

Winter 2022

Address at the Constitution Day Convocation of the University of South Carolina School of Law

J. Michael Luttig

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/sclr>



Part of the [Constitutional Law Commons](#), [Courts Commons](#), [Education Law Commons](#), and the [Judges Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

J. Michael Luttig, Address at the Constitution Day Convocation of the University of South Carolina School of Law, 74 S. C. L. REV. 429 (2022).

This Article is brought to you by the Law Reviews and Journals at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in South Carolina Law Review by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.

**ADDRESS AT THE CONSTITUTION DAY CONVOCATION
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF LAW**

The Honorable J. Michael Luttig*

Thank you, Dean Hubbard, for that kind introduction, and thank you, students, and law students of the University of South Carolina.

I had the privilege to serve for over fifteen years on the Federal Bench with some of your law school's most distinguished graduates—including my dear friends, The Honorable Donald Russell, Robert Chapman, William Wilkins, William Traxler, Dennis Shedd, and of course, Karen Williams, in honor of whom this beautiful courtroom is fittingly named.

I was honored almost six years ago to give the commencement address at this great law school, as it marked and celebrated its 150th year anniversary.

And I am honored beyond words to have been asked to be your 2022 Constitution Day speaker today.

Thank you so very much, all of you!

“We the People [in 1787] . . . ordain[ed] and establish[ed]” our Constitution “in Order to form a more perfect Union.”

It was not until 2004, over two centuries after the signing of the United States Constitution on September 17 of that year, that Congress legislated Constitution Day. If the First Congress of the United States had legislated Constitution Day in 1789, this Constitution Day 2022 still could well be the most consequential Constitution Day ever celebrated in all of American history.

On this Constitution Day, our country; our institutions of government and governance; the institutions of our democracy; and our institutions of law and law enforcement, are under vicious, unsustainable, and unendurable attack from within our own country.

Speaking in a time of not dissimilar tumult in America nearly two centuries ago, Abraham Lincoln urged a revival to the Constitution and the Rule of Law, a renewed reverence for that Great Charter for our governance and guarantor of our liberty and our freedoms.

* This Article is a minimally edited transcript of The Honorable J. Michael Luttig's Address given on September 15, 2022 at the University of South Carolina School of Law's Constitution Day Convocation. Judge Luttig served on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit 1991–2006.

“Let reverence for the laws,” the 29-year-old Abraham Lincoln implored our country, “be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap — let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges; let it be written in Primers, spelling books, and in Almanacs; — let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. . . .”

“[I]n short,” Lincoln sermonized with the reverence he urged, let the Constitution and the Rule of Law “become the political religion of the nation.”

America is in desperate need of such a revival to our Constitution and the Rule of Law as our sixteenth President of the United States urged for the nation in 1838—a reawakening and quickening to the reverential imperatives of the Constitution from which, today, we have strayed so very far.

We Americans have lost our perspective. We need once again to reunite around the much more that we have always agreed upon and that has bound and united us since our founding, and we need to find the perspective we have lost as to the much less that we disagree upon and that now divides and disunites us.

Winston Churchill said that “Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities, because . . . courage is the quality which guarantees all others.” It is going to take the courage of the convictions of the American citizenry and patriots like yourselves for all of us to support, protect, and defend our imperiled Constitution and democracy on this Constitution Day 2022 and in the trying years ahead.

The evidence of the precarious state of our union, our Constitution, and our democracy abounds all around us, and so it is that these perils are the most fundamental issues facing our nation today.

A stake was driven through the heart of America’s democracy on January 6, 2021. And nearly two years later, our democracy is still teetering on a knife’s edge.

A recent, and ominous, Quinnipiac Poll shows that even America’s two political parties—the political guardians of our democracy—believe that, “The nation’s democracy is in danger of collapse.” Mirroring the same concern of our population at large, nearly three quarters (69%) of both Republicans and Democrats agree that our democracy appears to be on the verge of collapse.

These are stunning, and grim, admissions and confessions of what we Americans believe today about the condition of our Constitution and our democracy.

Poll after poll after poll over the past two years shows plunging respect and support for all of the institutions of American government, democracy, law, and law enforcement.

Public faith and confidence in the Supreme Court is on the wane. The most recent polling on the Supreme Court shows that only 48% of the public views our nation's highest court favorably, with 49% viewing it unfavorably—the largest percentage of the public to view the Court unfavorably in the past three decades that the Pew Research Center has conducted the poll.

Just last Friday, as the Court is about to begin its October 2022 Term after its tempestuous previous Term, the Chief Justice felt the need to comment upon the mounting sentiment questioning the very legitimacy of the Supreme Court of the United States. One of the Chief Justice's colleagues, Justice Kagan, felt the same need—but commented differently than the Chief Justice on the causes for this mounting sentiment.

So concerned about the emerging public distrust of the Supreme Court was The White House last year, that the President appointed a blue-ribbon Commission on the Court to consider a host of possible reforms of the Supreme Court of the United States, from enlargement of the Court's membership, to limits on the tenure of Supreme Court Justices, to restrictions on the Court's jurisdiction, case selection, rules, and practices.

A startling poll released just this week shows that 30% of Americans favor the President having the power to remove federal judges from office for decisions not deemed to have been in the national interest.

The Supreme Court is no outlier. The Congress, the White House and the nation's media fare little better, and usually worse, in polls gauging Americans' respect for, and trust in, these institutions of our law and our democracy. The same poll last week shows that roughly the same 30% of Americans believe the federal government should be able to prosecute members of the news media who make offensive or unpatriotic statements.

Over the past two years, there have even been discussions and debates about the need to amend our Constitution, and even discussions of convening a new constitutional convention that would consider fundamental changes to our Constitution.

On January 6, 2021, had then-Vice President Pence not defied the demands of the former president, the United States of America would have been plunged into a paralyzing constitutional crisis.

Almost two years later, many believe that either we are still, or we are again, in or on the cusp of a constitutional crisis.

In the weeks and months before and following the November 2020 presidential election, serious thinkers about the American experiment who are not given to apocalyptic prophesying questioned whether America was on the verge of a literal civil war.

Today, almost two years later, with political violence on the rise and increasing numbers of our political leaders and fellow citizens fanning the flames of political violence, even more Americans than then are worried that we are in danger of a civil war, some even believing such a war is imminent.

I dared to pose only the lesser rhetorical question in my congressional testimony in June: Is even a figurative civil war to be our generations' legacy to posterity?

Finally, foremost in the nation's conscience this Constitution Day is still that fateful day in January 2021, as Congress continues its hearings into the attack on the United States Capitol and the obstruction of the proceedings of the Joint Session to count the votes for the presidency of the United States.

Almost two years thence, the former president—again the presumptive Republican nominee for the presidency—his allies, and his party cannot even agree whether that day was good or bad, right or wrong. Worse still, it cannot agree over whether January 6 was needed, or not.

If one of the two political guardians of our democracy cannot agree even as to whether the violent riot and occupation of the United States Capitol that obstructed and prevented the constitutionally-prescribed counting of the votes for the presidency of those same united states was reprehensible insurrection or legitimate political discourse, we all can agree on nothing.

Nor should we.

Such is the dangerously perilous state of our Union, our democracy, and our Constitution, on this Constitution Day 2022, four years shy of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of ours, the greatest nation in the history of civilization.

America was at war on January 6, 2021, but not against a foreign power. We Americans were at war against each other, at war against ourselves over our own democracy.

January 6 was a dark day in the history of the United States, one of our country's darkest days.

On that constitutionally prescribed day for choosing the next American president and peacefully transferring the Executive power of the United States from the incumbent president to his successor, there was not to be a peaceful transfer of power—for the first time in the history of our Republic.

Over a year and a half later, in continued defiance of our Constitution and our democracy, the former president and his political party allies still claim that the 2020 presidential election was “stolen” from the former president, despite their knowing that every shred of evidence proves that claim false.

All the while, this false and reckless insistence that the former president won the 2020 presidential election has laid waste to Americans' confidence in their government, their elections, their democracy, and in their Constitution.

False claims that our elections have been stolen from us corrupt our democracy, as they corrupt the Nation, and as they corrupt us. To continue to insist and persist in the false claim that the 2020 presidential election was stolen is an affront to the Constitution and to our democracy—an affront that is without precedent in our history and that we must ensure will be without precedent in our future.

Democracy is the process through which we choose in our national elections those who we want to represent and govern us, including most importantly the President of the United States. In turn, using the power that we entrust with our representatives, they, in trust, govern us.

The 2020 election was not stolen from the former president. But if one of our national elections is ever stolen from us in the way the former president attempted to steal the last presidential election, our democracy will have been stolen from us.

To steal an election in the United States of America *is* to steal America's democracy.

The war for America's democracy that was instigated on January 6 was just the next battle in the cultural war for America's heart and soul that has been ravaging America for years.

Like our war from a distant time, these two ravaging wars are "testing whether th[is] nation or any nation . . . so conceived in Liberty . . . can long endure."

These senseless wars are of our own making, and they are now being waged throughout the land, in our city centers and town squares, in our streets and in our schools, where we work and where we play, in our houses of worship—even within our own families.

These wars were conceived and instigated from our Nation's Capital by our political leaders collectively, and these wars have now been cynically prosecuted by them to the point that America herself has become the stake in this deadly Game of Thrones they have recklessly played with our country.

Though these wars we are waging against each other are over our lost morality and what is to be our new morality, they are immoral wars, not moral ones. We have lost the moral compass that has guided us for over two centuries, and with it, we have lost not only all sense of direction, but also all sense of who our enemies and friends are and who they are not.

In America, we don't wage wars against our fellow citizens. Wars against each other are wars against America herself. America cannot win such wars, and it is fatal to the American experiment to wage them.

America can withstand attacks on her Constitution and her democracy from without. She is helpless to withstand them from within.

The relentless assaults and attacks on America and its democracy from within that we have witnessed and experienced over the past years—of which January 6 is only one, though the most heinous example—are leveled for the purpose and with the objective of drawing into question the very legitimacy of the institutions and instrumentalities of our law and our democracy, and therefore of our country.

These assaults and attacks on the institutions of our law and democracy, and on the Rule of Law in America, have accomplished their assailants' objectives.

These kinds of attacks from within our own country are not contemplated by the Constitution of the United States and are therefore neither accommodated nor accommodatable by that Great Charter for our governance.

America is not in constitutional crisis until and unless the Constitution and our institutions and instrumentalities of law and democracy are under

withering, unsustainable, and unendurable attack from within. Then, and only then, is our constitutional order in hopeless constitutional disorder. Only then is America and America's democracy in peril.

Today, America and America's democracy are in constitutional peril, if not in constitutional crisis.

And it is no wonder. Every day for years now we have borne witness to, if we have not ourselves participated in, these vicious partisan attacks on each other and on the bulwarks of our democracy—our institutions of government and governance and the institutions and instrumentalities of our law and of our democracy.

Every day for too many years now, we have witnessed and participated in attacks on our institutions of law, our nation's judiciary, our Constitution and our laws, and on our institutions of law enforcement—all, the guardians of our democracy and of our freedom. I decried the institutional delegitimization and the naked politicization of the judiciary and the law that these attacks bring about when I was last at your law school five years ago—and the attacks have only grown exponentially in number and ferocity since.

For years, we have been told by the very people we trust, and entrust, to preserve and protect our institutions of law and democracy that these institutions are no longer to be trusted, no longer to be believed in, no longer deserving of cherish and protection.

If that is true, then it is because those with whom we have entrusted these institutions have themselves betrayed our sacred trust.

And it does seem at the moment that we no longer agree on our democracy—or so we've been told. Nor do we any longer seem to agree on the ideals, values, and principles upon which America was founded and that were so faithfully nurtured and protected by the generations and generations of Americans that came before us.

Yet, we agree on no other foundational ideals, values, and principles, either.

All of a sudden it seems, or so we are told, that we are in violent disagreement over what has made America great in the past and over what will make her great in the future. In poetic tragedy, political campaign slogan has become divisive political truth.

And there is no reason to believe that agreement about America by we Americans is anywhere on the horizon, if for no other reason than that none of our leaders, and so therefore none of us, is interested in agreement—at least for the time being.

In the moral catatonic stupor America finds itself in today, it is only disagreement that we seek, and the more virulent that disagreement, the better.

We are a house divided, and our poisonous politics is eating away at the fabric of our society.

As American thinker, writer, and commentator, David French, said last weekend in his marvelous article “Queen Elizabeth and Power That Transcends Politics,” “[t]he politicization of everything is a threat to any nation, but it’s especially a threat to our nation.”

We Americans seem no longer even to recognize, in either sense of the term “recognize,” the virtues of character that have been taught, instilled, and celebrated in our society and in all civilized societies since the beginning of time, such as honor, integrity, truthfulness, honesty, humility, selflessness, duty, obligation, responsibility, bravery, courage—and country. What would James Madison think of America today? It was he, one of our Founding Fathers, our Fourth President, and the Father of our Constitution, who declared it “a chimerical idea” the “[supposition] that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in [its] people.”

Much less do we Americans any longer agree on what is right and what is wrong, what is moral and what is immoral, what is to be valued and what is not, what is virtuous and to be pursued and what is not virtuous and therefore not worthy of pursuit.

We no longer agree even on what is and is not acceptable conduct and discourse in our supposed civilized society or, for that matter, even on the outer limits of tolerable conduct and discourse in our society.

We cannot agree on what is fact and what is fiction or on what is truth and what is falsity.

We disagree on what ought to be the law, and what ought not be the law. We do not even agree on what of the law that we agree is law binds us all, and what of it binds only some of us all.

Let alone do we agree on how we want to be governed or by whom, or where we go from here and with what shared national ideals, values, beliefs, purposes, goals, and objectives—if any at all.

No society, and certainly no democratic society, can long endure with such polarized disagreement over these most fundamental of matters essential to any union.

I refuse to accept that this is who we have become and what America has become, and I urge all of you to reject it, too.

What I believe is that all of us have now been told for so long by the political demagogues and charlatans among us that this is who we have become and what America has become, that we have come to believe these demagogues and charlatans. That is, each of us has been told that it is our fellow citizens, not us, who no longer believe in these fundamental matters and in America herself. And therefore, we have begun to act toward our fellow citizens as if they are our enemies, when in fact they are anything but.

I want to believe, like you want to believe, that we Americans do still agree on these fundamental matters that have bound us together and united us since the founding of our country and the framing of our Constitution, and that we do still believe in America. I want to believe that it is only that our politicians have not, as yet, decided that it is in their self-centered partisan political interests to acknowledge that we do. That they are cynically detaining us and our future until the time that they can proclaim that they are the ones who have finally brought us back together and united us in the one nation of United States that we were meant to be—and then they will ask us for their political reward.

And so we have gone on, believing that which they have deluded us into believing as fact, that what before now united us and now divides us is irredeemable and irreclaimable—when they, and we, know that is false.

Reeling from the two wars being waged over America, leaderless, and rudderless, America is in need of help.

It is obvious that we cannot hobble along much longer, politically and governmentally paralyzed, hopelessly divided, directionless and undecided as to what we want, what we want to be, and what we must do in order to become the America we want to be.

Where do we begin? This seems to me the easier of the two questions that must be asked and answered. Who has the patriotic, moral, and political courage needed to lead us forward? That's the second and harder question.

As to the first question, we begin where the reconciliation of all broken human relationships, be they broken from war, love, betrayal, anger, or disrespect, begins—by talking with each other, and listening to one another again—taking the time to listen to one another again—as human beings and

fellow citizens who share the same destiny and the same belief in America and the same hope for her future.

For years now, taking the lead from our politicians, we Americans have spoken only coarse, desensitizing, dehumanizing political vile at each other, which enables us to speak to each other without guilt or regret. For too many years now, we ourselves have spoken to each other as charlatanic political gladiators in an arena that even yesterday was, and today has also become, annihilative of America's future, not promising of that future.

Today our politicians live in a different world from the rest of us, and in a different world than that ordained by the Constitution. They live in a fictional world of divided loyalties between party and country, a world of their own unfaithful making.

Today's politicians believe that they never have to choose between their partisan party politics and their country, when in fact they are obliged by oath to choose between the two every day, and every day they defiantly refuse to choose. For our politicians today, never the twain shall meet between their partisan ambition and their country, and never the latter before the former, either.

They have summoned their, and our, worst demons at the very moment when we needed summoned their, and our, better angels.

Our polarized political leaders have proven themselves unwilling and incapable of leading us.

Our political leaders having failed us, to whom do we turn? The answer lies in the first seven words of the Constitution written by the prophets of our nation's founding. We turn to ourselves, to "We the People of the United States." We ourselves must come to the aid of our struggling America.

We are the ones constitutionally possessed of the power over our governance and thus over our destiny. "Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed," we wrote in our Declaration of Independence. Just as we vest and entrust our power in our leaders, so also can we divest them of that entrusted power—or at least divest the demagogues and charlatans among our political leaders who have betrayed us. We can do this as soon as at the time of the next election, and that is exactly what we need to do.

Then, we need to ensure that those in whom we choose to place our trust tomorrow understand better than their predecessors do today that they serve

us as our leaders and are obligated by no lesser authority than the Constitution to represent our interests and our Nation's interests at the seat of government.

Once we have reclaimed our country, our democracy, and our Constitution from the political demagogues and charlatans, "We the People" must end the annihilative wars over our democracy and for the cultural heart and soul of America that those politicians have cynically prosecuted in our name for their own partisan political purposes.

And then we Americans need to resolve to decide again, as our forefathers and foremothers first did for us once before, who it is that we want to be and what it is that we want America to be.

"As our case is new . . . we must think anew, and act anew," Abraham Lincoln would urge us. We must "disenthral" ourselves from the bondages of our political demagogues and then map our own way forward, as did our forefathers and foremothers before us.

To begin this task of redefining who we Americans are and what we want America to be, we need to begin talking with each other again as allies and friends, not as mortal enemies, which we have never been. We need to listen to one another again, as human beings and fellow citizens who share the same destiny, the same belief in America, and the same hope for her future. Civility must again become the hallmark of our conversations with each other about our country and our future. Civility is not a sign of weakness, as we have been told of late, but rather, a certain sign of strength, and civil sincerity is always subject to proof. Civility "is not a tactic or a sentiment; it is the determined choice of trust over cynicism, of community over chaos," President George W. Bush said of civility.

We need to find our lost perspective, refocus more on the much that matters that we agree upon and that unites us, and focus less on the comparatively little of importance that we disagree upon and that separates and disunites us today. It was John F. Kennedy who said, "Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us." We must look beyond what is our self-centeredness today to the all that unites us, and focus on the shared values, aspirations, and hopes for the future that bind us together into this one nation we call America.

We need to re-found America . . . found our country again. We need to rediscover the truths that we once believed to be self-evident. We need to rediscover—and re-examine if need be—the ideals, the truths, the values, and the principles upon which our country was founded and has flourished for almost two and a half centuries. We need to reawaken ourselves to the vision, truths, values, principles, beliefs, hopes, and dreams upon which the country was founded, which have bound our nation together into the more perfect union that "We the People" ordained and established and made America the greatest nation on earth. We must "turn this government back into the channel

in which the framers of the Constitution originally placed it,” as Abraham Lincoln said.

We need to shore up and reinforce the bulwark of our faltering democracy and refortify the institutions of our democracy. “Preserving virtuous institutions is its own noble purpose,” David French, again, put it so well.

David went on to say, “[w]e Americans can and should grasp . . . [that] nations and cultures need people and institutions who transcend politics. . . . [E]ach of us will be far more defined by who we are rather than where we stand, and no one should think for a moment that upholding our values, building our families, and preserving virtuous institutions compromises our life’s purpose. There are legacies that transcend politics.”

We must reassure the American people that in our democracy they are free in order that they can vote their consciences and chart their own destiny. We must reassure them that they can and should vote, and that when they do, their vote will not only be counted and counted equally, and that when they do, their votes will be counted and counted equally, and they will be counted toward their futures and the future of their country.

And as we refortify and restrengthen the sacred institutions of our law and our democracy, we need to inspire among our citizenry a reverential revival to the Constitution and to the Rule of Law. Above all else, America is “[a] government of laws, and not of men.” We are desperately in need of a revival, a revival that will renew and revitalize the flagging faith of the American people in our Constitution and the Rule of Law, the organic law of our ordered liberty. It is not our politics that defines Americans, but rather, “our constitution and our national story,” David French reminds us.

In a word, we need to rekindle the American idea, the American ideal, and the American spirit which have made America the envy of the world for almost two hundred and fifty years now.

Many here tonight are lawyers. We in the law belong to one of the most honorable and honored, the most noble and nobilified, and the most venerable and venerated of professions.

Of our Founding Fathers, thirty-five of the fifty-five delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1787 were lawyers or had legal training. Of the Framers of our Constitution, thirty-two of the fifty-five were lawyers. Of the “Committee of Five” tasked by the Continental Congress with writing the Declaration of Independence, four were lawyers.

We in the legal profession are the guardians and stewards of the Constitution and the Rule of Law, the twin foundations of our democratic nation and the guarantors of our liberty.

We lawyers take an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

If this sounds as if the lawyer holds a special place in the constitutional order that is our democracy and that we are weighted by an almost-sacred responsibility, it is because we do and we are. We have a high appointment, and we have a high charge.

We are uniquely qualified, positioned, and obligated to defend our Constitution and our democracy—and we must do so today, tomorrow, and the next day, and until the present threat is no longer. And then, thereafter, we must protect and preserve the Constitution and our democracy, as we are obligated by oath to do.

I will close with this last thought about the task that lies ahead for you, for me, and for our fellow citizens.

There comes a time in every single one of our lives—whether that life be private and personal, or public—when we are summoned to attest to our beliefs and convictions, when we are summoned to stand, bear witness, and affirm what we believe and what we do not believe. This moment of truth and decision is our moment of calling. And the decision that we must make in that moment always comes at personal cost and sacrifice.

When our call comes, if we answer with the courage of our convictions, we are heroes, whether we be heroes to our families, our friends, our loved ones, our communities—or heroes to our country.

We call those in public life and in public service heroes who, when summoned, stand, affirm, and act to preserve and protect all that we cherish and hold dear in America.

We honor these men and women as heroes because, when their time comes and they are summoned, they rise, they speak, and they act—without having to decide whether to do so. For them, there is no decision to be made, for they made their decision long before. When their time comes, these heroes stare down not just fear, but profound fear of the ultimate sacrifice—already knowing what they must do and what their sacrifice might be.

We bear witness to, and we affirm, the heroism of these heroes in order that heroism will be forever encouraged in a world in which there are vanishingly few with the strength, the courage, and the will to speak and act when they are called upon—that is, in a world where there are fewer and fewer heroes.

This Constitution Day 2022, students of the University of South Carolina, one of your moments of calling has come. Perhaps it is the first, but if it is, it certainly will not be the last.

You, as are all of us Americans, are being summoned—to stand, bear witness, and affirm that you believe in America, and that you believe in our democracy.

You, and we, are being summoned to affirm and bear witness that we believe in our Constitution and the Rule of Law, and we are being summoned to affirm and take oath that we will preserve, protect, and defend the United States and the Constitution of the United States.

I challenge you lawyers among us to commit and re-commit yourselves to the Law and to the Rule of Law, to pledge yourselves to these and to their protection and preservation. I challenge you to vow that it will be the Law that triumphs over politics and not politics that triumphs over the Rule of Law. If you do this, you will have risen to what is your high calling.

Few of us have ever imagined there would come a time when we would even have to decide whether to defend our country, our democracy, and our Constitution.

Likely none of us ever imagined that this moment of national truth and decision for us would come because our own political leaders and so many other of our fellow citizens would have either been silenced by those who fear their voices or would have silenced themselves out of political fear for themselves. That so many would have hidden from having to decide, and be seen as deciding, whether to support and defend our country and our Constitution.

This is the surreality of the moment in which we find ourselves. But this is our moment. This is the moment that we must seize with the courage of our convictions.

Where our political leaders have shown us they have neither the character nor the courage required for this national patriotic task, “We the People” have both in abundance—the character as well as the patriotic, moral, and political courage that is lacking but required.

If we answer this call from our country with the courage of our convictions, we can quickly steady and right our listing ship of state. America will soon again be the proud nation that we were not long ago. America and her democracy will once again be the beacon of freedom and the envy of the free world that we have been since the day of our founding two hundred and forty-six years ago.

2022]

CONSTITUTION DAY ADDRESS

443

There could be no greater honor that we could bestow upon the American patriots and heroes like our Forefathers and Foremothers, our Armed Forces, and our Law Enforcement who, before us, have been called and who have stood, affirmed, and borne witness to what they believe and what they believe in for America—often at the price of the ultimate sacrifice. There could be no greater reassurance to these that their patriotic efforts and their heroic sacrifices were not in vain.

Our task is great and noble, and the hour is late.

Godspeed University of South Carolina! And again, thank you for inviting me to join you for Constitution Day 2022!