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Hard work is the most influential civic value that unites America. Most Americans know that to succeed in reaching their goals, they need to work hard to reach them. Hard work not only brings about desired successes, but also instills a sense of self worth and satisfaction. The United States is one of the only countries in the world that rewards those who combine their talents and ingenuity with hard work. It should not be surprising that millions of people around the world seek to enter the United States and reap the benefits which hard work provides.

Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution gives Congress the power "to promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and investors the exclusive rights to their respective writings and discoveries". The founding fathers knew that hard work was vital to the success of America. Calvin Coolidge believed that working and providing work for the American public was the answer to society's ills. He stated, "After all, the chief business of the American people is business." Hard work is needed to achieve the "pursuit of happiness" that the Constitution declares as a basic human right.

Benjamin Franklin's life exemplifies how a diligent work ethic accomplished for him the American dream. Benjamin Franklin was the tenth of seventeen children and grew up extremely poor. He started work at an early age, and through his hard work ethic, diligence, and positive thinking he made a fortune in early America. He is most famously known for his writing of Poor Richard's Almanac, editing of the Declaration of Independence, inventing: bifocal glasses, the lightning rod, the iron furnace stove. Perhaps his crowning achievement, although not well known, is that his writings concerning the Protestant work ethic helped create the proper milieu in which capitalism could be founded and then flourish. Benjamin's 'rags to riches' American life story is an inspiration to us all.

Hard work does not necessarily mean monetary success; however hard work does contribute to personal satisfaction, increased responsibility, and a greater potential for reaching your ultimate goals. Any man can improve himself through hard work. Throughout the centuries the work ethic has changed, but the underlying fact is that wealth is both wanted and obtainable through hard, diligent work.

I live in a depressed area of the Appalachia Mountains where the majority of the people live off the 'draw' (welfare). Many able-bodied young people are walking the streets during the workday, living from hand to mouth off government handouts. The necessity of finding a job eludes them as they see no purpose in working as they have food on their table and have life's basic needs given to them. Consequently, many of these people have low self esteem and have no desire to better themselves or their offspring often turning to drug and alcohol abuse. There is an endless cycle of dependency and depression passed down from generation to generation. People in the Appalachia Mountains have been known as hard working people, many have worked long hard hours deep in the shaft coalmines that are common in this area. However, since the initiation of "The Great Society" by President Lyndon Johnson, there have been an increasing number of people who have no desire to work hard or improve themselves. I have met restaurant managers who say that the most difficult aspect of their job is finding people who want to work. Many restaurants do not want to open up a store in our area because they have learned that it is very difficult to find good, reliable employees. I believe that these people had been robbed of the necessity of hard work, which deprives them of their self-respect and dignity.

Menander, a Greek poet from 342 B.C. states that hard work is essential to life. He says, "He who labors diligently need never despair; for all things are accomplished by diligence and labor." America was founded on the principles of hard work as seen by its earliest explorers and settlers. It is as true now as it was then, that those who desire to work with diligence will not despair. This is a great unifying principal of America and I am proud to be labeled 'American'.