

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 experience hath shewn, 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 invariably 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 endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Law for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, 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 erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance. — He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our Legislatures. — He has attempted to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power. — He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation: — For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: — For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States: — For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world: — For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent: — For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by jury: — For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences: — For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to under it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies: — For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments: — For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. — He has abdicated Government here, by detaining us out of his Protection and waging War against us. — He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt 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 Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation. — He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands. — He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions. 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 attentions 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 consanguinity. 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 Friends.

We, 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 connection 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.

John Hancock	John Hancock	John Hancock	John Hancock
Samuel Chase	Samuel Chase	Samuel Chase	Samuel Chase
Wm. Paca	Wm. Paca	Wm. Paca	Wm. Paca
Thos. Mifflin	Thos. Mifflin	Thos. Mifflin	Thos. Mifflin
George Wythe	George Wythe	George Wythe	George Wythe
Richard Henry Lee	Richard Henry Lee	Richard Henry Lee	Richard Henry Lee
Th. Jefferson	Th. Jefferson	Th. Jefferson	Th. Jefferson
Mary Harrison	Mary Harrison	Mary Harrison	Mary Harrison
Th. Nelson	Th. Nelson	Th. Nelson	Th. Nelson
Francis Lightfoot Lee	Francis Lightfoot Lee	Francis Lightfoot Lee	Francis Lightfoot Lee
Carver Braxton	Carver Braxton	Carver Braxton	Carver Braxton
John Morris	John Morris	John Morris	John Morris
Benjamin Rush	Benjamin Rush	Benjamin Rush	Benjamin Rush
Bong. Franklin	Bong. Franklin	Bong. Franklin	Bong. Franklin
John Morton	John Morton	John Morton	John Morton
Geo. Taylor	Geo. Taylor	Geo. Taylor	Geo. Taylor
James Wilson	James Wilson	James Wilson	James Wilson
Geo. Ross	Geo. Ross	Geo. Ross	Geo. Ross
Cesar Rodney	Cesar Rodney	Cesar Rodney	Cesar Rodney
Thos. Mifflin	Thos. Mifflin	Thos. Mifflin	Thos. Mifflin
Thos. Mifflin	Thos. Mifflin	Thos. Mifflin	Thos. Mifflin
Josh. Bartlett	Josh. Bartlett	Josh. Bartlett	Josh. Bartlett
Wm. Whipple	Wm. Whipple	Wm. Whipple	Wm. Whipple
Sami. Adams	Sami. Adams	Sami. Adams	Sami. Adams
John Adams	John Adams	John Adams	John Adams
Robt. Treat Paine	Robt. Treat Paine	Robt. Treat Paine	Robt. Treat Paine
Abridge Gerry	Abridge Gerry	Abridge Gerry	Abridge Gerry
Step. Hopkins	Step. Hopkins	Step. Hopkins	Step. Hopkins
William Ellery	William Ellery	William Ellery	William Ellery
Proger Sherman	Proger Sherman	Proger Sherman	Proger Sherman
Sam. Huntington	Sam. Huntington	Sam. Huntington	Sam. Huntington
Mrs. Williams	Mrs. Williams	Mrs. Williams	Mrs. Williams
Oliver Wolcott	Oliver Wolcott	Oliver Wolcott	Oliver Wolcott
Mathew Thornton	Mathew Thornton	Mathew Thornton	Mathew Thornton

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He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, 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 erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

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**Georgia**

Button Gwinnett  
 Lyman Hall  
 George Walton

**North Carolina**

William Hooper  
 Joseph Hewes  
 John Penn

**South Carolina**

Edward Rutledge  
 Thomas Heyward, Jr.  
 Thomas Lynch, Jr.  
 Arthur Middleton

**Maryland**

Samuel Chase  
 William Paca  
 Thomas Stone  
 Charles Carroll  
 of Carrollton

**Virginia**

George Wythe  
 Richard Henry Lee  
 Thomas Jefferson  
 Benjamin Harrison  
 Thomas Nelson, Jr.  
 Francis Lightfoot Lee  
 Carter Braxton

**Pennsylvania**

Robert Morris  
 Benjamin Rush  
 Benjamin Franklin  
 John Morton  
 George Clymer  
 James Smith  
 George Taylor  
 James Wilson  
 George Ross

**Delaware**

Caesar Rodney  
 George Read  
 Thomas McKean

**New York**

William Floyd  
 Philip Livingston  
 Francis Lewis  
 Lewis Morris

**New Jersey**

Richard Stockton  
 John Witherspoon  
 Francis Hopkinson  
 John Hart  
 Abraham Clark

**New Hampshire**

Josiah Bartlett  
 William Whipple  
 Matthew Thornton

**Massachusetts**

John Hancock  
 Samuel Adams  
 John Adams  
 Robert Treat Paine  
 Elbridge Gerry

**Rhode Island**

Stephen Hopkins  
 William Ellery

**Connecticut**

Roger Sherman  
 Samuel Huntington  
 William Williams  
 Oliver Wolcott



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