



Declaration of Independence



IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

When in the Course of human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the Causes which impel them to the Separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Reference hath hitherto been, that Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long Train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing always the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their Right, it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security. Such has been the Patient Sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the Necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The History of the present King of Great Britain is a History of repeated Injuries and Usurpations, all having in direct Object the Establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public Good. He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing Importance, unless suspended in their Operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. He has refused to pass other Laws for the Accommodation of large Districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the Right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to Tyrants only. He has called together legislative Bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the Depository of their Public Records, for the sole Purpose of fatiguing them into Compliance with his Measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly Firmness his invasions on the Rights of the People. He has refused for a long Time after such Dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their Exercise; the State remaining in the mean Time exposed to all the Dangers of Invasion from without, and convulsions within. He has endeavored to prevent the Population of these States; for that Purpose obstructing the Law for Naturalization of Strangers; refusing to grant Letters of Naturalization to others; and raising the Conditions of new Appropriations of Lands. He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers. He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the Tenure of their Offices, and the Amount and Payment of their Salaries. He has created a multitude of new Offices, and sent hither Swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their Substance. He has endeavored to keep us in a State of perpetual Alarm, by maintaining numerous Armies of Regular Troops, in peacetime; by increasing the Size of the Military, and by encroaching on the Rights of the Colonies. He has endeavored to excite the Jealousy of our Neighbors, by excusing them from the Contribution of Troops for the common Defence; by declaring us out of the Union and waging War against us. He has plundered our Seas, ravaged our Coasts, burned our Towns, and destroyed the Lives of our People.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete the Works of Death, Desolation and Tyranny, already begun with Circumstances of Great Cruelty & Opprobrium, formerly unparalleled in the most barbarous Ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized Nation. He has endeavored to excite the Jealousy of our Neighbors, by exciting them to bear Arms against this Country, to become the Executioners of their Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands. He has excited domestic Contentions amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the Habitations of our frontiers the merciless Indian Savages, whose known Rule of Warfare, is an undistinguished Destruction of all Age, Sex and Condition. In every Stage of these Oppressions we have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble Terms. Our repeated Petitions have been answered by repeated Injury. A Prince, whose Character is thus marked by every Act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free People. Nor have We been wanting in Attention to our British Brethren. We have warned them from Time to Time of Attempts by their Legislature to extend an unwarrantable Jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the Circumstances of our Emigration and Settlement here. We have appealed to their native Justice and Magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the Ties of our common Kindred to disavow these Usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our Connections and Correspondence. They too have been deaf to the Voice of Justice and of Concinnity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the Necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of Mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace, and in Friendship. We do, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the Rectitude of our Intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political Connections between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of Right do. And for the Support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

Barton, Gwinnett
Lynch, Hall
Go. Walton.

John Hancock
Joseph Hewes
John Adams

Samuel Adams
John Adams
Thomas Stone
George Wythe

Richard Henry Lee
George Mason
James Wilson
G. Mifflin

John Jay
John Adams
Samuel Adams
John Adams

John Adams
Samuel Adams
John Adams
John Adams

Edward Rutledge

John Adams
Samuel Adams
John Adams

George Wythe
Richard Henry Lee
Thomas Jefferson
George Mason
James Wilson
G. Mifflin

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