

Friday, July 4, 2008

July 4 is meaningless without an ongoing struggle for civil liberties.

Â Bill of Rights.Â (From the public domain.)Â NOTE: While you enjoy the long weekend, here is a reprint of what I wrote last year on July 4.Â Whenever I look around on July 4, the scene is long on fireworks, beer, and merrymaking, and too short on discussion of what Independence Day is all about.Â The Declaration of Independence was hardly signed by a bunch of pacifists. The signers must have realized the bloodshed among the warring sides would lengthen and intensify with the Declaration of Independence, and it did.Â Violence begets violence, and the rampant violence that led to Britain's surrender did not take place in a vacuum; instead, it fed into all subsequent American wars and smaller military actions.Â The United States' repeated victories in wars (withÂ the Vietnam war probably ending all the later to delay America's first war defeat) likely made the United States all the more militaristic and cocksure militarily.Â ByÂ now, the United States governmentÂ thrives on control backed by force,Â the threat ofÂ force, and punishment, not only through militaryÂ might, but also through an overgrown and overbearing criminalÂ "justice" system of police, laws, money, prosecutors, courts, andÂ prisons; Â an overgrown national security system that leaves us little privacy, security, or sufficientÂ liberty; and an overgrown spying and "intelligence" system. Â Fortunately, a strong movement continues in favor of civil liberties and government by the governed rather than the reverse. The movement is led by the American Civil Liberties Union, fearless and skilled criminal defense and Constitutional lawyers, the drug legalization movement, and the list goes on. Â July 4 is meaningless without an ongoing struggle for civil liberties. Now is the time to join that struggle. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Constitutional Law at 00:00