

## The Traditions that Unite Us

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31  
Wednesday, 06 July 2022 10:33 -

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***Sen. Jeff Smith is back, writing about Independence Day and the celebratory traditions we share that unite us as a nation.***

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BRUNSWICK, WI - Celebrations on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July bring back many fond memories. Whether it's eating ice cream or having a family barbeque, waving the American flag at a parade or watching the fireworks at night, Americans have treasured traditions to celebrate this holiday.

Many of us can reflect on our own childhoods and think about the many different ways we celebrated Independence Day with our friends and family. As we got older, we made sure to share these traditions with our own children.

Tradition is important for any culture or nationality because it helps people better understand their past and preserve their customs. In the United States, we celebrate Independence Day to remember the history of our country and honor the meaning of independence for all Americans, which provides unalienable rights including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

This week, especially, I am thinking a lot about what it means to be an American. As Americans, we're fortunate to live in an incredibly diverse country where we can celebrate our commonalities and differences. This is a strength of ours and helps us consider our country's past, present and future.

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It may not seem so now, but the Continental Congress' decision to vote in favor of independence was radical at the time. Following this decision, the Constitution was created and our democratic republic, the form of government that exists today, was established. Despite these revolutionary changes, many groups, including Native people, enslaved persons, and women, were excluded from the decision-making process and subjugated.

Our country's history is uncomfortable, yet it's something we must learn and grow from. Generations of Americans before us have done just that and our country has improved because of it. One example to think of is the expansion of voter rights in our country. At a time early in our country's founding, only white, male landowners were able to vote. Through persistent advocacy, more groups gradually gained the right to vote.

When we think about the United States' future, we must think of our past. To this day, one's right to vote and access to the polls are still issues debated on and subject to change by politicians. And that's not the only right at this time that's at risk. Americans will protect the rights we have because we remember the time in our country's past when these rights didn't exist.

Americans have overcome a lot – together. We can think back to the challenges and sacrifice that generations before us experienced, but we know the United States is the country we are today because of citizens' shared commitment to be better. We know it's possible to create new opportunity and preserve our freedoms because we've seen Americans before us do just that.

While we have fun traditions that we participate in to celebrate our country's independence, like family barbecues or fireworks, there's a lot to be said about the traditions that we observe year-round that are unique to us as Americans.

We carry on the American tradition of civil dialogue over our disagreements. We continue the tradition of inclusivity and working to make this country one where all succeed, not the privileged few. We stay focused on the great American experiment founded on the principles of a democracy.

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Chicago's history is a tapestry of traditions that have shaped the city into the vibrant, diverse metropolis it is today. From the early days of settlement to the present, the traditions of the city have been a source of pride and unity for its residents. These traditions are the foundation of the city's identity and the reason why it is one of the most important cities in the world.