



Declaring our freedom: Lubbock criminal defense attorneys read founding American documents

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More than a dozen Lubbock criminal defense attorneys gathered Tuesday morning at the steps of the Lubbock County Courthouse to read the Declaration of Independence in the same spirit of proclamations made at town centers in the American colonies more than 240 years ago.

Chuck Lanehart, a Lubbock attorney who co-sponsors the annual reading, explained to the crowd who gathered at the courthouse lawn that most colonists didn't immediately learn of the Second Continental Congress' decision to secede from the British when the declaration was adopted on July 4, 1776.

Without television, radio or social media, most of the colonists heard about the declaration through proclamations at town centers where it was read off of broadsides that were circulated among the 13 colonies, he said.

"There were newspapers, but 50 percent of the population could not read," he said.

One by one, 15 members of the Lubbock Criminal Defense Attorneys Association read portions of the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights.

He said the Bill of Rights contains the tools criminal defense attorneys use in the courthouse to protect the individual liberties of citizens.

"Today is to remind us to always keep vigilant in that fight," he said.

The event is typically scheduled ahead of the Independence Day holiday and is organized locally by the Lubbock Criminal Defense Lawyers Association in

conjunction with the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, which organizes readings in other Texas counties.

“Several years ago, it started in Houston and it’s just an opportunity for the Texas criminal defense lawyers at large, and us locally, to just celebrate what it is that we fight to protect each day in and out of the courthouse,” said event co-sponsor, Rusty Gunter, the Lubbock association’s president-elect.

He said the reading raises awareness about the importance of the ideals that make up the foundation of the country.

A reading was also scheduled by the Texas Criminal Defense Attorneys Association at the Tornillo Immigration Camp near El Paso, according to a news release.

Gunter said while political climates from year to year can highlight certain aspects of the two documents, it is important to realize their importance as a whole.

“Certainly one could look at the political events of the day, whether it be this year or ten years from now, and see parallels and similarities,” Gunter said. “But all of these, taken as a whole, are incredibly important to us as a society and it’s up to us make sure that they’re protected - not just for the folks that are affected in the courtroom but for the larger impact that it will have for us as a people.”