

Declaration of Independence, 1776 (page 1 of 2)



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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 resistance hath 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 invariably the same Object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Tyranny, 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 system 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 inalienable to them, and inseparable to freemen only. — He has called together legislative Bodies at times unusual, incomplete, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of obnoxious and 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 whole American People are obliged to assemble in the most time-consuming manner, to attend the Legislature, and to provide for their support. — 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 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 excited 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 Legislature. — He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Powers. — He has combined with those against us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation. — For quarrelling large bodies of armed troops among us: — For pretending that by a mock Trial, from Jurymen 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 taking away our Charters, abolishing us in many cases, the sole Benefit of Trial by jury: — For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offenses: — For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighboring 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 abominable trade into these Colonies: — For taking away our Charters, abolishing us in many valuable cases, and altering fundamentally the terms of our Governments: — For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with powers to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. — He has abolished Government here, by dissolving us out of our Relation and weaving them against us. — He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people. — He at the same time has made large Armies of Jewish Mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun, with circumstances of Cruelty & Opprobrium scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous age, and lately 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, to stop themselves by their Hands. — He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the Inhabitants of one Province the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions. — Every stage of these Oppressions We have patiently suffered for a long time 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. — We have been warning in attendance 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 warned them of the circumstances of our migration 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 redress of our Grievances, do, in the Name, and by the 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. —

[illegible]

United States of America; Department of State. To all to whom these Presents shall come, Greeting:
 Fortify that the foregoing is a fair copy of the original Declaration of Independence as it was engrossed, but on the Spanish table, and signed in the Continental Congress
 1776, and deposited with the papers of the Continental Congress in the Department of State.
 In testimony whereof, I, John Hay, Secretary of State of the United States, have hereunto subscribed my name and caused the seal of the Department of State to be affixed.
 Done at the City of Washington this 17th day of November, A.D. 1902, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and twenty-seventh.

John Bay

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