

JC Watts column
Stephens Media Group
07/06 – Endowment

Good morning, America! I trust as you slipped the rubber band off your morning paper today and enjoyed a cup of coffee with daily news, that you have sufficiently honored the birth of our great nation 230 years ago this week, and have pondered what our nation stands for.

Perhaps nothing represents what this nation stands for, and more clearly articulates our ideas than that 1322-word document which hangs in every school classroom (I hope) in our country. Autographed by American founding fathers ranging from John Hancock to the Adams' Sam and John to Button Gwinnett, the Declaration of Independence is a timeless text for the ages.

To commence our morning historical retrospective, let's read together an excerpt from that most American of documents. Specifically, let's look at the most recognized paragraph from our own Declaration of Independence.

Altogether now...

*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...*

Check that first sentence out again.

...ALL men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights...

Let's break down that sentence together, shall we?

"All men are created equal."

Hmmm. It doesn't say "some men." It certainly doesn't say "American men," or "men of white, black or yellow skin." Indeed, if Jefferson, Adams and Franklin could have looked into a crystal ball, they may have been more specific. They may have written the lyrics to the old Sunday School song a century before it was written, for surely all men – red, brown, yellow, black and white – and olive skinned as well – are precious in His sight.

"That they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights..."

Before I share my next thought, let me preface it by stating unequivocally my love for my country and my highest esteem for our Commander-in-Chief and the military he leads. We live in the greatest country and under the most fair system of government ever conceived by mere man. The wisdom of our founding fathers confounds me every time I consider what they went through to birth and build this wonderful democracy.

And it is in that wisdom that our founding fathers did not state in the Declaration that all men are "created equal and...endowed by *their president* – or *secretary of defense* – or of their *government* -- with certain unalienable rights...etc.

With that in mind, allow me to part company on a few key points with some of my conservative brethren in Washington and on talk radio on the issue of the Supreme Court ruling last week with regards to our treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo.

If we believe as the Declaration of Independence says – that we are endowed by our creator and not by the military -- one of the reasons Gitmo creates problems for us as a nation is due to the fact that we hold the truths of the Declaration to be valid and real.

We are indeed endowed by our creator.

With people -- many who are likely terrorists, and well deserving of being detained – being held in this hell hole for three years with no trial – we don't know if they are guilty or innocent. They still have rights to at least some disposition of their cases. The Supreme Court's 5-3 decision reminds us that good people will disagree on these issues, and on many issues.

Nevertheless...being endowed by our creator gives us a pretty good standard as to how we should govern this situation.

The standard set by the founding fathers is as timeless as the document quoted here. Those standards don't change when presidents change – or when liberals or conservatives are in charge.

I derive my power from my creator and loan it to the government. I don't get my power from the government. Never have...never will. This sets America apart from every other nation on God's green earth.

Let's bring justice to the Gitmo detainees. We can't assume that everyone there is a killer and that they want to do bad things to America. We can't hold everybody under the guise of them being terrorists. Under that scenario, we are saying that they are endowed by Donald Rumsfeld.

They may not be protected under Geneva accords, but they are under God's law – even as evil as they may be – and we must move forward with justice.