written, and Havel echoed: Truth is not negotiated by power; it exists independently of it. Freedom, then, is not granted by the state. The Creator endows it.

It's no coincidence that Havel would later say, "The Declaration of Independence...states that the Creator gave man the right to liberty. It seems man can realize that liberty only if he does not forget the One who endowed him with it." Havel's words stand in sharp contrast to the Marxist materialism that had dominated his nation for decades. Communism saw history as a dialectic of class struggle. Havel saw it as a moral struggle—one between fear and courage, lies and truth, slavery and liberty. His vision had more in common with 1776 than 1917.

To the communist regime, Havel was a dangerous figure. He did not threaten them with guns or violence, but with the idea that every individual possesses inherent dignity and unalienable rights. In this, he was not just paraphrasing Jefferson; he was activating Jefferson's legacy in a context that the Founders could scarcely have imagined. It is easy to forget that the Declaration of Independence was not written for export. And yet, over the next two centuries, it became one of America's greatest exports—not through policy, but through example.

In 1989, as the Iron Curtain trembled, the Velvet Revolution unfolded not as a military campaign but as a moral awakening. Over a span of weeks, hundreds of thousands filled the streets of Prague, jingling keys to symbolize unlocking their future. The communists resigned. There was no bloodshed. Havel was elected president. It was one of the most remarkable political transitions of the 20th century—and the philosophical blueprint was unmistakably American.

Scholar David Armitage, in *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History*, has argued that nearly 200 nations and movements have borrowed from Jefferson's text. But the Velvet Revolution was more than mimicry. It was a reinvention of that spirit in a Slavic tongue, led not by statesmen, but by artists and students who understood that tyranny is sustained by fear, and fear is sustained by silence. Their revolt was velvet not because it was soft, but because it refused to become what it opposed.

Today, it is easy to take the Declaration for granted—to see it as a dusty relic rather than a living idea. But Havel and his fellow dissidents remind us that these words still have power. They are not bound by geography or language. They transcend ideology. They assert that governments derive "their just powers from the consent of the governed"—a truth so dangerous that even unarmed citizens could use it to bring down a regime.

In 1990, standing before the U.S. Congress, Havel gave a speech that was both an act of gratitude and a subtle warning. He praised the American experiment in liberty, but reminded his audience that democracy was fragile, that truth must be defended, and that complacency was its greatest threat. His very presence at that podium—an artist-turned-president—was a triumph of the ideals born in 1776.

In the end, the Declaration of Independence is not just a document. It is a spark. And in the cold gray of communist Prague, that spark became a flame—not one of violence, but of hope. Havel's revolution was velvet, yes, but its roots were red, white, and blue.

*Chloe Lee, a student at Dodea Humphreys High School, authored this article as part of VOC's Student Essay Contest.*

Access the essay: <https://victimsofcommunism.org/the-velvet-echo-of-1776-how-the-spirit-of-the-declaration-freed-czechoslovakia/>

## Victims Of Communism Museum: A New Birth Of Freedom (New Exhibit)

The Victims of Communism Museum is proud to host our latest temporary gallery, **A New Birth of Freedom**, that explores America's past, present, and future. Curated by the **American Journey Experience**, the exhibit invites visitors to learn about the principles that shape a free society, in stark contrast to the oppressive ideology of communism.

This is not simply history on display; it is a story to wrestle with and reflect upon. Visitors will walk through the struggles of Jamestown, where a communal system led to starvation and despair, stand with the Pilgrims, whose faith carried them through a devastating first winter, and encounter the bold words of Thomas Jefferson.

This exhibition is both remembrance and invitation. As you move through it, we ask you to reflect on a profound idea: America is not merely a place on a map – it is a set of principles. And the endurance of that idea depends on those willing to understand it, preserve it, and defend it.

The exhibit is open Tuesday-Saturday, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM and runs through August 21, 2026. Admission is free. We hope to see you there.

Watch video about the exhibit (2mins 37secs): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J\\_82ukBKCR4&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_82ukBKCR4&t=1s)

Visit VOC Museum in Washington DC: <https://vocmuseum.org/about/>

## The Clarence Thomas Lecture At The University Of Texas At Austin

Drawing on his extensive tenure as a jurist, Justice Clarence Thomas delivered a moving address at The University of Texas at Austin on April 15, 2026, reflecting on the continued relevance of the Declaration of Independence. Describing the Declaration as the foundation of American government, Justice Thomas emphasized the need to valiantly safeguard its principles. Doing so, he detailed the threats to the Declaration's principles, arguing that progressivist philosophies from the early 20th century to today seek to disregard the principles espoused there and eliminate natural rights in the process. Justice Thomas also shared the ways in which pivotal seasons in his own life—from his Georgia upbringing to his Catholic high school education—shaped him both as a jurist and as a citizen.

Appointed by President George H. W. Bush in 1991, Justice Clarence Thomas is the longest-serving current justice on the U.S. Supreme Court. He holds an A.B. from College of the Holy Cross and a J.D. from Yale Law School. He previously acted as Assistant Attorney General of Missouri, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights within the U.S. Department of Education, and Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.



U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Clarence Thomas speaks at the University of Texas at Austin, in Austin, Texas, on April 15, 2026. AP Photo/Eric Gay

Watch the Speech (59mins+): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXijcySCOZU&t=3s>

## Clarence Thomas' Great Speech On The Declaration

*Commentary by Star Parker originally published in The Epoch Times (April 23, 2026)*

Many speeches will be delivered this year about the Declaration of Independence as we celebrate its 250th birthday.

However, I think the greatest was just delivered by Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas on April 15 at the Civitas Institute at the University of Texas, Austin.

The force of Thomas' words does not just result from his deep understanding of what the United States is about, and how the Declaration of Independence defines it.

The force flows from Thomas' personal reality. He has lived what the Declaration is about. His words are not just the product of thought and study, but of Thomas's entire life experience.

Thomas grew up poor in America's Jim Crow South.

But he says, "Despite the multiplicity of laws and customs that wreaked a bigotry, it was universally believed among those blacks with whom I lived and who had very little or no formal education, that in God's eyes and under our Constitution, we were equal."

"When you lived in a segregated world with palpable discrimination and the governments nearest to you enforced laws and customs that promoted unequal treatment, it was obvious that your rights or your dignity did not come from those governments, but rather from God," he continued.

An ominous beginning for a future Supreme Court justice.

Thomas's life, career and education was trial by fire.

By the time he became chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the country had already been captured by progressivism, particularly on matters of race.

His principled adherence to the eternal God-given truths of the Declaration, and refusal to fold to the progressive agenda, which he calls the “then-prevailing orthodoxy on race,” was a lonely battle which left him under constant attack.

It was then he realized that carrying out the agenda was more than knowing the principles, but having the courage to fight, and even, if necessary, die for them.

Thomas notes that the principles stated in the opening of the Declaration—“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable rights”—could have gotten nowhere without the last paragraph of the Declaration.

There the signers conclude “We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”

“What changed the world,” per Thomas, “was not the words, but the commitment and spirit of the people willing to labor, sacrifice, and even give their lives” for what Lincoln called at Gettysburg “the last full measure of devotion.”

Thomas asks, “Do any of us have what it took for our young soldiers to storm Normandy Beach, to fight at Guadalcanal, to later fight at Chosin Reservoir?”

He discusses the emergence of progressivism which challenged the core principles of the Declaration. As Thomas notes, its pedigree is not American but was born in 19th century Germany of Otto von Bismark.”

It’s a world view that rejects the notion that God-given truths govern our lives, but rather politics and government so-called experts.

It’s deeply ironic and unfortunate that the Civil Right Movement, a movement about human freedom, a movement about moving black people out from the distortions of political control, and to our regime of freedom defined by our Declaration’s principles, itself saw progressivism as the answer to problems of race.

We are in a great struggle today for the future of our country.

The movement toward progressivism has delivered to us a new time with massive government, deficits, debts, and bankrupt entitlement programs. The assault of progressivism on the God-given principles of the Declaration of Independence has also taken a great toll on our culture, with the traditional family and our birth of children in dangerous decline.

To restore the vitality of our nation, we for sure today need a “new birth of freedom.”

A good start for all is to listen to Thomas’ message.

Access the article: <https://www.theepochtimes.com/opinion/clarence-thomas-great-speech-on-the-declaration-6016174>

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## Election Integrity

### Update On Mercer County Election Litigation: Case Nears Key Turning Point

*By Mark Demo*

The civil rights lawsuit (MER-L-324-24) challenging the administration of the 2022 and 2023 Mercer County elections has now progressed through its initial legal stages and is approaching a critical transition point.

After the complaint was filed in February 2024, defendants moved to dismiss the case. In August 2024, the Superior Court of New Jersey issued a ruling that allowed the case to largely proceed. While claims for monetary damages against the Mercer County Board of Elections and officials in their official capacities were dismissed based on sovereign immunity, the court permitted claims for prospective injunctive relief to continue. Importantly, the court also allowed civil rights claims to proceed against individual defendants in their personal capacities, along with the plaintiffs’ request for declaratory judgment.

Following that ruling, defendants filed their formal answer, denying most substantive allegations and asserting a range of defenses, including qualified immunity and lack of personal involvement.

The case has since moved through the discovery phase, where both sides exchange information and evidence. According to recent updates, discovery is now largely complete. However, a small number of outstanding issues remain, including requests for basic admissions and additional information related to election procedures—specifically, how voting authority slips were handled during the 2022 election.

These remaining disputes have required court intervention. The parties have already met with the judge twice to address discovery disagreements, and a third conference is scheduled. At that time, the court is expected to issue a ruling on whether the defendants must provide the requested information.

Once this final discovery issue is resolved, the case will move into the next phase: dispositive motions. Both sides are expected to file motions for summary judgment, likely in late spring or early summer. In these motions, defendants will ask the court to dismiss the case before trial, while plaintiffs will argue that the evidence supports judgment in their favor as a matter of law.

Following the court's decision on those motions, the case will either be resolved or proceed further. If the claims remain, the matter would then be scheduled for trial, which counsel has indicated could occur as early as fall.

In summary, the case is nearing the conclusion of discovery and is transitioning into a decisive legal phase, where the court will evaluate the sufficiency of the evidence and determine whether the claims proceed to trial.

## About Citizens for NJ Election Integrity

Citizens for NJ Election Integrity is a non-partisan organization dedicated to ensuring fair and transparent elections in New Jersey. The group advocates for electoral reforms, improved voter verification processes, and public education on election integrity. For more information, please visit <http://www.citizens4njei.org/>.

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For further inquiries or to schedule an interview, please contact C4NJEI at the information provided above.

## ICYMI

### Remembering The Delaware In Our Darkest Hour

The movement to make America great again is fighting on the same battlefields as the war to make America independent 250 years ago—highlighting the America First movement's successes, failures, and path to permanent victory.

By Kevin Mooney originally published in Restoration News' inaugural edition of Independence Magazine (April 18 2026)

*Word From the Editor (Independence Magazine): The state where much of the War for Independence was fought is now ground zero for the America First movement's project to take back our country. New Jersey's Catholic working class has long made it a Democrat stronghold. But now those same voters, sold a bill of goods with globalism, are rapidly converting to MAGA—and never going back. Despite Jack Ciattarelli's loss in the November 2025 governor's race, our coalition made deep inroads into the communities that Democrats abandoned. That he failed is a testament to the GOP's strategic failure to turn out winning quantities of Trump voters—but the voters are there. In this feature article, Kevin Mooney lays out the war for the Garden State and how it parallels the war for America itself. We aren't just taking back red and purple states, he observes, we're taking the fight into the Democrats' backyard.*



What a low the 2025 election proved after such a magnificent high just 12 months before.

The election pundits swore would be close, even a potential upset, was instead no small source of heartburn for concerned conservatives everywhere. Many were quick to abandon the grand strategy to Make America Great Again (MAGA). Others blamed poor candidates, helpless campaign managers, or the predictably too-little-too-late TV ads. Still more wrote off the losses as “blue voters electing blue politicians in blue states.”

There's merit to each of these arguments. But none of them get to the heart of the problem: America's patriots have a problem inspiring—and turning out—America First voters in winning numbers. We're like George Washington, standing on the banks of the Delaware River, knee-deep in snow and doubts, struggling to keep his army together. And like winter 1776, we need a victory to keep hope alive.

I'm a native son of New Jersey, a blue state most have written off as lost to conservatives forever. And for my entire life, that's been true. Or at least it was, until the MAGA coalition came along and offered working-class New Jerseyans a genuine alternative to the shopworn, corrupt, cynical, Democrat ruling class. After decades of being taxed and regulated into oblivion, there's a rising movement that finally threatens the ossified Trenton elites—one that echoes both the revolutionary spirit of 1776 and the current war for America's soul.

## A Forgotten Fervor

New Jersey has been at the heart of America's story from the very beginning.

Local historians and colonial reenactors familiar with the Battle of Princeton know that small battle's massive historical reverberations for the Revolution. Gen. Hugh Mercer had his horse shot out from under him during the battle. As he lay on the ground, British soldiers surrounded him and, mistaking him for Washington, demanded his surrender. Refusing, Mercer drew his sword and made his heroic last stand. The British stabbed him seven times with their bayonets.

As for Washington, the general rode between the armies' lines, calling out, "Parade with me, my brave fellows!" before charging into battle. His reinforcements proved decisive in that crucial early American victory, when all seemed hopeless.

The Battle of Princeton was the culmination of the "10 Crucial Days," which began with Washington crossing the Delaware River on Dec. 25, 1776, to attack veteran Hessian mercenaries at the first Battle of Trenton. Their heroism in the darkest hour heartened the nascent republic to hold fast to the cause of American independence for six more grueling years, when victory came at last.

Modern Americans, centuries removed, might ask, "What were they fighting for?" The best answer is freedom—freedom from oppressive "taxation without representation" and a king who refused to recognize their rights.

Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence expands on the justification for breaking away from Great Britain—first by expressing the rights of man under the laws of nature and nature's God, then recounting King George III's abridgement of those inalienable rights. The constitutional order that emerged to secure those natural rights still lives on in various states, but New Jersey—the state that boasts the most Revolutionary War battles—is not one of them.

Today, New Jerseyans find themselves in the same position as our forefathers, buckling under burdensome tax hikes imposed by unelected judges without input from the people's representatives. In truth, many of the complaints listed in the Declaration could be applied to the New Jersey Supreme Court.

How did a state that was once the platform of such revolutionary fervor fall so precipitously? And more importantly, how do America First conservatives retake it—and every other state in the union? That's a story that has its origins in the mid-20th century.

## Tough Realities

Residents of Mercer County—named for that obstinate revolutionary general—recently experienced a record 22 percent property tax hike in a single year. That's in a state where the average annual property tax now tops a record \$10,000. One local mayor blamed the tax hike on county officials, who blamed their predecessors. Meanwhile, the State Comptroller's Office found that Mercer County's improper policies had affected the county's finances, and that its former chief financial officer lacked the proper credentials for the job. This revelation led to multimillion-dollar IRS fines and the loss of more than \$10 million in state aid. The solution: Bilk, or perhaps "bayonet," taxpayers.

The clown act continues. Richard LaRossa, a former Republican state senator who represented parts of the county, believes entrenched figures who face no serious electoral challenges are a huge part of the problem.

"When you have one-party rule, no matter which party it is, there is a certain lack of accountability, and you don't have what I call a positive friction that comes from having checks and balances," LaRossa told Restoration News. "We still don't really know who approved the tax increase or what process was used."

LaRossa is living, breathing, walking history. He entered office on the heels of a tax revolt in the early 1990s called Hands Across New Jersey (HANJ)—an unlikely victory that gave Republicans a veto-proof majority in the state legislature. Democratic Gov. Jim Florio's unpopular \$2.8 billion tax hike cost him his 1993 reelection bid in favor of Republican Christine Todd Whitman, who ran on a package of tax cuts.

But the atmosphere proved far darker in last year's gubernatorial election. Jack Ciattarelli—a businessman and former Republican assemblyman who nearly unseated current Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy in 2021—lost 56–43 percent to Democratic Rep. Mikie Sherrill. Unlike Whitman, Ciattarelli couldn't benefit from a "Gingrich Revolution" red wave. Republican President Donald Trump is also unpopular with the New Jersey electorate—a fact Sherrill capitalized on with the help of Never-Trumpers like Whitman, who endorsed her. It marked the first time since 1961 that the same political party won three consecutive New Jersey gubernatorial races.

New Jersey Democrats have financial and structural advantages that are difficult to overcome. Campaign finance records show that Sherrill and the independent committees that supported her raised more than \$51 million and spent about \$43 million. By comparison, Ciattarelli and his supporting organizations raised about \$47 million and \$40 million, respectively. The support from groups outside New Jersey proved significant. The Democratic Governors Association (DGA) committed tens of millions of dollars in resources, vastly outspending its Republican counterpart.

In an encouraging sign for the future, Ciattarelli did raise more funds from individual in-state donors. But Sherrill received more than twice as much from out-of-state donors as Ciattarelli did—not to mention the power and influence of government unions, especially the teachers' unions, which overwhelmingly favor Democrats.

New Jersey Republicans do best in statewide races when they appeal to the state's large bloc of unaffiliated voters. But Micah Rasmussen, director of Rider University's Rebovich Institute for New Jersey Politics, didn't see either candidate do much to make the race a referendum on the outgoing governor, Murphy.

"The sharpest contrast for unaffiliated voters, I think, is whether they are any warmer toward a staunch defender or fighter of President Trump's policies," Rasmussen explained.

But Ciattarelli supporters who spoke with Restoration News on election night at the candidate's headquarters in Bridgewater credited the Republican for building new political coalitions that cut into the Democrats' base—even as he faced an uphill battle.

"There's the problem of the party in the White House typically losing ground in these off-year elections," said Dennis Pone, a former local party chairman. "I'm also looking at the impact of the government shutdown, although the blame for it seems to be evenly split.

"I think Jack ran the perfect campaign," Pone continued. "He went everywhere and could not have done anything differently. I think he has positioned us for a more favorable cycle [in 2026]."

Access the full article: <https://restoration-news.com/remembering-the-delaware-in-our-darkest-hour>

## **America at 250: Still Dominating The World—And Here's Why The Left Won't Admit It**

*Opinion by Victor Davis Hanson originally published in Daily Signal (April 22 2026)*

*Editor's note (Daily Signal): This is a lightly edited transcript of today's edition of "Victor Davis Hanson: In a Few Words" from Daily Signal Senior Contributor Victor Davis Hanson.*

Hello, this is Victor Davis Hanson for The Daily Signal.

This year, on July Fourth, will be the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, as exemplified in the ratification, signing of the Declaration of Independence. A lot of people ask ourselves, why are we so exceptional?

Are we exceptional, or is this just American braggadocio? Well, if you look at some major indicators, it's pretty clear that America stands like a colossus over the world today. Look at the economy. The U.S. economy is roughly a \$30 trillion nominal economy in goods and services. It's one-third larger than the Chinese economy. We hear a lot about Ascendant China, but it essentially means that one American is producing as many goods and services as four Chinese counterparts.

It's a third bigger than the EU, which has about 70 million more people than the United States. If you look at its culture, if you look at Netflix, streaming entertainment, Hollywood, even in its decline, popular music, it accounts for about 75% of international box office receipts of all sorts.

Educationally, there's a lot of global indices and they usually have the United States with eight to nine out of the top 10 universities. That kind of mimics the same economic standards that show that, at the top 10 companies in terms of international market capitalization, I think eight of them now are American.

In the case of the educational surveys, it's usually Caltech, MIT, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, etc., in the top 10. But at the top 50, 40 of them are American.

If you look at politics, the U.S. Constitution is the oldest surviving blueprint for democracy-republic. All the others have either faded or they come in and out of existence, but ours is that continuity of one particular consensual government, and its foundational document is unprecedented.

Finally, militarily, we have about 13,000 combat aircraft and their logistical support craft. That's larger than China, the EU, and India put together. We have 11 fleet carrier groups. China is struggling to get a third. No other country has a fleet-size carrier and a carrier group. They have smaller carriers.

But then, in addition to our 11, we have nine amphibious carriers that are about the same size as most other countries' fleet carriers. And we spend more money than most of the world combined in terms of defense budgetary.

Why did we enjoy all of this preeminence? Is it just because we have a continent-size country? Well, actually, Russia, then China, then Canada have larger territories than we do. Many countries have two oceans that border them. So it wasn't just that we have a large area and we have natural resources.

Other countries have as many or more than we do. There has to be a secret that explains this global preeminence, and one of them, as I mentioned, is the Constitution. No other country has been able to emulate successfully our Constitution. It's a very rare document.

It assumes that power will be collected in one particular person or one particular area, given human nature, and therefore it's gonna check the accumulation of inordinate power through the legislative and judicial branches as being separate, each with power over the other to stop their aggrandizement of authority and power.

It has a Bill of Rights. Very few countries have a bill of rights that protect individual liberty against the state, which is outlined in the Constitution proper—the state’s authority—and then the Bill of Rights, refines or hones that in and gives precedence to the individual in terms of free expression, the sanctity of his home from search and seizure, freedom of religion, the right to bear arms, etc.

In addition to the Constitution, the United States is not founded on a class system. There are no dukes or earls, where you’re born, who your parents were, how much land your grandfather had. That doesn’t really matter very much, or at least as much as talent.

We are a meritocratic society, and we value someone, I suppose, based on their net worth more than we do their title. That sounds kind of plutocratic, but actually our system of rewarding individual success—measured by materialism or good works or philanthropy—is a much more effective barometer of talent than inherited privilege.

And so that, that lends a message to the people that anybody can make it in America in a way impossible in many of the European countries and, of course, elsewhere in the world.

We have, until recently, had a long tradition of the melting-pot, meritocratic immigration, and that meant that if you came legally and immigrants were diverse and they were of numbers of a size that could be assimilated and integrated, then it was a wonderful thing.

I mentioned the eight or nine companies in the top 10 by market capitalization. I should say that of those American eight or nine companies, four of them were founded by immigrants. So, it’s been a great boom to the United States.

And finally, we have a can-do individual culture. There’s two types of envy in the world: the envy of emulation—the good envy—and the bad envy of, anger or resentment that someone has more than you do.

The old morality tale that an American sees a Cadillac and asks somebody how he got it, rather than kicks in the tires or keys it like someone in another country would do in anger that someone has a nicer car than he does. But that does explain, encapsulate the American ethos of emulating people who are accessible rather than trying to tear them down.

We also are the largest really devout Western country in terms of the Judeo-Christian tradition that offers a brake on the appetites. When you have leisure and affluence that are the bounties of market capitalism and constitutional government, you can get decadent. You can get complacent.

In other words, our religious tradition—maybe emblemized by the Sermon on the Mount—says just because something is legal and just because somebody has the ability to do it, you should not necessarily do it because of moral and ethical considerations.

Are there dangers to this great American experiment of 250 years? Absolutely. An affluent and leisured society, unless it has familial or religious or community brakes upon the appetites, can become self-indulgent, lethargic—the lotus-eater syndrome—and fall into a slow decline.

We’ve seen that happen in Europe, the foundation of the Western tradition that is really descendant now in terms of economics, politics, culture, and its military.

Another great worry is fertility. The United States fertility rate has fallen just in 30 years from 2.1, the replacement rate, down to 1.6, as if life is too valuable, too fun, too enjoyable to waste it raising kids.

Any society that has a low fertility rate, the population ages, it shrinks, and it becomes risk-averse.

We also owe \$30 trillion in aggregate national debt. We are running \$1 trillion to \$2 trillion annual deficits and, until recently, a \$1 trillion trade deficit. These are unsustainable.

And they’ll require, first of all, a major cutback in entitlements and unfunded liabilities. And how we do that when we have a bread-and-circuses attitude, that people think the government owes them something rather than they owe the government, I don’t know, but it’s something we’re gonna have to deal with.

And finally, immigration’s gone haywire. We traded in the successful centuries-long, melting pot for the salad bowl—DEI. We have reverted to tribalism.

If we continue down that pathway, that your superficial appearance determines who you are, that it’s essential rather than just incidental to you, your identity as a human, then we’re gonna end up like every tribal society, which is failure and pre-civilization reversion.

Access the article: [https://www.dailysignal.com/2026/04/22/america-at-250-dominating-world/?\\_bhlid=d65ed4fcf4db03485e1c07c933fee052a83b02cb&utm\\_source=TDS\\_Email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=victor-davis-hanson-trump-isn-t-negotiating-he-s-crushing-iran-s-regime](https://www.dailysignal.com/2026/04/22/america-at-250-dominating-world/?_bhlid=d65ed4fcf4db03485e1c07c933fee052a83b02cb&utm_source=TDS_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=victor-davis-hanson-trump-isn-t-negotiating-he-s-crushing-iran-s-regime)

## The Things Worth Dying For

**I'm an American and Catholic woman. My patriotism and my faith show me that if we refuse to sacrifice for what was bestowed to us as a trust, we will not survive.**

*By Meaghan Mobbs originally published in Tablet (April 19, 2026)*

I am a mother of two daughters. I am a Catholic. I served in Afghanistan. I was a psychologist who treated veterans suffering from PTSD in the Veterans Affairs. I do charity work in Ukraine, where I have watched ordinary people pick up rifles and stand in the rubble of their cities because they decided, with clear eyes, that their country is worth dying for. I lead a national security and policy center at Independent Women because I believe American women and girls deserve to understand the threats around them—threats foreign, yes, but increasingly and alarmingly domestic.

I tell you all of this because what I am about to say comes from lived places. It is not abstract. It is not academic. It is the thing I think about when I look at my daughters and ask myself what kind of country I am leaving them and whether they will have the formation, the faith, and the conviction to defend it if history asks them to.

And I believe it will ask them.

America is turning 250 years old. That is not a small thing. It is, by any honest accounting, an extraordinary thing—a country founded not on ethnicity or geography or royal bloodline, but on an idea. And that idea was not invented in a vacuum. It was soaked, from its very roots, in a Judeo-Christian understanding of the human person: that we are made in the image of God, that our rights flow from that Creator and not from any government, that we are therefore endowed with a dignity no king and no state has the authority to revoke.

This is why the Declaration of Independence does not read like a political manifesto. It reads like a theological document with military consequences.

The men who signed it knew exactly what they were doing. They were not naive about the cost. They pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. Many of them paid all three. They did so because they believed in something larger than themselves, something given to them by God and owed to their posterity. That belief was not incidental to the founding; it was the founding.

And it is the thread that runs, unbroken, through every generation of Americans who have answered the call to serve. Through the frozen fields of Valley Forge. Through the hills of Gettysburg. Through the beaches of Normandy. Through the jungles of Vietnam. Through the mountains of Afghanistan. In every case, the men and the women who found the courage to go, who mustered something in themselves that many of us can barely imagine, did so because they believed there was something sacred worth protecting. Oftentimes, it was their faith that gave them the vocabulary for sacrifice. But it was our country that gave that sacrifice meaning.

Recently, Pope Leo XIV strongly opposed the U.S. president's military actions in Iran, describing it as unjust. In his criticism, the pope has gone so far as to suggest that any military action is an affront to God and that "anyone who is a disciple of Christ ... is never on the side of those who ... today drop bombs." According to the pontiff, no cause can justify the shedding of innocent blood. Peace, Pope Leo went on to say, "comes only from the patient promotion of coexistence and dialogue among peoples."

Defense of the innocent is at the heart of Scripture. But its lesson is not passivity in the face of evil. It calls us to recognize the sanctity of innocent life and our responsibility to defend it, even when pursuing justice requires great human cost.

To pretend that all wars, or military actions, are equally wrong is moral confusion. It is also antithetical to the teachings of the Catholic Church, which was uniquely responsible for developing the theory of just war—the belief that the disciplined use of force to defend the innocent, restore justice, and secure peace when all other means have failed is necessary.

Our faith teaches us we cannot erase the distinction between aggressor and defender, between conquest and liberation, and between tyranny and resistance. By that logic, the United Kingdom and the United States were no different from Nazi Germany in the Second World War. History, reason, and Catholic tradition all reject that claim.

Relatedly, I have listened to a particular class of podcasters and commentators, people with large platforms and small consciences, decry the military operation in Iran and remark that they will not "send their sons and daughters to fight for Israel."

To be precise, this statement is antisemitic. The specific, deliberate singling out of Jewish people and the Jewish state as the cause for wantonly sacrificing Americans against our national interest has a long and ugly history, and dressing it in the language of anti-interventionism does not launder it. It is the same logic in different clothes.

It is also profoundly anti-American. Because the American project has always understood, imperfectly, haltingly, but genuinely, that the defense of human dignity does not stop at our borders. That a world in which tyrants are permitted to devour or



James Jarcho/Popperfoto via Getty Images

terrorize their neighbors—our allies and friends—without consequence is a world that will eventually come for us. Standing with allies who share our values and advance our interests is never charity; it is strategy and survival.

I do not blindly advocate for military intervention. No parent should ever have to bury a child. I mean that with every part of myself. There is no grief like it, and I have borne witness to much of it. There is no good parent anywhere on earth who would not give everything to spare their child that anguish, even at the cost of their own life.

But as an American and Catholic woman, my patriotism and my faith do not permit me to stop there. Because the same tradition that teaches me to mourn and honor the dead also teaches me that there are things in this world worth dying for. That love, at its fullest, is not self-preservation. That the person who lays down their life for their friends has done something that carries eternal and historical weight.

I will not lie to my daughters and tell them the world is safe. I will not raise them in a faith stripped of the cross and tell them that comfort is the goal. I will not send them into a civilization that has forgotten what it is for and expect them to be able to defend it.

What I will do, what I am called to do, as their mother and as a person of faith, is give them something to stand on. To tell them clearly, **We come from a people who believed in something. Who built something. Who bled for something. And who were sustained, in the doing of it, by a conviction that this life is not the end of the story.**

That is not a burden I am placing on them. Simply, it is the most precious gift I have to give.

The erosion of the belief that there are things worth dying for is not just playing out on social media or within the chattering class. It is also happening in the halls of Congress, where members on the left, and even some on the right, have used the exact phrase, “We are not sending our sons and daughters to fight.”

Echoes of this abhorrence of sacrifice have been socialized and expressed in our schools for years, where students have been taught that America is fundamentally bad. What follows is the cultural belief that if our nation is bad, it is unworthy. Unworthiness begets loathing, and loathing hollows out the civic virtue on which a free nation depends.

We are now living through the consequences of a coordinated assault on the very meaning of what it is to be an American. Not the caricature, not the jingoism or empty chest-thumping, but the real thing. The idea that this country was given to us as a trust, not an inheritance. That we are stewards of something that belongs to our children more than it belongs to us. That the phrase “one nation under God” is not decoration. It is load-bearing.

When a culture loses that, it does not simply become less patriotic. It becomes less capable of survival. Because the question every civilization must eventually answer—what are we for, and what will we defend?—does not go away simply because we have stopped having the courage to ask it.

We are entering our 250th year as a nation. That anniversary demands something of us beyond celebration. It demands reckoning and then it demands recommitment.

The recommitment begins with honesty: that we live in the greatest country on earth and that great things will be demanded of us because of it. That our Judeo-Christian foundation is not a relic to be embarrassed about, but a living root system without which this tree does not stand. Freedom has never been free. The people who told you otherwise were either being naive, selling something, or being paid by one of our enemies to convince you of it.

And then it demands faith. Not faith as sentiment or as a bumper sticker. Faith as the thing that steadies you when the demand is real and the cost is clear, and you choose to pay it anyway because you know, in a place deeper than strategy or politics or policy, that some things are worth it.

Peace in the face of fear is what faith is for. It is not a promise that nothing terrible will happen. It is the assurance that nothing terrible is the end of the story.

I believe that. I am raising my daughters to believe it. And I believe this country, if it remembers who she is, can believe it too and act accordingly.

Access the article: <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/things-worth-dying-for-america>

*Meaghan Mobbs, PhD, is a veteran, national security leader, and presidential appointee to the Board of Visitors at the United States Military Academy, serving as Director of the Center for American Safety and Security at Independent Women and President of the R.T. Weatherman Foundation.*

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## Public Corner

### Public Local Meetings

Interested in attending public meetings? Here are a few in your area for this month.

<https://www.mercercounty.org/i-want-to/calendar-meeting-list>

### HVRSD School Board Meeting

Monday May 18, 2026 at 6:30 PM  
425 S Main St. Pennington, NJ 08534  
Or Livestream on YouTube

### Municipal Township Meetings

<https://www.hopewelltpw.org/calendar.aspx?CID=32>

Township Committee Regular Meeting  
Monday May 4, 2026, 6:30 PM

Township Committee Regular Meeting  
Monday May 18 2026, 6:30 PM

Meetings are in hybrid format- Township Municipal Building & Zoom

Township meetings will be held at HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL SERVICES BUILDING 201 Washington Crossing - Pennington Road, Titusville, NJ 08560

In case you are unable to attend Township Committee mtgs, the recordings are available. Per the township clerk's office Kathy, they are "usually," available within a few days of the meeting.

Happy viewing click here:

[https://videoplayer.telvue.com/player/k83q0qZsxB\\_6dlk4EjvYfv...](https://videoplayer.telvue.com/player/k83q0qZsxB_6dlk4EjvYfv...)

Or: <https://www.hopewelltpw.org/> select How Do I.../ bottom right View/ Video Library

### Board of Elections Meeting

Schedule, Agenda, Minutes: <https://www.mercercounty.org/boards-commissions/board-of-elections/board-meeting-schedule-election-timelines>

Tuesday May 12, 2026 at 12:00 PM

Board of Elections Meetings will be at 930 Spruce St., Lawrence, NJ 08648

### Mercer County Board of County Commissioners

Meeting Notice, Agenda: <https://www.mercercounty.org/government/board-of-county-commissioners/meeting-agenda>

Meeting Schedule -- May 2026

Tuesday May 12, 2026 6:00 PM Agenda Meeting

Tuesday May 12, 2026 6:00 PM Formal Meeting

Tuesday May 26, 2026 6:00 PM Agenda Meeting

Thursday May 28, 2026 6:00 PM Formal Meeting

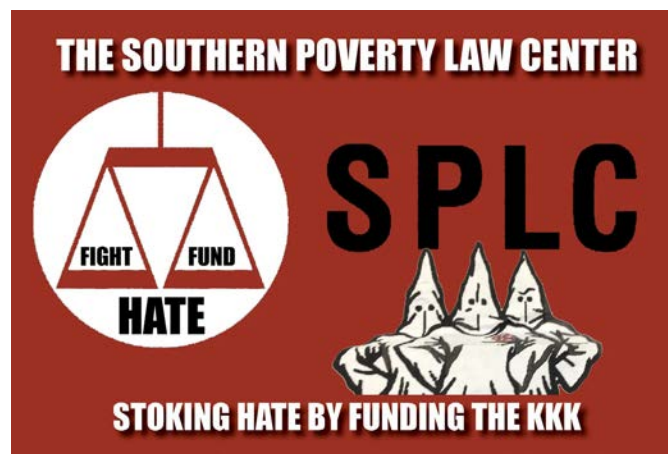
Agenda and Formal Meetings will take place at the Mercer County Administration Building, Room 211, 640 South Broad St., Trenton, NJ unless otherwise stated.

In order to encourage full participation of these meetings, please submit any requests for accommodations of people with disabilities to the Clerk to the Board, Mercer County Administration Building, PO Box 8068, Trenton, NJ 08650

(609) 989-6584 {V/TTY} {Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 101-336}

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## TruthBTold



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## At the Movies, Bookstores

### Book: **The Making Of The American Mind: The Story Of Our Declaration Of Independence**

Author: Matthew Spalding

Publisher: Encounter Books

Publication Date: December 9, 2025

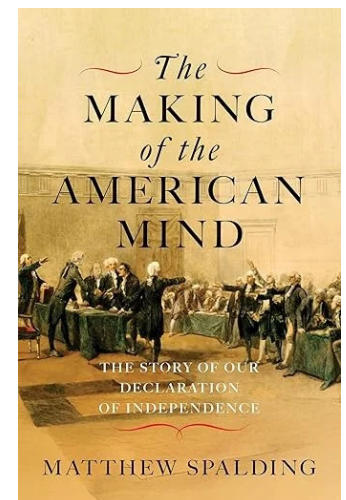
Hardcover, 344 Pages

#### Overview

Thomas Jefferson called the Declaration of Independence “an expression of the American mind.” Not merely a document, the Declaration is the common creed of our civic life, and it inspires the shared poetry of our political soul.

In *The Making of the American Mind*, best-selling author Matthew Spalding presents the dynamic story of the band of patriots who united to declare independence from—and declare war against—the most powerful nation in the world. He recounts the whirlwind of historic events that led up to the momentous political and strategic decisions of July 1776: from George Washington leading a new and untested army, to John Adams and Thomas Jefferson advocating independence in a divided Continental Congress, to George III forging an absolute tyranny over “the good People of these Colonies.”

In this unique commentary, Spalding recovers the deep roots of the Declaration of Independence by examining the influence of the Greeks and Romans, the Christian West, and the English constitutional tradition on the American mind. Reading



through the Declaration clause by clause, he explores the rich history and profound significance of the document's powerful language and arguments—from the “Laws of Nature and of Nature's God,” “all men are created equal,” and the “pursuit of happiness” to “prudence will dictate” and “abuses and usurpations.” Based on extensive, original research, the work presents in vivid detail the heroic deeds of those who pledged “our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor” to support the Declaration.

America cannot be appreciated without an understanding of the Declaration of Independence. Spalding's dramatic retelling and thorough explanation of the Declaration's making and meaning will capture the heart and instruct the mind of every reader.

To purchase: Encounter Books, Amazon, Barnes & Noble

About the author: <https://dc.hillsdale.edu/Profiles/Matthew-Spalding/>

*Dr. Matthew Spalding is the Kirby Professor in Constitutional Government at Hillsdale College and the Dean of the Van Andel Graduate School of Government at Hillsdale College's Washington, D.C. Campus. As Vice President for Washington Operations, he also oversees the Allan P. Kirby Jr. Center for Constitutional Studies and Citizenship and the academic and educational programs of Hillsdale in the nation's capital. He is the best-selling author of multiple books, which can be found here, and is the author of the newly-released The Making of the American Mind: The Story of Our Declaration of Independence. Hillsdale in D.C. sat down with Dr. Spalding to learn more about his latest book and what readers will gain from it.*

## **The Making Of The American Mind: An Interview With Dr. Matthew Spalding**

*By Hillsdale in D.C. originally published by Hillsdale College (December 8, 2025)*

### **Why did you write this book? What is it about?**

This book grows out of my own education and my teaching for decades and it focuses on the kind of centrality of the Declaration of Independence, an important document we oftentimes take for granted. I wanted to write a book that told the great story of how it came into being, how it was actually written, the debate in the Continental Congress, and the brave decision in the midst of war to make that declaration. But the other thing I wanted to do was actually to write a commentary—almost a line-by-line commentary of the words and phrases and their meanings—that would take us through the whole document, not just the famous parts, not just a few lines here and there but actually go through the whole document. So it would give us a sense of its general import as a political document created by the Continental Congress meant to make a regime argument at the moment they were declaring their independence and starting a new nation.

### **What do you hope readers will learn from reading your book?**

Hopefully a number of things at different levels! In general, I think that with the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the nation, this is a crucial moment for us to recover and to remember our own history. Whether we're reviewing the narrative or hearing the story for the first time we need to learn it and recover it. At a deeper level, it's important that we as citizens understand the meaning of the terms by which we are citizens, the principles of our own regime. And then I would say the third thing I hope people get out of it is this: Augustine wrote this a long time ago that you really can't love something unless you know it. So part of my objective is to help us to know the Declaration of Independence in a deeper way, understanding its meaning, its purposes, but also the way it points towards eternal and transcendent truths about man and the natural order of things. Knowing all these things makes our country worth loving.

### **Why is your book important today?**

I would say it's important today because of the 250th anniversary, but I would also point out is that we're at a time in our own politics—our own history—when we're debating virtually everything and we're increasingly questioning everything. This is true on the Left and the Right. Our politics are quite confused as to what should be the basis of our politics. From a conservative point of view: what is it that we should be conserving? And what is truly liberating about the American tradition? One of the purposes of the book is to go back and relearn these things so as to reorient our current politics toward those fundamental truths, those first principles, and to give us some guidance today that I think we are currently lacking.

### **After the commentary in the book on the Declaration, you have a closing chapter called “Iron Men.” What is that?**

The phrase comes from a great speech by Abraham Lincoln in Chicago of 1858 when, almost in passing, he says of those who signed the Declaration, “They were iron men.” I think that's a great line. I wanted to write an epilogue in the book about the signers, about all the people who signed the Declaration and what they did to support the Declaration with their lives and fortunes. Especially focusing on what they did in the Revolution. It pulls together a lot of original research that tells a very dynamic story about these great individuals, these “iron men.”

### **Is there anything new you learned while writing the book?**

There are always new things one learns in such a project, which is always wonderful. I would probably say I learned that the document which I've studied for decades and taught for decades is a much more powerful, and holistic document than I

previously had thought: how it all fits together and makes an argument and how it rhetorically pulls its various parts together and is laid out, almost like a symphony with different rhythms and parts that work in harmony. There are a lot of historic details of different phrases and lines here and there, for instance; all their grievances that no one really knows about anymore. Just going through and learning about all those particulars and then putting them together I would say is probably the most fun thing but also the most interesting thing I learned in the process.

Access the interview: <https://dc.hillsdale.edu/News/The-Making-of-the-American-Mind/>

## Hillsdale College: The Story Of America

### Episode 2: The Shot Heard Round the World

By Hillsdale College. Hillsdale College President Larry Arnn introduces a new video series, "The Story of America," created in partnership with the White House.

**Stories that shaped a nation. Faced with a choice between freedom and tyranny, courageous men and women risked their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to form a more perfect union—the United States of America. As our nation marks its 250th anniversary, we invite you to watch and learn from these fascinating stories that celebrate the American spirit.**

**Episode 2 (10mins 46secs; April 26 2025): Hillsdale College Professor of History Wilfred McClay explains "the shot heard round the world" that started the American Revolution 250 years ago.**



Join Wilfred McClay from Hillsdale College as he recounts the pivotal clashes at Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. Discover how British troops, under General Thomas Gage, aimed to suppress the growing rebellion but instead sparked a revolution. Learn about the heroic actions of the American militiamen, the infamous midnight ride of Paul Revere, and the lasting legacy of these events as captured in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem. This engaging narrative highlights the importance of remembering our history and the spirit of resilience that defines the American character.

Access the video (10mins 46secs): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdtJd8Mck0o>

Watch the series so far! [https://storyofamerica.hillsdale.edu/#watch\\_series](https://storyofamerica.hillsdale.edu/#watch_series)

Support Hillsdale College: <https://secured.hillsdale.edu/hillsdale/support-hillsdale-college...>

Visit our website: <http://hillsdale.edu>

Learn from our online courses: <http://online.hillsdale.edu>

Read Imprimis: <https://imprimis.hillsdale.edu/>

*Hillsdale College is an independent institution of higher learning founded in 1844 by men and women "grateful to God for the inestimable blessings" resulting from civil and religious liberty and "believing that the diffusion of learning is essential to the perpetuity of these blessings." It pursues the stated object of the founders: "to furnish all persons who wish, irrespective of nation, color, or sex, a literary, scientific, [and] theological education" outstanding among American colleges "and to combine with this such moral and social instruction as will best develop the minds and improve the hearts of its pupils." As a nonsectarian Christian institution, Hillsdale College maintains "by precept and example" the immemorial teachings and practices of the Christian faith.*

*The College also considers itself a trustee of our Western philosophical and theological inheritance tracing to Athens and Jerusalem, a heritage finding its clearest expression in the American experiment of self-government under law.*

*By training the young in the liberal arts, Hillsdale College prepares students to become leaders worthy of that legacy. By encouraging the scholarship of its faculty, it contributes to the preservation of that legacy for future generations. By publicly defending that legacy, it enlists the aid of other friends of free civilization and thus secures the conditions of its own survival and independence.*

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## We the People of Interest

### The Picture Of Dorian Gray

By Werner Graf

Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is a masterclass lesson in morality, the beauty of the human soul, and the dangers of valuing external beauty over the actions that define us. As we've stated previously, The Graf Dairy Hero Foundation believes each child, like the initial portrait of Dorian Gray, comes out of the womb beautiful and wanting to do good. Our core charter as a charity is to cultivate that heroic mindset and help stave off cultural elements which work to a child's detriment.

Dorian Gray started as a young man of incredible beauty obsessed with the idea of preserving it forever. However, instead of dedicating his life to doing the things that preserve his beauty (soul), he wishes for a shortcut cosmetic solution— his portrait would age in his stead and he subsequently descends into a life of immorality and evil.

On its surface, Gray's pursuit of eternal beauty is a metaphor for our obsession with appearances and external images of perfection. However, the complicated themes are much deeper. Wilde uses the portrait as a physical manifestation of Dorian's inner degradation behind a façade of beauty. With every hedonistic act, Gray's portrait becomes increasingly grotesque, even as his physical appearance remains beautiful.

Eventually, Gray's self-indulgent ways leads to tragedy when he rejects Sibyl Vane, a young actress, causing her suicide. Gray's initial remorse however unfortunately yields into cold, rationalized justification. Instead of contrition, he becomes more utilitarian, absolving himself of any responsibility. This signifies Gray's full descent into moral corruption, now viewing the world through a dehumanized lens, valuing his experience over concern for his fellow man and the goodness of life.

How many people the world make us more callous over the course of our lives that we dehumanize and devalue life and morality? Wilde's genius highlights the ease in how Gray distances himself from the immorality of his actions. It is too easy to trap. How do we protect our children from going down that path and rather embrace a superhero mentality which is dedicated to good, principles, and their fellow man?

As the story continues, Gray's vice and hedonism increases and his self-deception grows allowing him to commit greater atrocities sans guilt or regret. He eventually commits the mortal sin of killing the very artist who painted the portrait now immortalizing his soul. The murder is a "point of no return" for Gray, especially given that it was a calculated deliberate decision illustrating a chosen depravity. The murder is not a crime of passion nor a spontaneous act.

Wilde then weaves in a reflection on the nature of redemption. It's at this point in the book that we actually start hoping again for Dorian Gray. Wilde uses Hetty, a young woman who embodies the innocence and purity whom Dorian is moved to protect as something good, hopefully saving another soul from being corrupted by being entangled in his life. It is a significant departure from his typical selfishness.

Dorian considers the possibility of redemption, of altering another's life for the good, unlike the tragedy of Sibyl Vane. But the book sets up a question: is his decision to end the relationship before it leads to Hetty's ruin grounded in goodness—OR a desperate attempt at self-serving salvation?

When we take kids through the Super Hero statue gallery, we addressed the concept of redemption while we talk about the black widow. One of the points that we make is that you can always be redeemed, that there is nothing that you do in this world that you can't come back from, but you have to be contrite, which is a sincere remorse. There also has to be a commitment to do better. You can't be upset that you got caught, you have to be upset because you did wrong and own it.

Oscar Wilde builds this layer of complexity considering the purity of Gray's motives: is this true virtue and genuine act of contrition or is the redemption grounded in self preservation? Dorian surmises that the portrait, the physical manifestation of his sinfulness might just be a valid test of his sincerity. If his actions towards Hetty were genuine, the portrait would hopefully reflect a change, a reversal of the ugliness depicting his battered soul.

This is perhaps where Dorian makes his mistake, seeking external validation for his redemption. Redemption cannot be sanctioned by external sources, it must be in the heart, and if it's in the heart, it will be known. You will take the consequences for your action. You will feel the remorse, you will make amends to the best of your ability in concrete action going forward.

In Gray's case, the portrait remained unchanged as a grotesque reflection of his moral corruption. A brief flirtation with goodness did not absolve him of his past transgressions, nor validate his attempt at redemption. True atonement requires a profound inner transformation, not merely placing random acts of goodness on a set of scales.

In the absence of a true inner contriteness, Dorian Gray is driven to a moment of profound despair and vows to destroy the external portrait that reflects his every grotesque transgression. This final desire to obliterate the evidence of his decay is a final cosmetic act to reclaim his soul (and perhaps an unconscious attempt to end his own suffering). However, by destroying the portrait Gray's fate is unknowingly sealed as the curse of his own vanity comes full circle. Rather than a desperate shortcut to absolve themselves from the ugliness of sin, it's the portrait that reverts to its original depiction of Dorian as a thing of beauty

while Dorian himself becomes a grotesque reflection preceding his death lying beside the restored portrait. In his attempt to destroy evidence of sin without addressing it's inner root through true contrition, Gray ends his own life.

The Graf Dairy Hero Foundation sees the beauty in the soul and cherishes it, hoping in a small way to protect children from the corruption of the world through their adaption of a heroic mindset. Our children deserve and require examples, real and fictional, of pure and selfless virtue, rooted in a desire to promote our better nature. What will our children do when confronted with the every day and eternal struggle between conscience and temptation? Will they hear the whisper of conscience, urging them towards self-reliance, humility & courage — or embrace the seductive allure of self-indulgence?

Let's have them think about being HEROES!

More about the Graf Dairy Hero Foundation (GDHF): <https://grafdairyherofoundation.com/>

## Our New Jersey Signers Of The Declaration Of Independence

*Publishers note: As we near July 2026, our 250th Semiquincentennial, we wanted to encourage getting to know our esteemed New Jersey Signers of the Declaration of Independence. From November 2025 through March 2026 we featured our five heroic NJ Signers. They truly did pledge their Lives, their Fortunes and their Sacred Honor. They all deserve our utmost gratitude and we should all take the time to learn, remember and pass on the stories and legacy of these unsung heroes of American history.*

- **Abraham Clark** (featured in January 2026: <https://mercervethepeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/0126-MercerWe-revised.pdf>)
- **John Hart** (featured in November 2025: <https://mercervethepeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/1125-MercerWe.pdf>)
- **Francis Hopkinson** (featured in February 2026: <https://mercervethepeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/0226-MercerWe-revised.pdf>)
- **Richard Stockton** (featured in March 2026: <https://mercervethepeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/0326-MercerWe.pdf>)
- **John Witherspoon** (featured in December 2025): <https://mercervethepeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/1225-MercerWe.pdf>)

## Freedom 250: Signers Of The Declaration Of Independence

### Celebrating the Triumph of the American Spirit

**On July 4, 2026, America will celebrate the most important milestone in our country's history—250 years of American Independence. "With a single sheet of parchment and 56 signatures, America began the greatest political journey in human history," said President Trump of this momentous anniversary.**

Under the President's leadership, the Salute to America 250 Task Force ("Task Force 250") is executing a full year of festivities, which began on Memorial Day, 2025, and will continue through the end of 2026.

The White House is engaging all levels of government, the private sector, non-profit and educational institutions, and every citizen across the country to celebrate this historic milestone. To achieve this ambitious vision, we have created a new public-private partnership called Freedom 250.

Task Force 250 aims to inspire a renewed love for American history, encourage citizens to experience the beauty of our country, ignite a spirit of adventure and innovation to help our nation succeed for the next 250 years, and invite Americans to pray for our country and our people and rededicate ourselves as One Nation Under God.



Painting: The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776. Artist: John Trumbull, 1817-1818. Location: Capitol Rotunda.

From the Freedom 250 website watch a brief video and read a brief bio on each of the Declaration of Independence Signers: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/freedom250/founders-museum/signers/profiles/>

## Presidential Message Commemorating 250 Years Of The Bible In America

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This week, I send my best wishes to every citizen gathered at the Museum of the Bible, on the National Mall, and all across our country participating in America Reads the Bible, a historic initiative in which nearly 500 Americans will take part in a public reading, over the course of one week, of the entire Bible—from Genesis to Revelation—to celebrate 250 years of the Bible in America.

From Christopher Columbus' arrival in the New World and the first permanent English-speaking settlement at Jamestown to our founding in 1776 and to the present day, the Bible has been indelibly woven into our national identity and way of life. Nearly 400 years ago, a decade after the arrival of the Mayflower, the legendary John Winthrop powerfully invoked Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew: "We must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us," Winthrop said, imploring his fellow Christian settlers to stand as a beacon of faith for all the world to see.

In the decades that followed, the truths of Holy Scripture remained deeply embedded in our culture—not only within the walls of our churches but in our homes, schools, courtrooms, and public square. Nearly 150 years after Winthrop's storied sermon, on July 4, 1776, our Founders echoed Holy Scripture in the central animating principle of the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

From the declaration of those immortal words at the very beginning of our Republic, and ever since, the Bible has enduringly illuminated our system of Government, given life to our constitutional framework, bolstered our educational institutions, and informed our deepest civic and moral identity. The 1787 Northwest Ordinance—one of our Nation's earliest and most formative laws—stated that "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." Two decades later, John Adams, our second President, wrote the following to his fellow Founding Father Benjamin Rush: "The Bible contains the most profound Philosophy, the most perfect Morality, and the most refined Policy, that ever was conceived upon Earth."

In every generation, through every trial and triumph, God's Word has guided our people and our country to incredible new heights. During the first inauguration, George Washington, setting a precedent for all future Presidents, put his left hand on the Bible and took the oath of office, after which he kissed the Bible. In his First Inaugural Address Washington stated: "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States." In President Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, he quoted the Bible 4 times, mentioned God 14 times, and invoked the power of prayer 3 times as he sought to bring the country back together after a bloody 4-year Civil War. As more than 70,000 American troops prepared to land on the beaches of Normandy, President Franklin D. Roosevelt took to national radio and prayed that God's blessings prevail over "the unholy forces of our enemy." And at the height of the Cold War and the righteous crusade that he led to defeat atheistic communism, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed 1983 to be the Year of the Bible, writing: "Of the many influences that have shaped the United States of America into a distinctive Nation and people, none may be said to be more fundamental and enduring than the Bible."

Today, during our 250th year of American independence, the America Reads the Bible initiative invites all citizens to once again acknowledge our Nation's extraordinary Biblical foundations and to give thanks for the countless ways in which God has been the sacred source of our unity and national strength. This one-week event, during which leaders in faith, Government, business, and entertainment will read every verse and chapter of the Bible, will inspire countless citizens to rediscover the Biblical truths that have animated our Republic for two and a half centuries and to pray that the Bible will continue to guide us—as individuals, as a people, and as a Nation—for the next 250 years and beyond.

I applaud every citizen participating in the America Reads the Bible initiative. Together, we will honor Holy Scripture, renew our faith, usher in a historic resurgence of religion on American shores, and rededicate the United States as one Nation under God.

Access the Presidential Message: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2026/04/presidential-message-commemorating-250-years-of-the-bible-in-america/>

"For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,  
Through all our history, to the last,  
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,  
The people will waken and listen to hear  
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,  
And the midnight message of Paul Revere."

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### Mercer We the People

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