



THE DEFENDER

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Faith, Family, Freedom and the 4th of July

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Every year on the 4th of July, Americans gather to celebrate the birth of a nation founded on timeless principles. Fireworks light the night sky, flags wave proudly, and communities unite in gratitude for the blessings of liberty. More than a holiday, Independence Day is a reminder of the values that have shaped America since its founding: Faith, Family, and Freedom. These ideals are deeply rooted in the Declaration of Independence, whose preamble boldly proclaims that “all men are created equal” and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, including “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Faith has long been a cornerstone of the American experience. The Declaration recognizes that our rights come from a Creator rather than from government, affirming the dignity and worth of every individual. Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration, later wrote, “The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time.” This powerful statement reminds us that freedom is both a gift and a responsibility. Faith inspires Americans to seek justice, serve their neighbors, and remain hopeful even during difficult times. On Independence Day, many citizens pause to thank God for the freedoms they enjoy and to remember those who sacrificed to preserve them.

Family is equally central to the celebration of the 4th of July. Across the nation, families gather for picnics, parades, and backyard cookouts, creating memories that strengthen bonds between generations. Families are where values such as integrity, responsibility, and respect are first taught. They pass down stories of military service, immigration, perseverance, and patriotism, helping younger generations understand the meaning of American freedom. In this way, families become guardians of the nation’s heritage and its founding principles.

Freedom remains the defining theme of Independence Day. The Declaration of Independence established the revolutionary idea that government exists to secure the rights of the people. Those principles inspired the founding of the United States and continue to guide the nation today. Freedom allows Americans to worship according to their beliefs, speak openly, pursue their dreams, and participate in self-government. Yet freedom must never be taken for granted; it requires vigilance, courage, and civic responsibility.

As we celebrate the 4th of July, we honor the enduring connection between faith, family, and freedom. Together, these values reflect the spirit of the Declaration of Independence and the vision of America’s founders. By cherishing these blessings and passing them on to future generations, we help ensure that the promise of liberty continues to shine as brightly as the fireworks that illuminate our Independence Day skies.



Defending Faith, Family & Freedom

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HALEY TALKS TRUTH

Why “Moving Somewhere Better” Doesn’t Fix Everything

by Haley Barkman

2026 Lincoln Day Speech Contest Champion



Lately, I’ve noticed a pattern in how we’re responding to the politics of Washington state. People are deciding they would rather move somewhere that feels cleaner, calmer, and safer for our values, politically and spiritually.

I get it. I’m talking about the temptation to move away because things feel genuinely bad, frustrating, or unsustainable where you are. When a place feels like it’s declining, it makes sense that your first instinct is to imagine a

better life somewhere else.

It’s comforting to think geography is the problem. If everything feels broken, it’s easier to believe a new zip code will fix it. It’s much harder to deal with what’s right in front of you.

Tim Cresswell, a cultural geographer, draws a simple line between space and place. According to Cresswell, space is just location. Place is what happens when people live in a space long enough to give it meaning. Places don’t arrive finished. They’re formed slowly by people who stay.

That’s the part we skip.

When something feels frustrating, our instinct is just to move somewhere better. But if everyone who notices problems leaves, nothing gets built. The people who could have invested in a place are gone, and what’s left can only get worse.

From a conservative perspective, this should matter. We talk about family, local community, and stewardship, but none of that survives a culture where the first solution is always exit. You can’t build anything if nobody stays long enough to build it.

At some point, someone must decide not to abandon the place they’re in. A better place happens when people choose to stay and build where they are.

Before deciding to leave Spokane, ask what it would look like to stay and invest: join something local, volunteer, show up consistently, and take responsibility for one small corner of your community.

Leaving can sometimes be necessary, but most places don’t get better because people find somewhere new. Stability is built, not found. Rather, places improve because people decide to create change where they already are.

Before deciding to leave Spokane, ask what it would look like to stay and invest: join something local, volunteer, show up consistently, and take responsibility for one small corner of your community.



2026 CAUCUS & CONVENTION



Spokane County GOP Precinct Caucuses

Saturday July 18th 10:00 am

Locations Throughout Spokane County
SpokaneGOP.com/Caucus

Spokane County GOP Convention

Saturday August 22nd, 9:00 am
Mead Union Events Center

Be Part of Shaping Your Party and Community



LIBERTY'S SENTINEL



"In the beginning of a change the patriot is a scarce man, and brave, and hated and scorned. When his cause succeeds, the timid join him, for then it costs nothing to be a patriot." [Mark Twain]

Roger Sherman - A Patriot Who Helped Build a Nation

Among the many heroes of the American founding, Roger Sherman of Connecticut stands out as one of the most important yet often overlooked patriots. Through hard work, wisdom, and unwavering devotion to public service, Sherman played a vital role in securing American independence and creating the government that still serves the United States today. His remarkable life proves that dedication to principle and country can change the course of history.

Born in Massachusetts in 1721, Sherman received little formal education. Instead, he educated himself through reading, hard work, and determination. After moving to Connecticut, he worked as a surveyor, merchant, lawyer, and public official. His intelligence and honesty earned

him the respect of his fellow citizens, and he gradually rose to positions of leadership throughout Connecticut.

As tensions grew between Great Britain and the American colonies, Sherman became an early supporter of colonial rights and self-government. Connecticut selected him to serve in the Continental Congress, where he joined other patriots in resisting British rule. Sherman signed the Continental Association of 1774, which organized a boycott of British goods, and later served on the Committee of Five that helped draft the Declaration of Independence. In 1776, he proudly signed the Declaration, pledging his life, fortune, and sacred honor to the cause of liberty.

Sherman's service did not end with independence. He also helped create the Articles of Confederation, the nation's first governing framework. When weaknesses in that system became clear, he attended the Constitutional Convention of 1787. There, delegates from large and small states fiercely disagreed over representation in Congress. Sherman proposed what became known as the Connecticut Compromise, or Great Compromise. His plan created a two-house legislature, with representation based on population in the House of Representatives and equal representation for each state in the Senate. This compromise helped save the Convention from collapse and made the adoption of the Constitution possible.

Roger Sherman holds a unique place in American history. **He was the only person to sign all four great state papers of the nation's founding:** the Continental Association, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution of the United States.

From humble beginnings to national leadership, Roger Sherman exemplified the virtues of patriotism, perseverance, and public service. His contributions helped win American independence and shape the constitutional republic that endures today.

On this 250th anniversary of the birth of our nation, we honor Roger Sherman as one of the true architects of American freedom.



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DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Committee of Five



In June 1776, the Second Continental Congress appointed a group known as the **Committee of Five** to draft a declaration explaining why the American colonies should become independent from Great Britain. The committee consisted of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston. Although they shared the goal of gaining independence, they came from different colonies and often had different viewpoints. Their challenge was to create a document that would unite the colonies and persuade both Americans and foreign nations that independence was justified.

The committee worked during a time of great uncertainty. Many delegates in Congress still questioned whether declaring independence was wise. Some feared Britain's powerful military and worried that the colonies would struggle economically without British trade. Others believed independence was necessary to protect colonial rights and freedoms. These divisions meant that the committee had to carefully choose language that would appeal to delegates with different opinions and political interests.

Thomas Jefferson was selected to write the first draft because of his skill as a writer. John Adams later explained that Jefferson was chosen because he could express ideas clearly and was widely respected among the delegates. After Jefferson completed the draft, the other committee members reviewed it closely. Benjamin Franklin and John Adams suggested revisions, editing phrases and improving the flow of the document. Franklin, known for his diplomacy, encouraged wording that would inspire unity, while Adams focused on creating a strong argument for independence.

The committee members debated how strongly to criticize King George III, what principles should be emphasized, and how to explain the colonies' right to separate from Britain. They discussed the meaning of individual rights, the purpose of government, and how to present their complaints against British rule in a way that all thirteen colonies could support. These debates were important because the declaration needed to reflect a shared vision rather than the opinions of a single colony. Through discussion and compromise, the committee refined Jefferson's draft into a document that represented the broader colonial cause.

Even after the Committee of Five agreed on a draft, debates continued in Congress. Delegates carefully reviewed each section, making changes and removing passages they believed would be controversial or divisive. The editing process demonstrated that independence was not achieved through unanimous agreement from the beginning but through negotiation, compromise, and cooperation.

Ultimately, the Committee of Five succeeded in creating a document that united the colonies around the ideals of liberty, equality, and self-government. The Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776, becoming one of the most influential documents in history. By working through disagreements and focusing on their common goal, the committee transformed a collection of colonies into a nation committed to the principles of freedom and independence.



STA - PROP 1

SPOKANE TRANSIT AUTHORITY · PROPOSITION 1 · AUGUST 4, 2026

A “Temporary” Tax -- A **\$1 Billion*** Question



2

* 2/10 Sales Tax: 2029 – 2048 conservative growth assumptions



by Alan Nolan, Business Owner, Candidate for the Legislature in the 6th LD

Fed up with endless new and renewed taxes? Tired of the extreme left running roughshod over our community? Here is a chance to do something about it – defeat STA Prop 1 on August 4th.

What is STA Prop 1? It asks to renew a “temporary” 0.2% sales tax funding Spokane Transit Authority (STA) that was passed in 2016. Since then, STA has added \$234M to its unrestricted reserves, which now total over \$274M. In the same time, STA staff has grown by 56% with per capita ridership falling by 19%.

Renewing the tax through 2048 would add ~\$1B to STA’s budget, in addition to the \$3B it will receive from the 0.6% sales tax it levies on the Public Transit “Benefits” Area (PTBA).

STA Prop 1 is not needed to sustain public transit services. There is no clear plan for how the money will be used, and we should reject it outright. Voters are fed up with taxes, but few even know STA Prop 1 will be on the primary ballot. Now is the time to share the information with our neighbors and demand conservative candidates oppose it.

I have teamed with Spokane Business Association (SBA) to defeat STA Prop 1. SBA produced a strongly evidenced presentation on just how ineffectively STA uses our money. It and printed materials are available for each of us to spread the message. If you’re willing to step up, contact the Spokane GOP.

We, as conservatives, need to start building small wins to change the direction of Spokane and Washington State. Voting down STA Prop 1 is a prime opportunity for just that. It will drive turnout in the primary, set the stage for popular ballot initiatives that will be on the November ballot, and help elect conservative candidates. Join me and take a stand to reject STA Prop 1.



INFORM, INSPIRE, CHERISH LIFE

Over Fifty Years of Changing Hearts

Now Accelerating a Culture of Life Across Washington



The inaugural **Culture of Life & Love Summit™ & Arts Festival**, presented by **HLW's Life & Love Network™**, proudly featured the organization's first statewide Oratory Contest, bringing together young leaders who are passionate about building a culture that respects and protects every human life.

This year's top prize of \$1,000 was awarded to Mary Crosby, of Skagit Valley. Mary is no stranger to the platform. Having previously competed at the national level through another pro-life

organization's oratory program, she has demonstrated both a gift for public speaking and a commitment to advancing the cause of human life.

Mary credits her parents with intentionally raising their children to value effective communication and public speaking. Mary credits her parents with intentionally raising their children to value effective communication and public speaking. Inspired to use those skills for a meaningful purpose, she actively searched for pro-life speaking opportunities and found HLW's inaugural statewide Oratory Contest—the very opportunity she had been looking for.

Homeschooled and eager to continue serving the cause of human life, Mary plans to join **HLW's Life & Love Network™** as an intern beginning this July, becoming the organization's second intern this year. Her enthusiasm for learning and serving reflects the next generation of leaders we are committed to equipping.

This year's contest marked the beginning of an exciting new tradition. While the 2026 competition was our first statewide event, plans are already underway to expand the program. Beginning next year, Washington contestants will have the opportunity to advance to national competition.

We believe young people have tremendous potential to shape the future through thoughtful, persuasive communication. If you know a student between the ages of **16 and 18** who enjoys public speaking and desires to make a positive impact, we encourage them to participate in next year's Oratory Contest



For more information, please contact **Evangelyn Wendell** at Evangelyn@humanlifewa.org.

HLW's Mission is to inform and inspire the public about life-affirming options, fostering a culture that cherishes every individual, regardless of age or circumstance



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