

Guest Column: How can we increase respect for law in America?

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When we think about many Americans' current dislike of law and law enforcement, we would do well to consider how history's great lawgivers created respect for it.

Going back to one of the earliest known lawgivers, we find that Urukagina in Mesopotamia emphasized the need to write human rights into law, so that all could see the law's helpfulness.

Moses of Israel wrote a law with an emphasis on broad distribution of wealth (land) and extensive citizen responsibilities, so that all could claim ownership in administration of the law. He mandated annual citizen re-commitment to the original foundational law and legal education for all youth, so they could understand its purpose at a tender age. He said the law should be posted everywhere, even on houses and lands, and discussed continually.

Numa in early Rome established a firm devotion to the idea of peace in domestic and foreign affairs, thus obtaining the assent of the great bulk of Roman families struggling to achieve goals of personal development, secure persons and property, and long-life.

Solon of Athens refused to align himself with one or the other of society's two great socio-economic classes, so there could be no taint of favoritism in the law, and thus reason to object to it. He allowed no theft of the

rightly obtained wealth of the landed folk, but provided debt relief for the oppressed poor. Solon instituted an oath to defend and protect the constitutional law so all people would be on record as committed to it. He instituted an equitable justice system, so all people would want to be served by it. He wanted a law that “the gods would cheer.”

Muhammad of Arabia stressed that for law to be fully humane, the lawgiver must have a spiritual or ethical calling recognized by all, so the law is reflective of the highest values of nature and creation. In addition, there must come a literal judgment day, an impeachment or prosecution, for all types and levels of people who offend good law, so as to create a positive fear of misdeeds.

Alfred of England believed that the great bulk of the law must be administered on local levels, and public officials and police officials must be regularly held accountable for their misadventures. He established that leaders in law and government must be extremely knowledgeable in literature related to history, religion and government, so not easily reproached.

Thomas Jefferson demonstrated the correct way to resist tyranny in America. He did this by publishing grievances and proposing solutions in the Declaration of Independence. He also championed the role of higher education. Those who know more about life and society can better trust the law and know how to modify it when it is deficient.

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