



Written by [John Stossel](#) on July 3, 2024

## Government and Freedom

Last week, presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. asked me to moderate what he called “The Real Debate.”

Kennedy was angry with CNN because it wouldn’t let him join its Trump-Biden debate.

His people persuaded Elon Musk to carry his Real Debate on Twitter. They asked me to give RFK Jr. the same questions, with the same time limits.

I agreed, hoping to hear some good new ideas.

I didn’t.

As you know, Joe Biden slept, and Donald Trump lied. Well, OK, Biden lied at least nine times, too, even by CNN’s count.

Kennedy was better.

But not much.

He did acknowledge that our government’s deficit spending binge is horrible. He said he’d cut military spending. He criticized unscientific Covid lockdowns and said nice words about school choice.

But he, too, dodged questions, blathered on past time limits and pushed big government nonsense like, “Every million dollars we spend on child care creates 22 jobs.”

Give me a break.

Independence Day is this week.

As presidential candidates promise to subsidize flying cars (Trump), free community college tuition (Biden) and “affordable” housing via 3% government-backed bonds (Kennedy), I think about how bewildered and horrified The Founding Fathers would be by such promises.

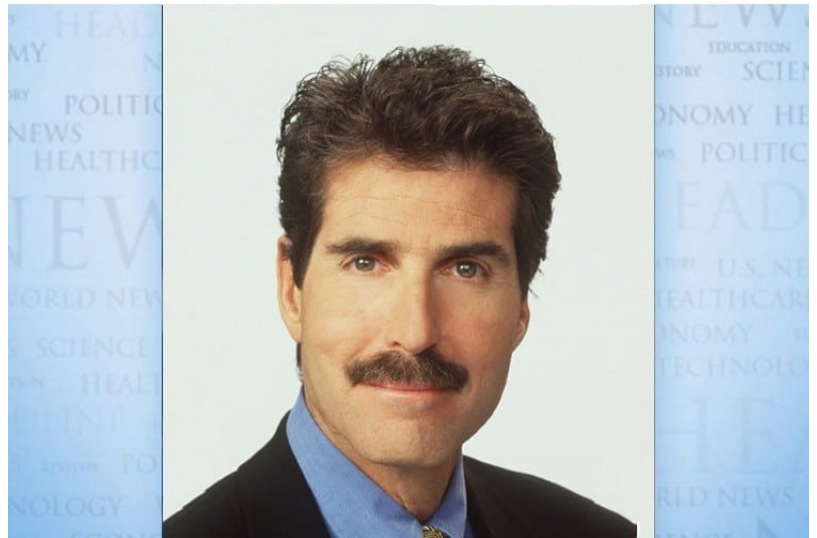
On the Fourth of July almost 250 years ago, they signed the Declaration of Independence, marking the birth of our nation.

They did not want life dominated by politicians. They wanted a society made up of free individuals. They believed every human being has “unalienable rights” to life, liberty and (justly acquired) property.

The blueprints created by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution gradually created the freest and most prosperous nation in the history of the world.

Before 1776, people thought there was a “divine right” of kings and nobles to rule over them. America succeeded because the founders rejected that belief.

In the Virginia Declaration of Rights, George Mason wrote, “All power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people.”



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By contrast, Kennedy and Biden make promises that resemble the United Nations' "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." U.N. bureaucrats say every person deserves "holidays with pay ... clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services."

The founders made it clear that governments should be *limited*. They didn't think we had a claim on our neighbor's money. We shouldn't try to force them to pay for our food, clothing, housing, prescription drugs, college tuition ...

They believe you have the right to be left alone to pursue happiness as you see fit.

For a while, the U.S. government stayed modest. Politicians mostly let citizens decide our own paths, choose where to live, what jobs to take and what to say.

There were a small number of "public servants." But they weren't our bosses.

Patrick Henry declared: "The governing persons are the servants of the people."

Yet now there are 23 million government employees. Some think *they* are in charge of everything.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, pushing her Green New Deal, declared herself "the boss."

The Biden administration wants to decide what kind of car you should drive.

During the pandemic, politicians ordered people to stay home, schools to shut down and businesses to close.

Then, as often happens in "Big Government World," people harmed by government edicts ask politicians to compensate them.

After governments banned Fourth of July fireworks, the American Pyrotechnics Association requested "relief in the next Senate Covid package to address the unique and specific costs to this industry," reported the NYT. "The industry hopes Congress will earmark \$175 million for it in another stimulus bill."

Today the politically connected routinely lobby passionately to get bigger chunks of your money.

For some of you, the last straw was when the administration demanded you inject a chemical into your body.

When some resisted vaccinations, Biden warned, "Our patience is wearing thin."

His patience? Who does he think he is? My father? My king?

At least Kennedy doesn't say things like that. But he does say absurd things. In a few weeks I'll release my sit-down interview with him, and you can decide for yourself whether he's a good candidate.

This Fourth of July, remember Milton Friedman's question: "How can we keep the government we create from becoming a Frankenstein that will destroy the very freedom we establish it to protect?"

*Every Tuesday at [JohnStossel.com](https://www.johnstossel.com), Stossel posts a new video about the battle between government and freedom. He is the author of Give Me a Break: How I Exposed Hucksters, Cheats, and Scam Artists and Became the Scourge of the Liberal Media.*

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