



Bluegrass Beacon BY JIM WATERS

Taking up the cause of freedom starts with a simple vote

By Jim Waters

Too many Americans have the mistaken notion that everyone else but them should take responsibility to defend freedom and advance policies that would make a better nation.

Based on the [dismal 10-percent turnout](#) for the primary election, the “them not me” syndrome appears alive and well in Kentucky.

I run into plenty of folks who excel at griping about what’s happening in Frankfort or down at city hall but who go AWOL on Election Day, disappearing under a cloak of excuses, rather than practicing good citizenship. Action such as voting holds lawmakers accountable.

Such indifference, a first cousin to ignorance, abandons what makes a free society work and shirks the responsibilities of its inhabitants.

I’m not talking about government-mandated responsibilities. I mean decisions made by individuals in the interest of freedom — the impetus for America’s founding and that which holds the key to Kentucky’s climb to greatness.

No one forced Rhode Island’s William Ellery and 55 others to sign the Declaration of Independence. They knew that it would cost them dearly if the revolution failed. They would likely hang. King George’s thugs ransacked and burned Ellery’s home and the homes of 11 other signers as a prelude to what would befall their lives if they and others failed.

Still, Ellery and his fellow signers pursued their own liberty and happiness. They reveled in the satisfaction that allowed them to sacrifice for a cause greater than themselves.

Ellery once marveled that he saw “undaunted resolution” in the faces of his co-signers. He also understood something about the role of government: “The office of government is not to confer happiness but to give men the opportunity to work out happiness for themselves.”

That’s why I cringe when I hear someone blather: “Yeah, I hope the [government bans smoking](#) because I need to stop.”

As if without the government, an individual Kentuckian could not quit bowing, worshiping and possibly even dying before a little green plant. Or that without a government mandate, someone cannot figure out how to insure his or her health, run a business or find needed sources of energy.

Our founders sacrificed greatly because they knew that a nation of individuals — free of government planners and do-gooders, even the most well-intentioned — would pose a greater threat to tyrannical kings and barbarous systems of enslavement than bureaucrats or armies.

Messy? Yes. Costly? Very. But it works.

Haym Salomon knew something about the cost of liberty.

The Polish, Jewish immigrant to America lived a short 45 years, but he made the most of his time on this planet. Salomon — arrested twice in New York by the British and sentenced to die the second time — fled to Philadelphia. In five years, he went from penniless to becoming the “Financial Hero of the American Revolution,” as described on a postal stamp honoring him in 1975.

Salomon came to Gen. George Washington’s aid when our first president cornered the British in Yorktown but lacked money to finish them off. Washington issued a simple command after learning the colonial government was broke and with no prospects for credit: “Send for Haym Salomon.” Salomon raised the equivalent of what today would equate to nearly \$8 million for the Yorktown campaign, which brought the war to an end.

Salomon not only saved the revolution. He repeatedly raised money to bail out the newly formed and debt-ridden government. Legend has it he also helped some of that early government’s most famous members, including James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, and that the government owed him \$40 billion (in 2005 dollars) when he died.

While debate may continue about some of those claims, answer this: “What sacrifice have you made for the cause of freedom?”

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