

Law Day Essay
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According to Greek mythology, if a mythological god gave his oath upon the river Styx and failed to keep his word, Zeus, king of the Pantheon, forced that god to drink from the river itself. The myth says that the foul water would cause the god to lose his or her voice for nine years.

The American Constitution is the river upon which our government officials must take oath to defend and uphold. Any American official – whether president, senator, or judge—who fail to honor that oath must answer to this country’s citizens, who have the power of Zeus to silence them. The freedoms guaranteed in the Bill of Rights arm Americans with a more-than-mythological power, manifested in the ballot and the power of free speech.

The Federal Government of the United States of America, a democratic republic, has outshined governments past and present in terms of its openness, its endurance, and its responsiveness—all of which hinge upon its organization. Forged in the fires of a revolution that changed the world, the Constitution of the United States, the blueprint of our Government, announced the true power behind the democratic republic in its first nine immortal words, “We the People of the United States of America.” The citizens, not the president, nor the legislators, nor the judges have the reins solely in their hands. The American people are the careful riders, and make the Government stay on the

righteous path firmly set forth by the Constitution, the path beset on all sides by the darkness of oppression and the evils of tyranny.

Some vocal critics use the media outlets to cry that the people surely do not have power, that nothing they do stops the government from defying its constituents. These critics are wrong. The very fact they can speak so freely about the government is enough evidence to prove their folly.

One silver bullet of the people is universal suffrage. The rights to vote grants Americans the right to choose not leaders, but representatives whose very seats depend entirely on the citizens who brought them into power in the first place. Even the Supreme Court's decisions are affected by the power of the ballot. When Americans choose their President, they essentially begin the process of choosing their judges.

A well of power for Americans is in the courtroom. Any American can challenge the constitutionality of a law. In 1986, the Supreme Court defended a law in Georgia that banned homosexual relations. At that time the decision reflected the opinions of the broader base of America. However, as America has become more tolerant of divergent lifestyles, the Supreme Court no longer defends such restrictive laws, and the same law that the Court defended back in 1986 was eliminated in the Georgia Supreme Court, other states following their example. While the Constitution remains the riverbed of which the laws must flow upon like the water, the people of the United States are the ones who control the direction of the currents. From decisions about prayer in schools, to affirmative action, to campaign finances, the American people keep their legislators, their president, and their judges true to the Constitution.

Important decisions are hard to make, especially when the stakes are so high. Those decisions, however, must be informed decisions. Americans face consequential choices each and every time they walk up to the voting booth or into a courtroom. Choosing a man or woman to take on the responsibility to affect other people's lives is a decision where one needs to be informed, and even afterwards, that person in power needs to be held responsible for his use (or misuse) of power.

Journalists and reporters have the critical responsibility of informing the people of America of significant socio-political events. Through its influence, the media holds the power to change the course of American History and to protect the balance of power. Back in 1972, the fateful night on June 17, burglars broke into the Watergate Building Complex and raided the Democratic Party headquarters. However, this seemingly insignificant event could all been dismissed as just a burglary. Two journalists, backed by the Washington Post, made connections with the ongoing presidential election campaign and the Watergate burglary. Exhaustive and meticulous investigative journalism brought about the case of United States v. Nixon. A president, and members of his staff, were forced to sip the foul waters from the River Styx. The powers of journalists brought down an entire Administration by gathering the facts and presenting them to the American people. Assuring an informed populace is the purpose of the news media, the collective mass of journalists from the *Pocono Record* to NBC. Journalism helps to preserve the balance of power by reporting upon political events while holding political and social leaders responsible for their actions.

Voter apathy and uninformed citizenry threaten the balance of powers. Distorted, sensational media threaten the balance of powers. The American democratic republic

keeps our nation strong by charging its elected and appointed officials to swear upon holy writ to keep their oaths, to defend the Constitution of the United States. Each official in the White House, the Congress, and the Supreme Court, must stand upon a podium and take that vow.

It is the responsibility of every American to give voice to every election decision, every policy, and every decision. It is the responsibility of every American to demand truthful, thorough, and objective journalism -- without restriction by any government action. Americans must take an oath to protect the balance of powers, lest they lose their power to bring their leaders to accountability.