BOWLING GREEN DAILY NEWS

How the United States can make it another 250 years…

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As our republic prepares to celebrate two-and-a-half centuries as an unprecedented beacon of light in the history of the world, you're going to see considerable homage paid to the past.

Which is justified. We deserve a moment to look at what we've accomplished. On the other hand, I think it's far more important to look at where we're headed. Just because we made it this far is no guarantee we'll be able to successfully navigate the turbulent waters that lie ahead.

That's why I've decided to ponder what it's going to take to make it through the next 250 years. From my vantage point, it's not altogether clear we'll have a similar celebration in 2276.

If we are to have any chance of making it to that next milestone, a few things are going to have to change. And luckily for you, I'm here to tell you what they are.

First, we're going to have to return to valuing competence over loyalty. The challenges we are facing as we march deeper into the 21st Century are daunting and complex; they will require unparalleled experience and expertise. They will not be overcome by sycophants whose only credentials seem to be a willingness to kiss the ring and foolishly cater to the leader's every whim.

Second, we're going to have to get intimately reacquainted with the document that got us this far: The U.S. Constitution. Any administration that sees our allegiance to anything or anyone other than this seminal roadmap for an enduring government of the people, by the people and for the people should be viewed with a jaundiced eye.

Let's begin with the First Amendment. If we're going to make it another 250 years in this still-evolving experiment in self-governance, the ironclad separation between church and state needs to be meticulously and uncompromisingly maintained. The United States was not set up as a theocracy and any attempt to move in that direction should be vigorously opposed.

Similarly, any infringement on our right to free speech should be dealt with immediately and decisively. This includes individuals as well as journalists. The idea of a state media being established in America - or one that even slightly puts its thumb on the scale for the government - should be vehemently denounced at every available opportunity.

Moving on to the much misaligned and misunderstood Second Amendment, everyone needs to understand that having the right to bear arms does not mean everyone in society should have access to guns. Only a complete moron would argue that convicted felons, fugitives from justice, the mentally ill, those subject to domestic violence restraining orders, or children should be in possession of firearms.

There are those among us who would put them in vending machines if we'd let them. Responsible gun control in no way violates the Constitution.

Third, we have got to get politics out of our law-and-order institutions (the judiciary, the police, and especially the Department of Justice) as well as the military. This self-inflicted threat to our continued viability based on self-serving political ideology cannot be overemphasized. Upholding the rule of law should have nothing to do with which party is in power and any attempt at retribution based on loyalty to anything other than the Constitution should be categorically condemned.

Fourth, and perhaps the biggest threat we face in getting to 2276 is fiscal. We simply can't keep spending what we don't have and expect to maintain an acceptable quality of life for all our citizens. But before you start high fiving this one, I'm not talking about cutting social programs. Our country, like it or not, is going to have to provide an even greater economic safety net – one that was never envisioned by FDR in his wildest dreams.

If we are to survive, the government must play a much more substantive role in meeting the basic human needs of its citizens. We need universal healthcare, a guaranteed income for all our retirees that allows them to live out the remainder of their lives with dignity, and an end to homelessness and hunger. The basic amenities of life should not be distributed based on the size of one's bank account.

This can be done if we impose a progressive tax structure in which the wealthy are required to give back to those who made their affluence possible: the workers and the consumers. This will only be possible, however, if we actually focus on solving societal problems instead of giving tax breaks to those pursuing vanity projects that benefit only a select few.

The Founding Fathers didn't set up an oligarchy; we can't let our nation become one.

If we pursue altruistic priorities, instead of those based on self-aggrandizement, selfishness and unbridled materialism, I have no doubt we will still be around – and stronger than ever – 250 years from now. Our ancestors understood this and were willing to make sacrifices for the greater good.

All we need is the vision, the courage, and the fortitude to emulate them and make it happen.



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