



CHARTERS OF FREEDOM

Just in time for the celebration of the 4th of July, Okaloosa County recently received an unusual donation. A package that includes 7 large monument style stainless steel and bronze plaques that measure 4 feet each. These large plaques display four of our most important documents:

- The Declaration of Independence,
- United States Constitution,
- Bill of Rights,
- Civil Rights Amendments,

I have been privileged to visit the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and view the original documents. As someone who is deeply patriotic, whose family was part of the founding of this Country, I was moved to tears.

When Vance and Mary Jo Patterson viewed the documents in Washington D.C., they decided to create Foundation Forward, Inc. It was officially formed in 2013 and operates as a nonprofit educational project that promotes civics, education, and the preservation of American history. The goal is to have a set of plaques in each of the 67 counties in Florida.

These plaques are to be displayed in an area that will allow citizens easy access to view these important documents. The cost to Okaloosa County is for construction of the monument display only. Typically, the displays have been constructed with a concrete base and brick veneer, but others have used granite, or other types of upgraded finishes.

Okaloosa County is a patriotic military community, and the Board of County Commissioner jumped at the opportunity to place these documents for display. The challenging decision of accepting the gift was determining the location for installation. Some communities placed their monuments at Courthouses, museums or other memorial sites. Okaloosa County has two obvious choices: Crestview Courthouse and Women Veterans Park on Okaloosa Island. At the Board of County Commission meeting, I lamented out loud that we needed another set at which point Chairman Trey Goodwin stated that we should pursue a second set.

The good news is that we now have two sets! One will be placed in the Crestview County seat, and *the second will be unveiled on Veteran's Day, November 11, 2026 @ 8:30 AM. in Women*

Veterans Park. Please type this link into your browser and watch the short video to understand the gift of these plaques just in time for America250! <https://youtu.be/z5iuLCsv8kU>

In a community such as ours very few need to be reminded that freedom is not free. I particularly want to honor past and present service men and women on this 4th of July for the privilege of living in the United States of America.

It is an honor to serve as your Commissioner.

My Sincere Thanks,



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