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Frank J. Bommarito CEO & Founder
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TO: St. Louis Area Residents
FROM: Frank Bommarito
RE: The Passion of Politics

The bitter, no-holds-barred campaign ran by both parties has resulted in more divisions than most Americans can remember.

However, history tells us this is not the first time that election results and controversial party rule have gotten nasty.

In 1804, on a mid-summer morning just after dawn, two men met on the dueling grounds of Weehawken, NJ. They were armed with Wogdon dueling pistols with elegant flint lock and highly carved barrels, that were 11 inches long. One of the men was Aaron Burr, recent Revolutionary War hero, former Attorney General and then-Vice President under Thomas Jefferson. The other man was Alexander Hamilton, a terrific political leader, promoter of the US Constitution and former Secretary of Treasury under George Washington.

A few weeks earlier, Burr had demanded that Hamilton apologize for years of insults. When Hamilton refused, Burr challenged him to a duel and Hamilton accepted.

Immediately, both men got their affairs in order, wrote farewell letters and redrafted their wills. In the papers Hamilton left behind, he admitted that Burr was justified in challenging him because he had indeed smeared Burr's character, but Hamilton wouldn't avert the duel by apologizing because in his opinion, everything he said was true.

Even though, in 1804, duels were against the law, turning down a duel was the sign of a coward. Burr and Hamilton measured the distance of ten paces between them, then loaded their pistols and turned to face each other. Several others were there to watch and supervise, including two New York lawyers, as well as the customary doctor.

Nathaniel Pendleton, one of the lawyers, made sure both men were ready, then gave the signal "present". Hamilton fired first, aiming upward, his bullet tearing through foliage. Burr fired moments later aiming directly at Hamilton and shot him in the stomach. The doctor flew to his side as Hamilton said, "this is a mortal wound, doctor", then sank into unconsciousness and died two days later.

Aaron Burr was not prosecuted for participating in an illegal duel and all charges were dropped. After leaving Washington, Burr traveled west seeking new opportunities, both economic and political. His activities eventually led to his arrest on charges of treason in 1807, but once again he was acquitted.

Both men were passionate about politics and about the path the country was taking in 1804. One died and the other was never again accepted as a political leader. Dueling solved nothing in 1804, nor will the continued division of our two-party system. The facts are, that much work needs to be done and for those who step up and passionately get it done, regardless of party affiliation, they will be rewarded in many future elections. America is watching and America will prosper.

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Sincerely,

Frank J. Bommarito














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