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Celebrating Our Nation's Independence

Their names may not be remembered in the same vein as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, or George Washington, but Ohioans Hiram Powers, William Henry Powell, and Howard Chandler Christy each played a role in telling the story of our nation's history.

Hiram Powers' eight-foot high statue of Benjamin Franklin has stood a few feet from the entrance of the U.S. Senate Chamber for nearly 150 years. Directly across from this towering statue is another work-of-art crafted by an Ohioan. William Henry Powell's 16 foot by 26 foot painting, "The Battle of Lake Erie," depicts a pivotal moment during the War of 1812. It captures the moment when a U.S. victory protected the Great Lakes and our state from British invasion. It was at the end of this battle when Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry notified General William Henry Harrison, future Ohio Senator and U.S. President, that "we have met the enemy and they are ours." Both Powers and Powell were from Cincinnati.

On the other side of the Capitol, just a few feet from the entrance to the floor of the House of Representatives, our Presidents have passed by Powers' statue of Thomas Jefferson. Directly across the statue is a painting by another Ohioan, Morgan County's Howard Chandler Christy. His 18 foot by 26 foot "Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States" depicts George Washington, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, among other founding fathers, enumerating the laws of our Constitution in Independence Hall in Philadelphia 1787.

This year, we celebrate the 234th anniversary of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, preserved in the Constitution that George Washington first swore to uphold and defend.

In doing so, we celebrate all Americans who have told the story of our nation – whether in sculpture or paint in the U.S. Capitol, on battlefields in foreign lands, or in factories and firehouses in our communities.

In doing so, we reflect on the sacrifice of those who make our independence possible. To all the men and women of our armed services, our veterans, and all of our military families – we owe you our gratitude and thanks.

We know there are great challenges confronting our state and our nation – an economy to rebuild, national security to protect, an oil spill to be contained. But this weekend's celebrations embody the vibrant American spirit and rock solid patriotism that I see in communities across Ohio.

As it has done throughout our nation's history, Ohio's talented workforce is building the cars and appliances of the 21st Century. Ohio workers are building the infrastructure – ports and bridges and highways and railways – that will connect our shores and expand our commerce. Ohio's manufacturers, farmers, small businesses, and entrepreneurs pushed the

boundaries of ingenuity and innovation to help turn our nation into an economic superpower. Workers' wages climbed as productivity increased and the ticket to the middle class – a stable, well-paying manufacturing job – built prosperous communities around the state. Today, we are re-tooling our manufacturers to compete in the 21st Century clean energy economy – and rebuilding our middle class communities along the way.

The entrepreneurial spirit of our great state sent humankind into flight and space. It built the cannonballs and tanks to defend our nation. It helped navigate our great rivers and cultivate our vast fields. And it will once again lead our nation toward a path for economic prosperity.

And throughout our nation's history, that path has always come through Ohio. Marietta was the first official town in the newly established Northwest Territory. The official public celebration occurred on Independence Day 1788, marking our state's role as a gateway to westward expansion. For the more than two hundred years since Thomas Jefferson granted our statehood, our state's history has helped tell the story of our nation's history. One is reminded of this walking past Hiram Power's sculptures or the paintings of William Henry Powell and Howard Chandler Christy. And I am reminded of it as I meet Ohioans across our state, knowing that our nation and Ohio's history have been, and will continue to be, shaped by everyday heroes in our communities.

It's an honor serving as your U.S. Senator and I thank you for being active participants in the story of our great state and upholding the ideals and limitless promise of our great nation. I wish you and your family a safe 4th of July holiday.

Sincerely,

Sherrod Brown



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