

From the Niagara, Perry reengaged the battle with the British and ultimately gained the day. He forced their surrender and sent the now famous message to General Harrison: "We have met the enemy and they are ours." Lake Erie had been secured for America.

The War of 1812 continued on through 1814, but Perry's victory on Lake Erie was pivotal. Had the British taken Lake Erie, it would have provided a base for attacks into New York or into the new State of Ohio and for control of the American Northwest. Instead, the Treaty of Ghent ended the conflict with no loss of territory or trade to the United States.

Perry continued his naval service after the war, but he contracted yellow fever during a mission to Venezuela in 1819 and he died at the age of 34. Today, his name and his actions are remembered in ways large and small throughout our country. In Ohio, on Lake Erie, a bicentennial celebration was held this year commemorating the great battle, and Put-in-Bay boasts a memorial maintained by the National Park Service—Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial. I am told that up there one can toast to Perry's victory with a Commodore Perry IPA, courtesy of Cleveland's Great Lakes Brewing Company.

In Rhode Island, one can travel along Commodore Perry Highway in his native South Kingstown or visit the newly commissioned Rhode Island tall ship SSV Oliver Hazard Perry, which will provide education-at-sea programs to Rhode Island kids.

It is fitting that we continue to honor this great Rhode Islander. His victory on Lake Erie was, to borrow from Churchill, one of those "sharp agate points" on which history turned. So today I hope we will all take a moment and remember Oliver Hazard Perry and reflect on how differently our world would have turned out were it not for his actions.

I thank the Chair, I yield the floor, and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KING. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KING. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONSTITUTION DAY

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, today, the Nation celebrates the 226th

anniversary of the Constitution's signing. That moment was a decision to create a Federal Government with the power to address national problems. During the Constitutional Convention, the delegates debated hundreds of issues and proposals before crafting the original version of the Constitution. Even then, though, the true genius of their charter was article V, which provided for later amendments—because the Founding generation knew that they did not have all the answers and they had faith in future generations to perfect their charter and "form a more perfect Union." And so, step by step, we have. "We the People" have shown a continuing concern for the sacred right to vote. And we have amended the Constitution six times to expand that right.

For over 2 centuries, the Constitution has allowed America to flourish and adapt to new challenges. Since the inclusion of the Bill of Rights in 1791, the Constitution has been amended 17 times. Our current version of the Constitution reflects not just the Founders' original crafting, but also the need for subsequent amendments. Today is a good day to remind the American people that when we pledge to support the Constitution, we must pledge our support for the whole Constitution, and not just those specific provisions and amendments that we favor or find convenient to uphold.

Too often, I have heard people who profess to support the original meaning of the Constitution, ignore the subsequent amendments that inform and alter that original meaning. Some even express strong support for specific amendments, but then ignore others. That is not how our charter functions. It is not a menu that you can pick and choose from. The whole Constitution is what we celebrate today.

This past June, when the Supreme Court issued its decision on the Voting Rights Act, I noticed that there was surprisingly little discussion of the fundamental importance of the Reconstruction Amendments. After the Civil War, we transformed our founding charter into one that embraced equal rights and human dignity by abolishing slavery, guaranteeing equal protection of the law for all Americans, and prohibiting racial barriers to the right to vote. I find it alarming that many who claim to support and honor the Constitution conveniently ignore these critical amendments that made our Nation a more perfect one after the Civil War.

There are perhaps no two amendments that have played a larger role in securing liberty and equality for all Americans than the 14th and 15th Amendments. Without the 14th Amendment we would still have "separate but equal" treatment of Americans and State-sanctioned gender discrimination. Without the 15th Amendment, minorities would continue to be excluded from fully participating in our democracy.

The importance of these amendments was clear upon passage. President Ulysses S. Grant in 1870 signed a bill into law that created the United States Department of Justice to help facilitate the enforcement of the 14th and 15th Amendments. But the Justice Department does not have sole responsibility for supporting and upholding the 14th and 15th Amendments. Congress, as provided by the text of the Amendments, has an even greater role in enforcing the mandates of those Amendments.

Section 5 of the 14th Amendment states that: "The Congress shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article." Section 2 of the 15th Amendment states that: "The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation." It is clear that the Constitution has placed the burden on Congress to ensure that all Americans are entitled to the freedoms and rights guaranteed by these two amendments.

It is for this reason that Congress must respond to the recent Supreme Court decision severely undercutting the Voting Rights Act by passing legislation that protects against racial discrimination in voting. It is our duty and constitutional obligation to not waver from the path of greater political inclusion that we have set for the Nation through our bipartisan support of the Voting Rights Act. I hope that Congress will work with me so that we can provide the protections guaranteed by these two amendments for all Americans.

On this day, as we commemorate the signing of the Constitution of the United States of America 226 years ago, I hope that Congress will be reminded of its obligation not only to periodically read the words of our founding charter, but to act and to give meaning to those words. I look forward to working with fellow Senators to reinvigorate the Voting Rights Act this fall to uphold our constitutional values and ensure that every American enjoys the right to vote.

CITIZENSHIP DAY

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, in 1940, Congress officially recognized the values inherent in United States citizenship by enacting legislation to designate a day of commemoration. At that time, the third Sunday in May was designated "I Am an American Day." In 1952, Congress passed new legislation to move the commemoration date to September 17, the date in 1787 the Constitution was signed. September 17 became known as Citizenship Day, a day that we recognize today.

Today's celebration of the values represented by United States citizenship represents also a celebration of our democracy. In Vermont, United States Federal District Court Judge William Sessions will conduct a naturalization ceremony today. Once again the President will issue a proclamation to honor