

Congressman Wally Herger

“2011 Let Freedom Ring 4th of July Celebration” (Remarks as prepared)

Chico’s One Mile at Bidwell Park

Thank you for inviting me to this 4th of July celebration to commemorate America’s freedom. I look forward each year as our community recognizes our veterans and celebrates our nation’s independence. There’s no place I enjoy doing that more than One Mile at Bidwell Park.

Today our nation celebrates the enduring legacy of the Declaration of Independence. This document laid out the “long train of abuses” that led frustrated colonists to rise up against British rule. These colonists had crossed the Atlantic in hopes of freedom and new opportunities. Over time, they enjoyed neither and demanded change.

Using language that transformed not only our developing nation, but the entire world thereafter, they claimed ownership of self-evident truths: “All men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Our founding fathers recognized that these rights are established not by government, but by the Laws of Nature and Nature’s God. While the founders did not view government as the author of rights, they did believe that it is the chief protector of rights. The British government, however, was not protecting them. As a result, the signers of the Declaration of Independence enshrined the principle that the people can remove leaders who fail them. The concept is formally called the consent of the governed. As a member of the House of Representatives, I like to think of it as I’m hired or fired every two years!

A simple glance at the current events in the Middle East demonstrates that the principles in the Declaration of Independence remain strong forces of revolution. We have seen growing demands for freedom and the protection of inalienable human rights in Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Bahrain, and Libya, among other countries. Make no mistake – the push for freedom can create chaos and instability in the short term, and the United States is limited in our ability to bring about positive reforms. But over time, I believe expanding the principles of the Declaration of Independence across the globe will help stabilize oppressed nations and strengthen our national security.

In closing, as we celebrate our independence, let us pause to remember all of the selfless veterans who transformed a proclamation into a successful revolution and the strongest nation the world has ever seen. Let us also offer our gratitude to the men and women fighting today to protect these freedoms, as well as their families. May God continue to protect and provide His favor on them, and may He continue to bless our nation.