

My name is Tom Petersen a resident of Empire Township and I am an Independent voter belonging to neither of the two major parties. I am also a 26 year veteran of the military (not as a chaplain) having served both in and out of combat.

I've been attending some of these meetings online as well as in person. I have heard some things lately that seem to be slanted to one side. I would like to present another side by addressing four of these points.

While often categorized as a democracy, the United States is more accurately defined as a constitutional federal republic. What does this mean? "Constitutional" refers to the fact that government in the United States is based on a Constitution which is the supreme law of the United States. The Constitution not only provides the framework for how the federal and state governments are structured, but also places significant limits on their powers. "Federal" means that there is both a national government and governments of the 50 states. A "republic" is a form of government in which the people hold power, but democratically elect representatives to exercise that power. So there is nothing in that definition that tells me I have to be a Republican or a Democrat.

Some folks seem to be having attacks of high blood pressure over the committees used in government. I have been involved with several different types of management over the years and all effective ones use smaller action groups to do research, or work to solve the problem and report back to the main body with their findings. Every level of government I can find uses committees to aid in making their decisions – committees make recommendations not decisions. I have sat in service club and church meetings where they were trying to conduct business as a committee of the whole – it normally took many, hours long meetings to begin to get a consensus on a direction to go.

In this country we have freedom of religion. That means that every person has the choice as to which religion they will follow (including none) as a right. I have heard many individuals in this room try to force their beliefs on others. You have the right of choice in your beliefs, however, you do NOT have the right to impose your beliefs on any other person or organization.

I have heard the One Nation Under God since the beginning used in this room and have to say that motto replaced the original in 1956 not 1776. The original was E Pluribus Unum (Out of many one). Under God was added to the pledge in 1954, which by the way was written in 1892 by socialist minister Francis Bellamy and did not contain the words United States until 1923. So none of them were around in the beginning. All it takes is a little reading of our founder's writings and a legitimate study of history.

Thank you.