

Premier's Constitution Day Address

5 July 2010

My fellow Caymanians, and all residents in these Islands. It is my pleasure to bring you greetings on this Constitution Day holiday. I am sure you will all make good use of the holiday... but I urge you, to let's also remember the significance of why we have this holiday.

A constitution is the highest law of any country. It enshrines the rights of a people and sets the parameters of government. This is why countries seeking to ensure a democratic governance will show so much respect for their constitution, will hold a constitution in such high esteem, as to commemorate it with a holiday, as we are doing today. Constitutional development in any country is generally associated with a people's ability to determine their own destiny.

Modern constitutional development in Cayman began on the 4th of July 1959, with a Royal Order-in-Council. This was the direct result of Caymanian Assemblymen petitioning the United Kingdom. Events of the day made it clear that we could, and should, take formal control of our own political destiny. That document was revised in 1972. Just over a year ago, the people of the Cayman Islands voted in our first Referendum, to adopt a new constitution.

This document will have a major impact on the shape of Government, and the nature of governance in the Cayman Islands for generations to come. The Caymanian people had the opportunity to give input, examine and approve this new constitution; several changes in the structure of government – through a series of Ministerial Councils, Commissions, and District Councils, will greatly broaden public participation in our government. But it does come with a monetary cost to the country. Nevertheless, Caymanians have believed in democracy, in government of and by the people. It is central to our political heritage.

It is not a perfect document, but it is what you voted for; it is what we have. So, take time today to tell your children why we have a holiday. Pass on our love of democracy to the next generation. Our freedom that is guaranteed by the constitution and the United Kingdom should not be taken for granted. Cherish it... and protect it. May God bless you and your families. And, may God bless these, our Cayman Islands.