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## *"A More Perfect Union"*

*July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011*

We are all privileged to live in the longest-running Democracy in history. We have an amazing standard of living and we have Freedom and Liberty unlike any society in the world. Those freedoms don't come easily. We've paid for them in each generation—making sacrifices now so the next generation can continue to enjoy those freedoms and get their chance to pursue their version of the Great American Dream.

Many of you have family members or friends who've paid dearly to keep our Democracy safe and strong and vital and we honor them—always.

But the thing that has set our great nation apart from all others is the fact that it is dedicated to a proposition—laid out in the Declaration of Independence—and it is governed by a set of rules—the U.S. Constitution—that has proven both enduring and flexible enough to keep us strong and guide our decades of progress as a dynamic, freedom-loving, innovative society.

Regardless of your politics—right, center, left—it's good to be reminded that the Founders who gave us this amazing U.S. Constitution knew that it wasn't perfect, that it couldn't be made absolutely perfect and that, indeed, they enjoined all us to continue to strive to always make it a more perfect Union.

We've always been a nation where people have different ideas about how we should be governed. It's that tension between varying points of view—and a Constitution that empowers people to hold contentious and contrary opinions—*that always astounds people from other countries where such Liberty and Freedom is not allowed.*

Indeed, on the day the Constitutional Convention was to vote to approve the document that became the U.S. Constitution, it was unclear whether support for passage actually existed. Just as today, people held various and contrary points of view about the proposed Constitution.

Sensing a problem and an opportunity to make a good point and sway his fellow delegates, Benjamin Franklin stood up and launched into a speech that basically reminded his fellow delegates that if all of them concentrated so much on what's wrong with the Constitution, they risked losing all that is good about it. Here is a short excerpt from that speech:

*“I confess that there are several parts of this Constitution which I do not at present approve, but I am not sure I shall never approve them. For having lived long I have experienced many instances of being obliged by better information or fuller consideration, to change opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise.*

*“It is therefore that the older I grow, the more apt I am to doubt my own judgment and to pay more respect to the judgment of others...*

*“I doubt...whether any other convention we can obtain may be able to make a better Constitution. For when you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom you inevitably assemble with those men all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views. From such an assembly, can a perfect production be expected? It therefore astonishes me, sir, to find this system approaching so near to perfection as it does...*

*“If every one of us in returning to our constituents were to report the objections he has had to it and endeavour to gain partisans in support of them, we might prevent its being generally received, and thereby lose all the salutary effects and great advantages resulting naturally in our favor among foreign nations as well as among ourselves from our real or apparent unanimity.*

*“On the whole, sir, I cannot help expressing a wish that every member of the convention who may still have objections to it, would with me, on this occasion doubt a little of his own infallibility—and to make manifest our unanimity, put his name to this instrument.”*

Then Franklin paused for a moment and turned his attention to the front of the hall where George Washington sat presiding over the convention. Directly behind Washington was a carved, half-disk of the Sun.

*“I have often in the course of the sessions and the vicissitudes of my hopes and fears in its issues, looked at that behind the President without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting. But now at length I have the happiness to know that it is.... a rising and not a setting sun.”*

Like Franklin, I'm an optimistic person. I, too, believe that despite the hard times and challenges we now face as a nation, that the Sun is still rising on the Great American Dream – not setting.

So, on this Fourth of July, Let us all be thankful for all our Freedoms... To be grateful to all who've sacrificed to get us here... And to remember that as the Melting Pot of the World and the longest-running Democracy in history, we will always have our differences of opinion....

**But as long as we stay engaged in the process of perfecting our Union, we will know that at the start of each day, “by the dawn’s early light,” that our flag is still there.**

**May you have a Safe and Happy Independence Day!**

Sincerely,



J. Preston Byers CPA CFP®  
President

[pbyers@clearbridgewealth.com](mailto:pbyers@clearbridgewealth.com)



7000 Central Parkway Suite 1760 | Atlanta, GA 30328 | 770-350-9605

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