

The Declaration of Independence
by Thomas Jefferson



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==== NOTE: This HTML rendition of the original Project Gutenberg etext #1 was produced on August 4, 2018 to replace the original inadequate auto-generated file, and, in order that this important PG work could be read on mobile viewer screens. Images of Thomas Jefferson's hand-drafted copy of The Declaration of Independence have been added. **The original Project Gutenberg header and footer have been retained.**

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THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS

[Declaration Of Independence](#)

[December, 1972 \[Etext #2\]](#)

[December, 1972 \[Etext #2\]](#)

[December, 1972 \[Etext #2\]](#)

[The United States Bill of Rights.](#)

[I](#)

[II](#)

[III](#)

[IV](#)

[V](#)

[VI](#)

[VII](#)

[VIII](#)

[IX](#)

[X](#)

[Facsimiles of Thomas Jefferson's Draft](#)

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE 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 shown, 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 Laws of Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migration 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 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:
 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 declaring 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 compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy of 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 only 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 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 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.

December, 1972 [Etext #2]

******The Project Gutenberg Etext of The U. S. Bill of Rights******

The United States Bill of Rights.

The Ten Original Amendments to the Constitution of the United States Passed
by Congress September 25, 1789 Ratified December 15, 1791

I
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

II

A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

III

No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

IV

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

V

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put

in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.

VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

VII

In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury shall be otherwise re-examined in any court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

VIII

Excessive bail shall not be required nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

X

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

THOMAS JEFFERSON'S HANDWRITTEN DRAFT

[The following four images are from engravings taken from the Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence in his handwriting with some amendments and changes in the handwriting of Benjamin Franklin and John Adams--Click on the enlarge button to view the image in full-size.]

[ENLARGE](#)

A Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled.

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 & 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~~ ^{the} separation.~~

We hold these truths to be ^{self-evident}, ~~that~~ ^{that} all men are created equal & independent; that ^{they are endowed by their creator with equal} ~~from that equal creation they derive~~ ^{unalienable} ~~rights~~ ^{rights}, among ~~which~~ ^{these} are ~~life, liberty, & 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 ~~shall~~ becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, & to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, & organising its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety & happiness. prudence indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light & 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 & usurpations [begin at a distinguished period, &] pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to ~~reduce~~ ^{under absolute Despotism} ~~them to absolute Despotism~~, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government & to provide new guards for their future security. such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; & such is now the necessity which constrains them to ^{alter} ~~change~~ their former systems of government. the history of ^{the} ~~the~~ present ^{King of Great Britain} ~~is~~ ^{repeated} is a history of [unremitting] injuries and usurpations, [among which, ^{appears no solitary fact} ~~there is not one~~ ^{but all} ~~to~~ ^{having} ~~contradict~~ the uniform tenor of the rest, ~~all of which~~ ^{all of which} have in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. to prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world, [for the truth of which we pledge a faith yet unsullied by falsehood]

* Franklin's handwriting

* Adams' handwriting

ENLARGE

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 & pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained, and when so suspended, he has ^{utterly} neglected ~~attending~~ 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 ^{in the legislature} representation, a right inestimable to them & formidable to tyrants only:

he has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, & 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 ^{& continually} for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people:

~~he has refused~~ ^{time after time} he has refused for a long ~~space~~ ^{series} of times, 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, & convulsions within:

he has endeavored 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, & raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands:

he has ^{obstructed} ~~suffered~~ the administration of justice ^{totally} to cease in some of these ^{states} ~~provinces~~ by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers:

he has made ^{our} judges dependant on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices, ^{the} ~~the~~ & payment and amount of their salaries:

he has erected a multitude of new offices ^{by a self-assumed power}, & sent he-

-ther swarms of officers to harass our people & eat out their substance:

he has kept among us in times of peace, ^{without the consent of our} standing armies ^{legislatures} ~~& ships of war~~:

he has affected to render the military independent of & superior to the civil power:

he has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitutions and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their ^{acts of} pretended ~~acts~~

& 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 neighboring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government and enlarging it's borders, so as to render it at once an example & instrument for introducing the same elsewhere.

ENLARGE

187. Franklin

abolishing our most ^{valuable} ~~important~~ laws
for taking away our charters & ^{altering} ~~altering~~ fundamentally the forms of our governments,
for suspending our own legislatures & declaring themselves invested with power to
legislate for us in all cases whatsoever:
he has abdicated government here, ^{by declaring us out of his protection & warring against us,}
[withdrawing his governors, & declaring us out
of his allegiance & protection.]

he has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns & destroyed the
lives of our people:

he is at this time transporting large armies of ^{Scotch and other} foreign mercenaries to complete
the works of death, desolation & tyranny already begun with circumstances
^{scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages and totally}
of cruelty & perfidy, unworthy the head of a civilized nation:
^{he has incited discord among us, and has}
he has endeavored 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, & conditions [of existence.]

[he has incited treasonable insurrections of our fellow-citizens, with the
allurements of forfeiture & confiscation of our property:
<sup>he has constrained some of the inhabitants of the high seas to bear arms against their country & to do
or to take up arms to become the executioners of their friends & brethren</sup>
he has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sa-

-cred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never of-
fended him, capturing & carrying them into slavery in another hemi-
sphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This
piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the
Christian king of Great Britain determined to keep open a market
where MEN should be bought & sold. he has prostituted his negative
for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this
^{determining to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold:}
execrable commerce; and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact
of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms
among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them,
by murdering the people upon whom he also obtruded them: thus paying
off former crimes committed against the liberties of one people, with crimes
which he urges them to commit against the lives of another.]

187. Franklin

in every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble
terms; our repeated petitions have been answered ^{only} by repeated injuries. a prince
whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, "is unfit
to be the ruler of a people [who mean to be free] future ages will scarce believe"
that the hardiness of one man, adventured within the short compass of twelve years
to lay a foundation so broad & undisguised, for tyranny
^{only,} ~~only, a foundation so broad & undisguised, for tyranny~~
over a people fostered & fixed in principles
of "liberty, freedom"]

ENLARGE

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A Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled.

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 & 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~~ ^{the} separation.

We hold these truths to be ~~self-evident~~ ^{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, & the pursuit of happiness;~~ ^{that they are endowed by their creator with certain rights, that among these are life, liberty, & the pursuit of happiness;} that to secure these ~~rights~~ ^{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, & to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, & organising its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety & happiness. prudence indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light & 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 & usurpations [beginning at a distinguished period, & pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to ~~reduce~~ ^{reduce} them to ~~absolute despotism~~ ^{absolute despotism}, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government & to provide new guards for their future security. such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; & such is now the necessity which constrains them to ~~alter~~ ^{alter} their former systems of government: the history of the ^{the} present ^{present} ~~is~~ ^{is} a history of ~~unremitting~~ ^{unremitting} injuries and usurpations [among which ~~appears no solitary fact~~ ^{appears no solitary fact} to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest, ~~of which~~ ^{of which} have in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. to prove this let facts be submitted to a candid world, [for the truth of which we pledge a faith yet unshaken by falsehood.]

* Franklin's handwriting

* no Adams hand only

back

he has refused his assent to laws the most wholesome and necessary for the pub-
 -lic good:
 he has forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate & pressing importance,
 unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained,
 and when suspended, he has neglected ^{actually} 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, a right
 inestimable to them & formidable to tyrants only:
 he has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable & 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 ^{or} continually for opposing with
 manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people:
~~he has refused~~ he has refused for a long ~~space~~ ^{time of} ~~of time~~ 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 & convulsions within:
 he has endeavored 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, & raising the conditions of new ap-
 -propriations of lands:
 he has ^{endeavored} ~~suffered~~ the administration of justice totally to cease in some of these
~~states~~ ^{states} refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers:
 he has made ^{judges} ~~judges~~ dependant on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices
 and amount of their salaries:
 he has erected a multitude of new offices by a self-assumed power & sent he-
 -ren swarms of officers to harass our people & eat out their substance:
 he has kept among us in times of peace, standing armed ^{without the consent of our} ~~ships of war~~ ^{legislatures}
 he has affected to render the military independent of & superior to the civil power:
 he has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitu-
 -tions and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their ^{acts of} ~~pretended~~ ~~acts~~
 of 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 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 neighboring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government
 and enlarging its borders so as to render it almost an empire & put us under the same arbitrary government for subduing the same etc. etc.

back

