

Good morning, Sheridan!

Thank you for being here today—on this June morning, outside our courthouse—not in protest, not in silence, but in celebration. We're here to honor one of the greatest ideas ever put to paper: *We the People*.

Those three words, written boldly at the top of our Constitution in 1787, flipped centuries of political tradition on its head. No kings. No emperors. No divine right. Just *us*. As James Madison wrote, "*The people are the only legitimate fountain of power.*"

But what Madison and his fellow Founders knew—and what we must remember—is that power without participation is meaningless. Liberty without learning is fragile. And freedom, if not exercised, fades.

Today's event reminds us that political involvement and civic education are not just duties—they are essential to preserving our republic.

Our Constitution does not just give us rights; it gives us responsibility. Article I begins, "*All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States...*"—and who elects that Congress? *We do*. The First Amendment guarantees "*the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.*" That is what we are doing here today. Using our voices. Claiming our role.

The Founders were not naïve. They knew this system would only survive if the people were informed and engaged. George Washington warned, "*A primary object should be the education of our youth in the science of government.*" And Benjamin Franklin, when asked what form of government had been created, famously replied: "*A republic—if you can keep it.*"

Well, how do we keep it?

We keep it by teaching our children what the Constitution means—not just what it says. We keep it by making sure every student in Wyoming, from Gillette to Cheyenne to here in Sheridan, understands checks and balances, the power of the vote, and the necessity of civil discourse.

We keep it by voting—not just every four years, but every time we are given the opportunity. We keep it by showing up to town halls, writing to our legislators, listening before we speak, and engaging with facts instead of fear.

We keep it by paying attention to the issues that affect our lives—public lands, which define our Western identity. Public education, which shapes our future. Veterans' care, immigration policy, healthcare access—these are not partisan issues. These are civic responsibilities.

Thomas Jefferson wrote, “*Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government.*” That trust is the foundation of our democracy—but it is earned through effort. If we leave civic education to chance, we leave our democracy to chance.

So let us remember today: The Constitution does not operate on autopilot. It works only when we do. It protects us only when we protect each other. It lives only when *we the people* give it life.

We do not need to agree on every issue. In fact, disagreement is part of the American design. But we must agree on the process. On the right of every citizen to be informed, involved, and heard.

Let today be a beginning—not an end. Let it be a renewal of the promise written in Philadelphia nearly 240 years ago: that this government belongs to the people. That it is *ours*—to cherish, to challenge, and to carry forward.

Because when *we the people* show up, speak out, and stay informed, there is no challenge we cannot meet, and no freedom we cannot keep.

Thank you—and may we never take for granted the power that belongs to *us all*.