

America 250 Celebration Remarks FCC Commissioner Olivia Trusty

Two hundred and fifty years ago, a group of men put their names to a document that changed the world: the Declaration of Independence. We know its famous opening — “When in the Course of human events” — and we know its grand promise: that all men and women are created equal and endowed with certain unalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

But I want to call your attention to the last line of this revered text. A line that others have highlighted in the lead up to the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

After all the declarations and grievances and after laying out their vision for a new kind of nation, the signers closed with something deeply personal. They pledged to one another — *mutually pledged* — the following: “our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

Not a policy. Not a principle. But, a promise, made person to person and I’ll briefly reflect on that.

They pledged their lives.

Public service has always meant choosing something larger than yourself. The founders risked everything — their families, their freedom, their futures. The stakes for FCC employees are different, thankfully. But the spirit is not. Every day, people across this agency work to make sure Americans can call for help in an emergency, connect with a doctor across a hundred miles of open country, start a business, reach loved ones, and more. That work is quiet, largely unseen, but absolutely essential. And I am genuinely honored to serve alongside people who show up for that work every single day.

They pledged their fortunes.

Here’s something worth considering: the founders didn’t build everything that America would or could become. Rather, they created the conditions in which future generations of Americans could build it. The FCC’s work is not so different. We don’t lay fiber. We don’t launch satellites. But we do shape the environment in which companies and entrepreneurs engaging in that work can take those risks, make certain bets, and connect this vast nation. When that works — when a rural hospital gets access to reliable broadband, when a small business reaches new customers, or when a family residing in a remote corner of this country is no longer cut off — that’s the return on the investment. Not just money. Possibility.

They pledged their sacred honor.

Honor in this sense means stewardship. It's passing something forward. The founders weren't just building for themselves; they were building for us, two and a half centuries away. And we have the same obligation to those who come next.

I've been fortunate in my career to learn from people who understood that. People who made time to mentor, to encourage, to open doors they didn't have to open.

And that investment into other people has shaped not just careers but the entire character of our field. That kind of leadership is its own form of nation-building. These values don't survive in documents alone. They survive in people.

So, as we celebrate 250 years, I'd offer this: the Declaration of Independence didn't end with a vision. It ended with a vow.

A vow made together, among the founders, to something bigger than any one of them. Today, we benefit from the faith our founders placed in generations they would never meet. And now it is our turn.

Our responsibility is not to form a nation, but to strengthen one—to ensure that Americans can connect, communicate, innovate, and thrive. To leave behind communications networks, institutions, and opportunities that will serve Americans we will never meet ourselves.

But, if we do our jobs well—serving with dedication, enabling the investments that connect our country, and lifting up the people who will carry this work forward—then perhaps 250 years from now, others will look back on our generation as we look back on those who signed the Declaration of Independence.

With gratitude. With pride. And with an appreciation for the profound privilege of contributing to the American story.