**GAVEL GAMUT**

By Jim Redwine

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(Week of 04 July 2022)

**DEMOCRACY**

Plato (c. 427-348 BC) set forth the best reason for people to be involved in politics:

“The chief penalty of refusing

to govern yourself is to be governed

by one’s inferiors.”

*The Republic*, Vol. I, p. 347.

Plato was Socrates’ (c. 470-399 BC) student and Aristotle’s (c. 384-322 BC) teacher. Those three Greeks laid the foundation for the thought behind our democracy. Their general philosophies on law and self-government were studied by England’s John Locke (1632-1704), expanded by France’s Montesquieu (1689-1755) and Rosseau (1712-1778) and written into the Constitution of the United States, mainly by James Madison (1751-1836).

Each of these legal philosophers cautioned about the unfettered power of the state. Locke feared monarchies. Montesquieu called for divided government to restrain the power of any one segment and Madison put it all together and designed a form of self-government based on three equal branches, Executive, Legislative and Judicial. The core of each of these philosophies of law is a fear of unrestrained power united with the ideal of citizen involvement in their own legal system. For both of these goals to be achieved or maintained, good people have to be willing to serve in their government.

The Fourth of July, 1776 is when our Founders made the momentous decision to stand up to Great Britain and to take responsibility for governing themselves. Two hundred and forty-six years later amid mass shootings, war in Europe, inflation, COVID and a citizenry sharply at odds over virtually every issue from wearing masks to gun control we are testing our credo of self-government.

The national news media relies upon a general disdain of politicians to pump up ratings. Almost no one is willing to run for political office due to the unrelenting bile cast upon the few who are. Most of us see July 04 as a time for fireworks and barbeque not a time to regenerate an interest in a participatory democracy. Are we self-destructing instead of self-governing? Perhaps, but not necessarily. We have survived plagues of typhoid, Spanish flu, civil war and world wars thanks to people of good character being willing to sacrifice their right to simply complain, while instead they sacrifice themselves upon the altar of active public service. As for me, I say thank you to all who are willing to help us preserve our democratic form of government. Public service is almost always synonymous with personal sacrifice. Thank you to everyone from Main Street to Potomac Avenue who helps me, my family, my friends and my country to remain free from rule by those who might care only about themselves. Happy birthday to all of us. Go vote and share your unique talents by getting involved in America.

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