

# U.S. independence day

## Faith in the American Dream never wavers

John Victor Roos  
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN

Independence Day is one of the most important holidays for Americans — and for those of us overseas, many of whom are away from family and friends, I think the day becomes even more important.



The Fourth of July is a time to celebrate the values that both define and unite us: values such as liberty, equality, freedom and democracy — principles the founding fathers believed were important enough to risk their lives fighting for and which have since become solid cornerstones of American society. As Americans gather for festivities, fireworks and traditional Fourth of July barbecues, we enjoy and exercise the rights fought

for and passed down to us by our forefathers. If those brave men could see how their extraordinary wisdom has supported the growth and stability of a democratic system that has inspired people around the world, they would surely be proud.

As President Barack Obama noted in his recent West Point commencement address, “From the birth of our existence, America has had a faith in the future — a belief

that where we’re going is better than where we’ve been, even when the path ahead is uncertain. To fulfill that promise, generations of Americans have built upon the foundation of our forefathers — finding opportunity, fighting injustice, forging a more perfect union.”

In following this faith and seeking those selfsame values of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and their compatriots that are celebrated each year on the Fourth of July, countless people have flocked to the United States since its founding and made the country their own. The American Dream is as much a part of Independence Day as the parades and parties. It makes the United States a place where all things are possible for people who are willing to put in hard work and effort. Generations of our fellow Americans have looked toward the future and toiled for their dreams alongside each other despite their differences, continuously fighting for freedom and the rights promised to us in our Constitution. In a recent high school commencement address in Kalamazoo, Mich., President Obama congratulated a recent arrival to the school who became valedictorian of her class, noting that she represented “what is continually replenishing the energy and the dynamism and the innovation of this

country.”

Each year Americans and visitors participate in the Independence Day activities on the National Mall in front of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. The annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival takes place there on the two weekends overlapping the Fourth of July holiday to honor the diversity of people, culture, beliefs and histories that forms the backbone of the United States. The upcoming 2010 Festival includes a special program, “Asian Pacific Americans: Local Lives, Global Ties,” celebrating Asian Pacific Americans and their traditions, which contribute to the cultural landscape of our nation’s capital and its surroundings.

In our increasingly interdependent world, as we celebrate those values upon which our great nation was founded so many years ago, let us also celebrate the enduring partnership between Japan and the United States. Our fates and our fortunes are intertwined as never before. This year we also celebrate the 50th anniversary of the signing of our security treaty. In these past five decades we have supported and strengthened each other. Through cooperation and exchanges we have built our friendship. We are allies who share the same values of freedom and democracy, and together we are working to en-



**Celebration: The Foo Fighters performed on the South Lawn of the White House on the Fourth of July last year.** OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA

sure a more peaceful and prosperous future for ourselves and the Asia-Pacific region.

Japan’s hosting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings this year, followed by the U.S. in 2011, gives us another great opportunity to build on our partnership. We have the opportunity to cooperate even further through APEC to increase trade and bring sustainable economic growth to all APEC members. As leaders of the global economy we also have the responsibility and resources to make the world a better place so that all future generations will have an even better environment in which to grow and experience the freedoms that we already enjoy.

As U.S. ambassador to Ja-

pan, I am overjoyed to extend my very first Fourth of July greetings to all my fellow Americans and friends of America residing in Japan and to express my sincere appreciation to our gracious hosts, the Japanese people, for their continued friendship and

support. May both our great nations continue to enjoy the blessings of liberty.



**American beauty: President Barack Obama looks at the Grand Canyon in Arizona on Aug. 16, 2009.** OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA



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