



**Pole Capping, 2015**

**State Representative Ken Gordon**

Thank you to the Bedford Minutemen, the Selectmen, and all of you for once again allowing me to participate in the Liberty Pole Capping ceremony, one that dates back all the way to ancient Greece to signify the freeing of a slave, and was carried forward in colonial America to protest oppression of British Rule.

Freedom is an important concept here in Bedford these days and throughout the Commonwealth. This past year residents of our town banded together to show that isolated yet increasing incidents of anti-Semitism are unwelcome here and will not be tolerated. We are firm in our resolve, that any instance of intolerance will not define our town. Our response to intolerance is what defines us, and we have responded with respect, love and kindness to our fellow citizens.

That kindness spread to other towns of Burlington, which I also represent, and Lexington have hosted peace gatherings several times since then. I'm sure this has gone on in other places.

Here in Bedford, especially in our schools, we are fortunate to be exposed to many different cultures. Our vibrant METCO program brings students from all backgrounds who live in Boston to our schools, so they can share their experiences while learning alongside town children. The children of military families come to the high school and share their experiences gained from around the world. We appreciate our servicemen, honor them, and we attempt to return their commitment to our security with the valuable education their high school kids receive here.

Tomorrow we will have a multi-cultural event in the high school, and I encourage all of you to attend. Because here in Bedford, everyone has the freedom to be who you are. No matter the color of your skin, the way you worship, the place where your parents came from, whether you face physical or emotional challenges or who you love. You are all welcome here.

The freedom to be yourself goes for our Commonwealth as well. Just this month, Indiana and Arkansas passed a new law that allowed businesses the freedom to take civil rights away from other people. Almost as soon as it was passed, Indiana thought better of it and amended it. Here in Massachusetts, we know that freedom at someone else's expense is not freedom at all. Here in Massachusetts, you will not be reading about civil rights setbacks. Because here, the words liberty and justice for all means just that, "for all". Liberty and justice were born here and thrive here.

So I thank you again, for including me on this important day, this celebration of Liberty.