



For 7 Days, We Remember Our Past to Secure Our Future

Virginia Allen / September 11, 2020

Patriot Week, launched in 2009, is a week dedicated to honoring America's past and studying its founding principles. Every year, Sept. 11 marks the first day of Patriot Week and Constitution Day, Sept. 17, brings it to a close.

Judge Michael Warren of Oakland County, Michigan, and his daughter, Leah, founded [Patriot Week](#) to celebrate national pride and educate Americans about the history of our country.

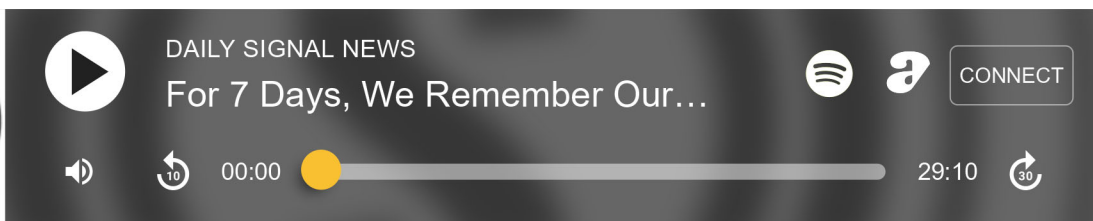
Warren joins the podcast on this first day of Patriot Week 2020 to explain how you and your family can take part in remembering our past over the next seven days. [Click here](#) to register for Patriot Week.

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Virginia Allen: I am joined by Michael Warren, a judge and the co-creator of Patriot Week, a

week dedicated to honoring and remembering America's history. Judge Warren, thanks so much for being here.

Judge Michael Warren: Well, it's my pleasure. I'm a subscriber and I love your podcast, so to be on, it's a real thrill.

Allen: Oh, thanks so much. Well, we're so excited to talk today about Patriot Week.

You and your daughter started Patriot Week in 2009. And really, it's a week that is dedicated to celebrating and honoring our country's history. Every year, Patriot Week begins on Sept. 11 and it ends on Sept. 17, which is Constitution Day.

So, why did you and your daughter see this need for a special week dedicated to really remembering our founding principles?

Warren: We back then understood, and I think it's become even more obvious today, that there's a great need in our country to understand our founding first principles in our history, to embrace them, to understand what they're about, and then to understand that we're not perfect, and that we need to build upon those, our history and where we've come before, to be able to achieve even greater freedoms and liberties.

And just as a side note, or maybe underlining this, I should say, is that unfortunately our educational system has done a really abysmal job at educating our students about American history and civics.

There are studies upon studies that reveal that our K-12 students, as well as our general public, are really struggling with understanding the basics of our country and our Constitution.

Just as one example, when we started Patriot Week, there was a poll that had come out which showed that about one-half of the people could identify the three branches of government.

So, it's not this hard. There's a legislative and executive and judicial branch, and about half of the people could identify those three, which is of grave concern. If you don't even understand a very basic concept like that, how are we supposed to maintain our freedoms and liberty?

It's gotten worse. Now it's less than half of the people understand the separation of powers in the three branches of government. So there's a real need.

One of the things that the Founders really understood about making and enabling our citizens really to understand our founding first principles and our history was to celebrate them. And so we had a civic calendar. And that calendar has really been ruined over the course of the years, and so

the idea of Patriot Week is to create a new civic celebration of America.

As you mentioned, it starts on 9/11, which is obviously the anniversary of the terrorist attacks, and to Sept. 17, which is the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution.

And each day we celebrate a founding first principle from the Declaration of Independence, key documents, and speeches that embody that; Founding Fathers, other great patriots that made those principles come alive; and then flags from a history that represent those principles.

So it's very organized. It's grassroots. It's been recognized by the United States Senate unanimously last year. Over 15 states have recognized it over the years. And there's a multitude of ways to get involved, and I recommend that your listeners go to PatriotWeek.org to learn more.

I wanted to mention its origin because I think this is really neat. It started in 2009, when my daughter was just 10. And Leah and I were having a lunch. And I was explaining to her the importance of American history, and civics, and the need to commemorate that in a symbolic way.

The reason I came up with this insight was because I was born the child of a disaffected Catholic and a atheistic father. And so I was raised as a nothing, and my dad would always say, "Mike, you can believe anything you want, just remember it's all ..."—he wouldn't use the word baloney, but you know what I mean.

So I was a very young child as an atheist. And I kept that up up until high school. And then in high school, I said, "Maybe there's a God, maybe there's not." And so I became an agnostic, and I said, "Maybe the Buddhists are right, maybe the Hindus, maybe the Catholics, who knows? The Greek pantheon."

Then of all places, in Ann Arbor in law school, the Holy Spirit found me, and I converted overnight. [I] called my little Italian grandma, the traditional Roman Catholic grandma, and said, "Grandma, you're going to take me to church this weekend." And she said, "Michael?" I said "Yes?" She said, "Is this a joke?" I said, "No, no, no. Really, grandma. You're going to take me to church."

And very quickly, I converted as an adult. And I tell you that because as an adult convert, I had to go through religious education formation classes. And those classes teach you a lot about the faith, but one of the things that I didn't really think about as a non-believer was that we have this thing called a liturgical calendar.

We have all these holidays where we're supposed to stop in the hustle-bustle of our day and to renew our faith. And all the grades, religions have this. Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhists, all forms of Christianity, Muslims, they all have this idea of a liturgical calendar.

And I realized, as I was doing some historical research, that America used to have a civic calendar. We had Washington's birthday, Lincoln's birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Armistice Day. Why? To stop in the hustle-bustle of our days and to renew our faith in our country.

In fact, when we declared independence, John Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail, that the anniversary of that day would be remembered in America, to be celebrated with bells and bonfires, games and speeches, and illuminations in the sky from one end of the continent to the other, now and forevermore. And he was right. On July Fourth, we still celebrate Independence Day.

But he also said it should be a silent day of devotion for the blessings of liberty. It ought to be solemnized. Now, I don't know about you or most of your listeners, but I suspect the last time you had a hot dog at a July Fourth party, ... it was not a particularly solemn occasion.

We have hollowed out and cheapened and commercialized our civic calendar to the empty excuses for barbecues, three-day weekends, appliance sales, whatever it is.

I was explaining this to my then-10-year-old daughter, Leah, at lunch, and she got really angry, pounded on the table, and said, "Dad, that's wrong. We need to do something. We need to start a new celebration for America." And so that's how it started.

And to be audacious, because you know 10-year-olds are audacious ... because I opened Pandora's box, I had agreed to do something. She said, "Let's make it a week." So, we looked at the calendar and realized that 9/11 through 9/17 is a seven-day period. It was a perfect fit for what we were trying to do, to renew the spirit of America.

Allen: Judge Warren, thank you so much just for sharing all that past history of how Patriot Week began, this amazing project, and specifically, really how you and your daughter worked together to launch it.

I know that Leah, not too, too long ago, gave a youth TED Talk where she discussed really some of these big issues that we're facing in America, that young people and Americans in general don't have a good understanding of our nation's history.

Why do you believe that knowledge of history is so connected to America's success in the future?

Warren: Well, that's a great question. First off, I would say that we are not like any other country in the world.

We were founded on this proposition that was in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these

truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they're endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, [that] among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

And that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That when any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it and to establish new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing powers, such form is to them to seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness.

Now, those words from the Declaration of Independence were revolutionary in 1776, and they remain revolutionary today. We're the only country founded on the ideal that we have unalienable rights, that God has given us those rights that cannot be taken away from man, and that we have a sacred obligation to protect those rights. And that that's the whole purpose of government, is to protect our rights.

If you don't understand that, if you don't understand that your rights come from God and that they are born within you, but just by being a human being, then it's very easy to give them away. It's very easy to let the government run over your rights and to ignore your inalienable rights.

And I think we've seen this over the course of, really, decades, where people have, instead of defending the rights and saying government is supposed to be our servants, it's been reversed where people feel like they're the servants of the government, and that the government gives us what we can use.

Those are privileges, not rights. And that's a fundamentally corrupt way of working at the American experiment of liberty. And there's a whole host of these.

The rule of law is intended to ensure that everyone follows the law, from the janitor to the CEO, from the prisoner to the judge or the president. And if you don't understand that that's what the rule of law is about, then it's very easy to ignore it, and have very serious consequences for society.

And because we don't understand that we live in this uniquely blessed country, it's easy to give it away and not even realize it.

Allen: So then tell me specifically, how is Patriot Week taking a stand and saying, "We will not forget our past," and actually actively working to educate Americans, both young and old, on history and on founding documents?

Warren: We, as I mentioned, each day we celebrate a founding first principle from the Declaration of Independence, key documents and speeches, Founding Fathers, and other great patriots, and flags from our history. And we have a whole set of resources that are on our website. ...

You don't have to do it just during the week. You can do it anytime. Learn more about American history and our Constitution, our Declaration of Independence. We have lesson plans. We have a TV show. We have like 130 episodes up on demand. We have a great podcast called "Patriot Lessons: American History and Civics" that you can access there on Apple or Google Play or wherever. We have a lot of resources on the website.

Normally during the week and through the year we have had festivals, paloozas, picnics, parades, panel discussions, guest speakers, essay contest, audio contest, just a whole slew of different activities and programs from a whole slew of people that are engaged.

And I want to emphasize that this is nonpartisan. We have a 501(C)(3), and we are really trying to unite the whole country behind those founding first principles.

You don't have to be on any particular side of the political spectrum. Everybody should believe—and I think almost everybody does, except for maybe Nazis and communists—in those founding first principles.

Once they think about it, they go, "Oh, yeah. It makes sense that we have a limited government," but unless it's upfront and in your mind, as you're looking at policy, thinking about voting, thinking about participating, it's very easy to be distracted by the Kardashian sisters and TikTok, and all this other stuff.

So, we are very counter-cultural. We're trying to bring people back to their roots, and to remind people why it's so important that they remain engaged as a citizen, and the full meaning of that word.

Allen: So, who actually participates in this week?

Warren: That's a great question. Anyone can participate. And we have had a number of independent organizations like ... rotary clubs, chambers of commerce, schools, universities, community colleges, churches. A lot of organizations celebrate Patriot Week in the way that makes most sense for them and their constituency.

So, we do offer specific ways. For example, let's say you're somebody that doesn't really have a lot of people that might be interested in this and you want to just learn more, you can go and participate in Patriot Week.

On the website, we have a set of daily celebrations that you can do by yourself or with close family and friends. It's about reading documents and thinking through different issues and then the lesson plans, but because it's so grassroots every year, it's different.

So this year, with the pandemic and all the challenges, we've gone with a Patriot Academy. So every day we're going through all the different topics that we cover for that particular day.

So starting on Sept. 11, ... you can go to PatriotWeek.org, register even now, as you're listening to this podcast. [We'll have] a Virtual Patriot Academy about all the things that happened on 9/11 and for each day thereafter, all the way through Constitution Day. We're doing that.

We have a virtual toast, which usually we do in person, and we toast the Constitution with people all around the table. And there's dozens of people that do this, that make specific toasts, and so we're going to have one of those.

We have a rule of law forum, which is going to be, again, virtual on the Saturday of this Patriot Week. So there's a lot of different activities. Normally it's spread not only through Michigan, but we've had activities in New York, and New Hampshire, Texas, and Arizona. It's not just the one spot. We really are working very hard to have it spread across the country.

Allen: So if I want to sit down with my family every day this week beginning today and do these activities, and listen to the lectures or the podcast, read the documents, about how much time should I be planning every day? Is it something that a family could do after dinner all together over the course of an hour or two? Or are we talking about this is more like a full day given toward reading these documents and so on?

Warren: I would say this, people can ... pick and choose. So it's like a buffet, and we have activities that only take five minutes. But I'll tell you, even a five-minute activity ... Think about a prayer. If you pray for five minutes, that moves something.

You spend some time learning about our founding documents, or our first principles, or a flag, or a historical figure like Frederick Douglass, or Martin Luther King Jr., or George Washington, or James Madison, you'll be a better person when you're done, and you'll be better-informed citizen.

So we have five-minute activities, 20-minute activities, hour activities. The academies last just an hour. So you can get a whole bunch of content in our Patriot Academy during this week, and those will remain posted on our website.

We also have a virtual tour of a courthouse, my courthouse in Oakland County, Michigan. That's about 45 minutes. We have a Constitution Day review of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. That's also a video that lasts about 50 minutes. And the TV shows that we have are about a half-hour, podcasts can go from a half an hour to a little more than an hour. So you can really pick and choose and decide what's best for you and your family.

Allen: What's the response that you have received over the years from those who do choose to

participate?

Warren: I'll tell you that this is something that there's a real hunger for. There are so many people that love this country and feel like they were cheated in school, or cheated by the predilections of the current society in not understanding our origins and how fruitful we have developed.

And I want to emphasize this week. We've talked a lot about the Founders. We also celebrate women's suffrage and gender equality. So we have Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and [the] 19th Amendment. The suffragettes had their own flag, it's really cool, that nobody knows about.

We also celebrate racial equality. So we have Abraham Lincoln, and Frederick Douglass, and Martin Luther King Jr., and [the] "I Have a Dream" speech, and the flag that flew over Fort Sumter, which has a really interesting and fascinating history.

So this is for everyone, and the response has been very robustly positive. And it really [is] from across the political spectrum.

For example, in my state, U.S. Sen. Gary Peters co-sponsored a resolution with Sen. Joe Kennedy. So, you had a Democrat and Republican, and they got the Patriot Week resolution passed unanimously from the U.S. Senate last year, which I think is quite a task to make because nothing gets passed unanimously.

But just your everyday person is so excited to learn, and to be engaged, and feel some pride in our country in a good way. And so I think it really has been resonating.

Allen: And your love for our country, your patriotism, began long before the founding of Patriot Week. And it was really well-comprised in your book "America's Survival Guide." Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Warren: Yes. Thank you. So, "America's Survival Guide," and it has a long subtitle, which is, "How to Stop America's Impending Suicide by Reclaiming Our First Principles and History." And the book is about how we as a country have forgotten our founding first principles and history, why that's a grave threat to our survival as a free people.

It goes through many of the things that we're talking about now. It then goes through what the first principles are. It talks about the American Revolution, goes through that, how the Revolution was motivated by principles, and that greed, and that you hear all these stories, economics, or now there's this bizarre one from the 1619 Project that the Revolution was all about maintaining slavery, which is ridiculous.

So it dispels those myths, talks about the Constitutional Convention, walks through how the Constitution was designed and framed to protect liberty, and then goes through the civil rights struggles, as well as the abolitionist struggle and the emancipation of the slaves, as well as the suffragette movement, and how women finally gained the right to vote.

And then [it] has a set of recommendations about what to do about the crisis, one of which was reviving our old holidays, but that's really difficult. So if I wrote the book again, I would say do old holidays, try your best, but really Patriot Week is a new holiday that hasn't been corrupted. And so that's a way to renew the spirit of America.

Allen: Well, we certainly appreciate the work that you all are doing at Patriot Week, and I think it's such a perfect way to really take time to commemorate what happened so long ago in our nation's history, our founding, but also take time to reflect on Sept. 11 and on those lives that were lost. And also to look forward to, how do we really hold our history in its rightful place so that we don't repeat mistakes of the past?

One more time, would you just tell us how our listeners can sign up for Patriot Week and be involved this week?

Warren: Absolutely. So, Patriotweek.org is the website, and I encourage everyone to go there. You'll find something that you'll enjoy. And then the book, you can go to americassurvivalguide.com, or you can find it on Amazon and other online retailers.

Allen: Wonderful. Judge Warren, thank you so much for your time today. We just really appreciate you coming on.

Warren: Well, it was my pleasure, and God bless you and God bless America.