

# The Delray Democrat

July 2020\*

## “We Hold These Truths”

Michael K. Cantwell

It is easy to read The Declaration of Independence with a jaundiced eye, contrasting the ringing declaration that “all men are created equal” with the reality that many of the men who signed the document (including its principal author Thomas Jefferson) were untroubled *owning* other men. It is easy to point out that the term “men” was gender-specific and not some linguistic convention intended to embrace the entire human species.

Yet this revolutionary document can still bring tears to one’s eyes, especially when measured against the government we have today. Could anyone argue that a government led by Donald Trump (or George W. Bush, for that matter) has “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind”? Do Mitch McConnell and Lindsey Graham have the remotest conception of the word “honor,” much less the “Sacred Honor” our Founders mutually pledged as they risked their lives?

Where reality deviates most from aspiration is in the notion that government derives its “just powers from the consent of the governed.” If the consent of the American people actually mattered today, government would be working to increase voter turnout, not suppress it.

If the laws actually reflected the opinions of the governed, those with incomes in the hundreds of millions of dollars would not be taxed at a [lower](#) rate than a secretary or the night manager at a Burger King. Our government would be doing [more](#), not less, to combat climate change. [Black Lives Matter](#) would be more than the name of a protest movement; it would be the basis of effective legislation to redress centuries of exploitation and murder. And the [Equal Rights Amendment](#) would finally be ratified.

November 3 may be our last chance to begin the difficult process of realizing the aspirations of our founding document.

## The United States Post Office – The Early Years

Char Lane

The United States Post Office. We grew up in the years of daily mail delivery and it’s always been an integral part of our lives. Despite online communications and transactions, there’s still a bit of magic to the daily delivery of mail.

In earlier times correspondence was carried by traveling friends or acquaintances, and there were multiple attempts to establish a system of mail in the colonies. The first post office was chartered by the Massachusetts court and set up in 1639 at the Fairbanks Tavern in Boston. It was basically a place where locals could leave mail that was typically shipped to England.

Benjamin Franklin served as Postmaster General to the United Kingdom for the colonies from 1737 until 1774 and organized the early postal system. His allegiance to the independence of the colonies caused him to lose that position and return home. He was designated Postmaster General by the Continental Congress in 1775 when the U.S. Post Office was created.

Congress was granted the power to establish and regulate post offices by the Articles of Confederation in 1778, which granted the post offices the right to collect “postage.” The Founders realized the critical role

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\*This issue is dedicated to the hardworking women and men of the USPS, Americans’ [favorite](#) federal agency, now fighting for their livelihoods against the plunderers and grifters in the Trump Administration.

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that mail played in communications, and Article 1, Section 8 of the United States Constitution granted Congress the sole and continuing power “To establish Post Offices and Post Roads” on September 22, 1789. Samuel Osgood was appointed the first Postmaster General that year by George Washington, and while Osgood served for only three years, he put the Post Office on a track to be self-sustaining.

After a few years of disagreement between the House and Senate on Post Office oversight and operation, Congress passed the Post Office Act of 1792 on February 20, 1792, declaring (Osgood’s) self-sustenance model would continue. It was, however, the intent of the government to subsidize the delivery of news to the general population and through the Act helped to subsidize the distribution of newspapers by offering very low mailing rates. The Founders viewed it a critical public service to inform and educate the general population on all facts and issues, including and especially those governmental and political in nature. Prior to the Act the Post Office did not handle newspapers.

The Act also provided for the growth and expansion of the Post Office, and guaranteed the privacy of personal articles mailed. As the Post Office expanded buildings and routes, the country came together in knowledge and opportunity. The expansion and construction of buildings and roads became quite expensive over the years and there were numerous investigations that politicized cost overages and budget shortfalls. The need for mail delivery created the need for facilities and roads and those needs often eclipsed the efforts by Congress to curtail costs.

The nineteenth century gave rise to mail traveling by stagecoach over roads that were being constructed and better maintained to accommodate these stagecoaches carrying mail. In 1847 ships carried mail from New York to San Francisco via the Panama Canal. Steamboats and wagon trains were also em-

ployed in the delivery of the mail to the western and southwestern sections of the country by the mid 1800’s.

The first postage stamps were issued on March 3, 1847 and bore the pictures of George Washington (\$0.10 cent stamp) and Benjamin Franklin (\$0.05 stamp), with the cost of mailing dependent on the weight and delivery distance of the item being mailed.

1860 brought us the Pony Express, created by the Central Overland California and Pike’s Peak Express. The Pony Express ran from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento, California, but lasted less than two years due to high costs that led to financial failure, and it was subsequently purchased by Wells Fargo. 1862 gave rise to the advent of home delivery, meaning people no longer had to stand in line to get their mail and resulting in the creation of many new jobs. The Post Office later became a major employer of Civil War veterans.

The transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869 and train cars in which mail was sorted were put into operation. 1870 introduced the early concept of air mail by using balloons, but the actual Postal Air Mail Service came about on May 15, 1918. The passage of the Comstock Laws in 1873 made it illegal to mail obscene and certain other materials, thereby regulating the content of mailed items.

Parcel Post began in 1887 with service between the U.S. and Canada and other countries, but was not instituted within the continental United States until 1912. The United States Postal Saving System was created by Congress on June 25, 1910 and went into service on January 1, 1911. The system offered 2% interest per annum while the Post Office earned a small differential on the deposit of these monies and the saving system was operational until 1967.

All of the preceding activities and events contributed to the development of our current postal system.

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# Trump's Threats Against the Postal Service Are a True Danger to Democracy

*June Sandra Neal*

Old Ben Franklin was a man of many enterprises, including a publishing business. But he had a competitor, Andrew Bradford, who distributed his upper-crust American Weekly Mercury, while our “Poor Richard” Franklin put out the plebian Pennsylvania Gazette.

What to do? Good ole’ political back-scratching. Franklin curried favor with Andrew Hamilton, the speaker of the Assembly, and won himself the government printing contract. With more horse trading, Hamilton helped Franklin win the plum job of clerk of the Assembly which, Franklin said, “secured to me the business of printing the votes, laws, paper money . . . that, on the whole, were very profitable.” Indeed.

But Bradford had the advantage of being Philadelphia’s postmaster, and, as any good politician would, he used his position to prevent Franklin from sending his Gazette through the mail. So, Franklin also did what any good politician would and bribed the postal carriers.

When some discrepancies were found in Bradford’s bookkeeping, and he failed to pay the debt, Franklin became postmaster and said, “nyah, nyah” (or something like that) and forced Bradford out of business. It’s a wonder the backstabbers didn’t freeze in the Philadelphia winter with so many holes in the backs of their coats.

It all sounds quaint now, but the story should be a

cautionary tale about the danger of private control—or dictatorial control—of something so fundamental to democracy as a postal service. He who controls distribution wins. Trump has threatened to cripple mail-in balloting by withholding funds to the USPS or taking the service private. Bidding the USPS out to private contractors would be a disaster. We’ve seen the tragic results of the privatization of Homeland Security’s detention centers.

The USPS predicts the corona virus will reduce mail revenue by more than 50% this year. When the economy shut down, the postal service asked for a bail-out, but Trump and Treasury Secretary Stephen Mnuchin decided to exclude the Postal Service from the \$2.3 trillion stimulus package. Instead they blackmailed the Service, offering a mere \$10 billion loan—and only if delivery rates are increased and labor costs reduced. Those reductions and layoffs will affect the 28.6 percent of black USPS employees; the black community is already hurt by working no-isolation service jobs and by the disproportionate number of Covid-19 infections.

Commentators have noted that the USPS is the only institution that can reach every household in America. And the current Postmaster General has promised to deliver even those mail-in ballots that lack proper postage. Our postal service is an integral part of our democracy. The danger of Trump’s attempt to clamp down the distribution hose is self-evident.

## Register to Vote By Mail **Now!**

Even before the coronavirus pandemic the Florida Democratic Party encouraged all Democrats to vote by mail because it is convenient, it greatly increases turnout, and this year it is postage free in PBC.

Today it is no longer solely a matter of convenience. Milwaukee residents waited hours to vote recently because all but 5 of 180 polling stations were closed, and a number of voters [later tested positive](#) for Covid-19. Americans shouldn’t have to risk their lives in order to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

Register online at [pbcelections.org](http://pbcelections.org) and follow the prompts. Register by phone at 561-656-6208. Registering to vote by mail will not prevent you from going to the polls. It just gives you another option if you are unable to vote in person.

In Congress, July 4, 1776.

## The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly

neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign

to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by

their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

# Post Office Banks Could Be a Win-Win

*David Kulick*

There has been a history of using Post Offices for banking services and perhaps the time is right to do it again. Post offices have centralized locations in urban and rural areas around the country and those are prime locations to offer more services than just mailing letters. Great Britain became the first country to use their post offices as banks in 1861, accepting deposits and paying 2.5% interest. The money raised was a cheap way to finance public debt.

In wealthy urban neighborhoods, banks can be as ubiquitous as drug stores, one per corner, but that isn't the case in rural communities, nor poor areas of cities. Many banks don't have branches in poor communities, particularly after limits were placed on how much banks can charge for overdraft protection.

Internet banking has become an option, but not for people without internet access or computers and smart phones.

Communities without banks have to rely on payday loan and check-cashing services that charge high fees. Unless living on a pure barter system, everyone has the need to cash checks and pay bills, and for those without a bank account the cost can be high. Check cashing services charge anywhere from 1% to 10% of the value of the check, and that costs the people who can least afford it hundreds of dollars a year.

Those without bank accounts also have low or non-existent credit ratings, meaning that payday loan stores charge high interest rates — again that's on the people most unable to afford it. Many poor people in rural towns and big cities rely on payday loans to get through the week.

Even the process of paying a bill is difficult without a bank account. Without a bank account you can't have a debit card, so effectively you're paying cash or getting a money order from the Post Office. Yes, they

still do money orders. Sometimes I go to the Comcast office and while waiting I see people go to the window to pay bills. Paying bills by actually going to places is time consuming.

Since banks are in the business of making a big profit and it's hard to do that with people who don't have much money to begin with, they aren't interested in serving the poor. Even in communities with banks, checking account fees can often be too high.

So who opposes the idea of using Post Offices as banks? Well, Republicans for one. Republicans don't believe that the government should do anything except take huge amounts of our money for the Offense budget and leave everything else to private enterprise. Payday Loan and check cashing services would oppose it. And, of course, banks don't want competition even though they aren't serving the target community. Their problem must be the possibility that a successful Post Office Bank will become a threat to their more profitable clientele.

No one is suggesting that the Post Office should become a brokerage house or commercial powerhouse, but it could certainly handle checking and savings accounts linked to debit cards. There are caveats, however. Once you get into the business of making even small loans, the problem of collecting delinquent loans surfaces. Post Offices also don't have vaults to store cash. And the Post Office did handle banking until 1967 when it ended because people preferred dealing with new neighborhood banks that had comparable rates and more services. But since that time, those banks have become more expensive and simply don't serve areas that they once did.

It's an idea that might be worth another look. The website <http://www.campaignforpostalbanking.org/> is a good place to start.

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# How to Destroy the United States Postal Service

*Michael K. Cantwell*

Why does the Republican Party want to destroy the United States Postal Service? The Postal Service is a government agency; isn't that reason enough?

In what passes for a theory of government in the modern Republican Party, the goal is to reduce government to a size where it can be "drowned in a bathtub." That countless Americans may be drowned as well is of little concern to a Party whose existence depends upon pleasing the obscenely wealthy: "Leave the money on the table, and no kissing."

In a grotesque parody of Dwight D. Eisenhower's warning that "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed," the Republican Party's paymasters view every dollar spent on Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, or the Affordable Care Act as a dollar taken from them.

and took advantage of the lower rates by contracting out some of their own deliveries to the Postal Service. In the year prior to passage of the bill, the Postal Service reported nearly \$1 billion in profits. It has been losing money ever since.

There are two additional reasons the Postal Service is in Republican crosshairs. Most immediate is the fact a substantial percentage of votes in November will be cast by mail, and high turnout almost always favors Democrats.

Second, the Postal Service is unionized, so its employees (disproportionately people of color and women) earn a living wage with decent benefits. Having all but destroyed unions in the private sector, Republicans have been targeting public sector unions for the last decade. Now they sense an opportunity to hobble if not destroy the Postal Workers union.

*"Postal workers provide an absolutely essential service to everyone in the country - no matter how rich or poor we are or where we live."*

Enacted by Democrats over furious Republican opposition, these programs enjoy substantial support because they are lifesavers. Not for want of effort, Republicans have been unable to eliminate them.

The Postal Service is the latest government program on the chopping block. Contrary to Republican claims, the Postal Service is not a victim of its own inefficiency but rather of Republican malfeasance. It is a living example of the old quip that "Republicans campaign on the theme that government doesn't work, and then they get elected and prove it."

Republicans controlled both Houses of Congress as well as the White House in 2005. After Democrats took control of both Houses of Congress in 2006, Republicans passed a bill in the lame-duck session that imposed crippling burdens on the Postal Service, including a requirement to pre-fund its employees' pension and healthcare costs for 75 years at an annual cost of \$5 billion over the following 10 years. No other company is subject to such a requirement.

The law also prohibited the Postal Service from raising regular mail rates by more than the Consumer Price Index. This inhibited its ability to respond to spikes in fuel and healthcare costs. It was also a gift to competitors, who had lobbied for the legislation

In February 2020, the House passed a bipartisan bill that would undo the damage from the 2005 bill, but it will die in the Senate. Sensing an opportunity to realize its proposal to privatize the Postal Service, Trump is insisting that a \$10 billion loan will be contingent on approval by the Treasury Department.

Although Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has exercised no oversight over the businesses that have already received \$500 billion in bailout funds, and refuses even to divulge their names, he is threatening draconian concessions as a condition of his approval.

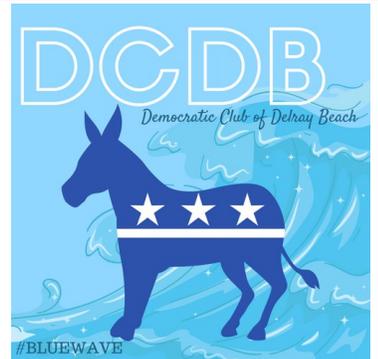
APWU President Mark Dimondstein eloquently and appropriately [responded](#) to these threats as follows:

Postal workers provide an absolutely essential service to everyone in the country – no matter how rich or poor we are or where we live. During this pandemic, postal workers have continued to bind the nation together and deliver essential medicine, supplies and information to a public that is confined to their homes. At a time when the country needs us now more than ever, Mnuchin and his Wall Street cronies are attempting to exploit the crisis to raise prices, demonize heroic postal workers and cut service, all so private delivery companies can profit. It's a power grab. Shame on them.



The Old Post Office, now fattening the coffers of our Grifter-in-Chief in violation of the U.S. Constitution's Emoluments Clause.  
 Photo by Ingfbruno licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/) license.

## Democratic Club of Delray Beach 2020 Membership Application



Date \_\_\_\_\_ New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

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Preferred method of contact: E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Text \_\_\_\_\_

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