



# WEEK 2: DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Continental Congress and The Declaration



## Lead up to the Continental Congress

---

- 1765 – Virginia House of Burgesses adopted resolutions calling for American resistance to the Stamp Acts passed by British Parliament. These Acts imposed firmer imposition of British authority over the Americans and increased taxation. Led by Patrick Henry, the House of Burgesses (Virginia) declared these taxes unconstitutional because the Americans did not have representation in the British Parliament and therefore did not consent to the Stamp Acts.
- This is where the phrase, “no taxation without representation” came from.

# Lead up to the Continental Congress

---

- March 1766, Parliament repealed the detested Stamp Act.
- Britain continued to regulate American maritime commerce by imposing duties.
  - American tobacco that was intended for European markets were required to be sold in Britain and was taxed as it landed.
  - Britain Chancellor Charles Townshend extracted revenues from the Americans by means of import duties. Known as the Townshend Acts, Parliament would impose duties upon tea, lead, glass, paper and paints entering American harbors.
- October 7, 1763 Britain had forbidden white settlements beyond the Appalachian divide, presumably to protect the lands of the Indians.
- George Washington and George Mason led the Virginia House of Burgesses to establish a boycott upon Townshend-taxed goods and other British products until the duties were rescinded.
- 1769 Parliament repealed the Townshend duties except for the tax on tea.

## Lead up to the Continental Congress

---

- Prime minister Lord North devised the famous Tea Act.
  - The law extended favors to the East India Company.
  - Enabled the East India Company to undersell smuggled Dutch tea, which tempted the colonists to buy the English product and pay substantial Townshend duties.
- Samuel Adams and other men in Boston took action.
- December 16, 1773 the Boston Tea Party took place.
- George Washington was opposed to the destruction of the tea and felt the East India Company ought to be reimbursed.
- Parliament passed a series of Coercive Acts that closed the port of Boston until payment was made for the tea destroyed there and remodeled the government of Massachusetts to bolster royal authority.

# Lead up to the Continental Congress

---

- The Quebec Act of 1774 extended the boundaries of the Canadian colony to the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, granting freedom of worship to its Roman Catholics and possibly denying the westward expansion of the Protestant American colonists.
- George Washington saw little advantage in petitioning Parliament. He said, “I think the Parliament of Great Britain hath no more right to put their hands in my pocket for money, without my consent, than I have to put my hands into yours for money.”
- Washington also said that such taxation was “not only repugnant to natural right, but subversive of the laws and constitution of Great Britain itself.”
- George Washington, Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee would propose that Americans stand forth at all costs in defense of their rights and adopt a thorough boycott of British goods as a countermeasure.

# Lead up to the Continental Congress

---

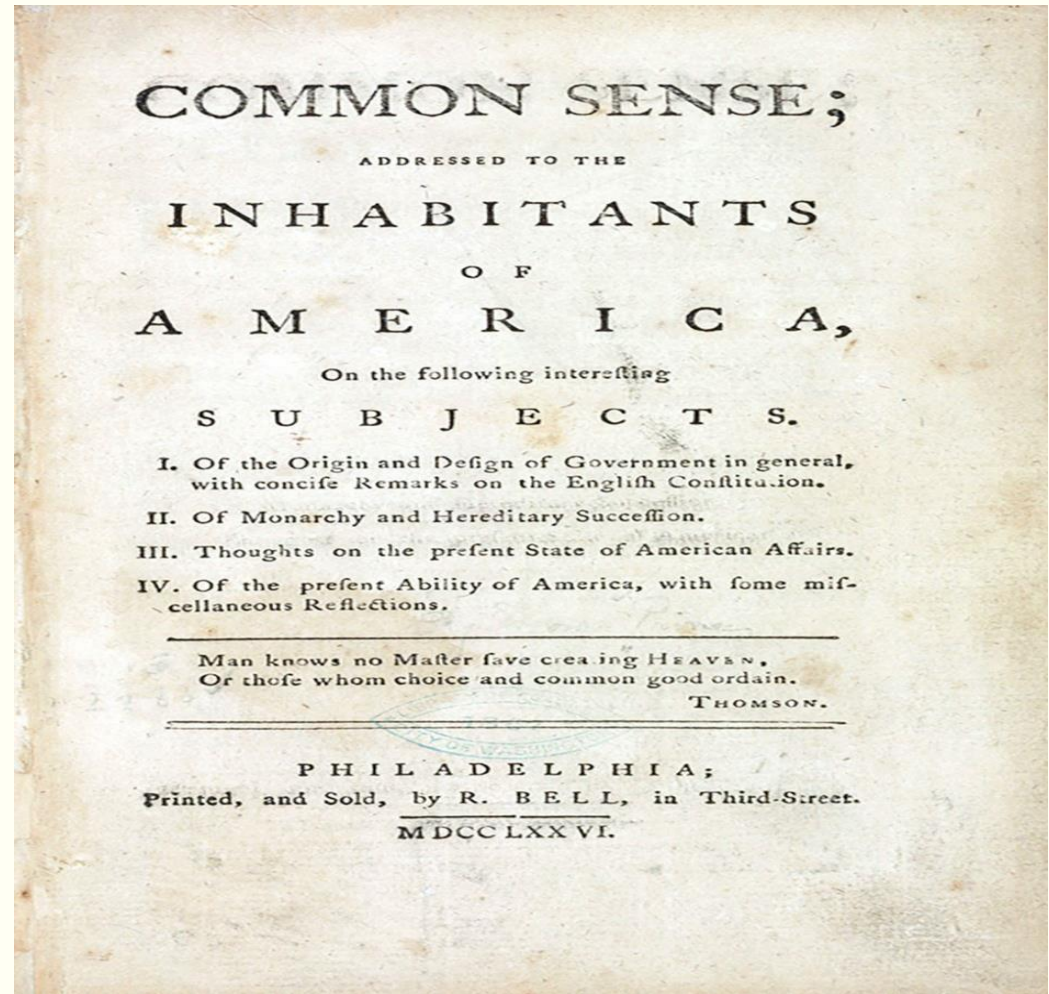
- Virginia Governor Dunmore tried to prevent the patriots from acting by putting an end to a meeting of the House of Burgesses. Its members then formed a convention and urged all the other colonies to send delegates.
- The Massachusetts House of Representatives issued a similar invitation.
- With the exception of Georgia, all the colonies responded, using conventions rather than legislative bodies wherever necessary for the purpose of choosing delegates.
- September 5, 1774 the First Continental Congress was held.
- The debate was about the relationship between the 13 colonies and the mother country of England. Some wanted to resolve the relationship once the colonists' grievances were addressed. Others, most notably John Adams, argued for independence.

# Thomas Paine's pamphlet: Common Sense

---

“Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province or a kingdom, but of a continent.... Now is the seed-time of continental union, faith and honor... Time hath found us. Time hath found us!

O! ye that love mankind, stand forth... Ye that dare oppose not only the tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth! O! receive the fugitive, and prepare.. An asylum for mankind.”

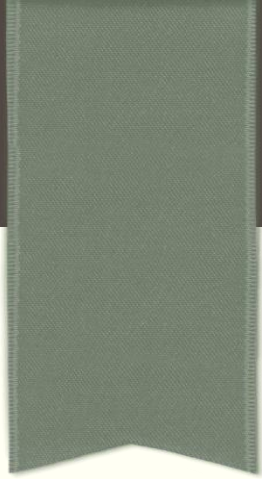


## Second Continental Congress

---

- Declaration of Independence written.





# DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

# The Declaration of Independence

---

## Primary Principles

- All men are created equal
- Rights come from our Creator
- Purpose of Government is to protect our rights
- Consent of the governed
- Right to alter or abolish
- Duty to throw off tyrannical government

## Primary causes for separation

- Dissolved Representatives Houses
- Obstructed the Administration of Justice
- Sent swarms of Officers to harass the colonists
- Quartering large bodies of armed troops among the colonists
- Depriving trial by jury
- Taxation without consent