Dear Citizen,

During the wee hours of the morning, back then I awoke with such a sense of urgency that I could not return to sleep, an urgency that someone had left the gates ajar. The wolves roamed then with such ferocity. So it was under candle light in 1776 that I began the first sentences of what was to become Common Sense. I wrote several works. Have they taught any of these in your modern schools? It is with the same urgency that I must stir from my grave, to address a most urgent matter now, in this year 2016; a serious matter that faces America. Dear me how time moves so swiftly! Due to a flaw, if you will, in your present day selection and vetting process, a flaw that we in 1775 could never have anticipated, a fellow named Donald or Donny Drumpf has somehow, by sheer real estate style salesmanship, navigated himself very near to the doorway of President of the United States. Real Estate was big in my day too, and believe me when I tell you we called this type of person a real gamester, the worst of villains, a charlatan.

Citizen! Wake up and step from your plows. America needs a few good citizens now to realize the right path this election must determine. To turn away with a cynical, skeptical mind and dissociate with the political process that has guided this nation through the great storms of history; to remain sleeping, as I have for three hundred years, and allow this person Drumpf (I am now told it is Trump) to become the next president of the United States, would be a flirtation and engagement to calamity. I realize good citizen that the opposing candidate of the Democratic Party, Hillington Clinton, (do excuse me, I don’t get the best of intelligence in my a’hem position), that this candidate lacks even my charisma, or even the explosive passion of my esteemed colleague the late, late, John Adams. But this fork in the road of America’s future is a most contrasting one, a choice between a circus of chaos and the continuing orderly process of a civilized democratic government under a tested constitution. It is that simple, good citizen. One or the other.

November 2016 is desperately close at hand. The leaves of September now cover the grounds of my old haunts around Philadelphia. The noisy crowds and clamor of a Democratic and a
bellicose insulting Republican campaign now float meaninglessly adrift into the background noise that most Americans call their day to day lives. All the headlines of the past several years, some hideously unimaginable, are part of your collective day to day reality. Unbridled gun violence; (From where did that come?) struggles with gender tolerance and understanding; environmental disaster, disregard of your progress in race relations, countless threats from a polarized dysfunctional congress to cancel cornerstone programs built from all our struggles over centuries past; trash the Affordable Care Act, load a self-inflicted immigration problem onto south bound railroad box cars; and allow massively rich American corporations to continue carte blanche in their impudent rough shod greedy romp over a lower and middle economic levels of American Citizens.

At this moment, those who belong to the economic lower and middle levels of American society, the working back bone of your country, the two-jobbers, need to put down the potato peeler, the broom, the shovel and hammer, shut off the welder and the vacuum and walk out onto the front porch and out to the clothesline. Listen to the peace, or silence, the whirl of traffic, or children playing. Vapor trails etch white lines across the sky and scatter into the high blue altitudes. In each of your realities, you share your humanity, equality and kindness at any moment of need. It is urgent to be aware of that single power each of you have, the power to vote for individuals who will represent you in the dangerously omnipotent and powerful seats of American government; specifically those members of the House, the Senate and the next occupant of the White House, your new President.

Like a mirror, part of your reality has only just appeared. Great Britain in an emotional vote by her citizens has just rolled the dice in a giddy moment of mass self-empowerment. The outcome of this colossal gamble, which had a thin majority outcome, has sent financial markets plummeting and neighboring governments into emergency sessions. It is as though, amidst fear and anger, a gun has discharged in a divorce, consequences not pondered or imagined, ears ringing, the smell of cordite and blood fills the nostrils of those dazed soles who pulled the trigger, the very citizens of Britain herself. A referendum is a fancy word for leadership’s ill perceived action to put a desperately critical matter to vote rather than work the problems out.

The result of this referendum is now etched in stone. Great Britain will leave the European Union, the EU as it is known. Rather than legislate reforms through Parliament, a thin 46% majority of Brits, some say acting on fear and anger, have propelled their nation careening into the darkness of the unknown. Those Brits who were sleeping, the 54% who didn’t show up to vote, suddenly woke up asking what happened. It is a clarion call to Americans to be very careful with your most powerful democratic expression, your vote, on Election Day. During my early days, 1785ish, after the revolution fewer than ten percent actually voted, but I’m astonished that your present election day performance is near 45% of your great population. Where then are the remaining 55% on Election Day? I am told that apathetic youths comprise much of that fifty five percent.
We (I say we, though I am long since gone, but back for only this fleeting moment) Americans are surely better than that. Could it be that void of good leadership, in the chaos and anarchy of a distant future we look back and yearn for the fine, indeed boring, incremental changes from what we once characterized as a “do-nothing Congress”? Could you in those future days yearn for those long periods of peace and tranquility as you eke out a living, feed and clothe your children? Today you have seen nation states disintegrate before your very eyes. Once peaceful market places and quaint villages of the old world, daily routines, explode with sectarian violence; ripping apart any resemblance of the lovely bistros and stalls rich with symbols of unique cultural diversity, that suddenly could no longer co-exist peacefully. Amidst seemingly harmless demonstrations, violence erupted. No one agreed or debated or negotiated. It became all or nothing. It ended in nothing, with millions of refugees scattering to seek shelter in a crowded troubled world. This election is no time for apathy good citizen.

So as you proceed calmly into November with an eye toward civility rather than bombastic insults and inflammatory statements every week, toward fact, and not buzz words that incite hate, bully insults, bigotry, servitude and divisiveness among you, let all Americans keep an eye on that prize “Liberty for All”. Intended or not, this Mr. Trump’s rhetoric has made him a conduit for your darkest side. Acting from your better side, your vote should sustain the long political process we began in the Conventions of 1775 and 1776. Quite simply, the results of your precious one citizen one responsible vote come November, will sustain the government of by and for the people we gave you. It will insure a tested government characterized by debate, negotiation (you need work there friend), mutual respect and rule of law. It might sound boring, but considering the dangerous consequences of a Trump Presidency, anarchy, hate groups, alienation of race, demonization of terrified hard working emigrants who have contributed so much to your success as you know it, I don’t know about you good citizen but I’ll take boring any day.

I conclude with an appeal to your younger citizens, millennials as I believe you call them. Hear me now oh children of liberty. Your counter parts in the Ukraine, Syria and Egypt have shaped the directions of events with the very tools you carry in your pockets; Iphone, Facebook and Twitter and Instagram to enlighten masses of likeminded young citizens, guiding them toward the flickering candle light of democracy and civilized, peaceful and productive societies that are slipping away from them. Take up these same tools yourselves in this last month of America’s 2016 Presidential Campaign and show your collective power to shape an America in which you wish to live. On November 1, 2016, liker her or not, cast your votes for Madam Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton. Anyone, any sensible manager interviewing the two candidates for the difficult job ahead could not possibly consider the alternative. (It’s been good to see what has become of America since my early revolutionary days. I must now return to my eternal slumber. But, I cannot emphasize enough, do take great care, good citizen, with what we have given you. It is in your hands now. Fair thee well and a tearful good bye.)

Thomas Paine 1737-1809, mtm