

# **FINALLY, AN EASY-TO READ VERSION of our DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE!**

Today, the language of 1776 is dated and hard to read. But the ideas are not.

***READ, COPY, AND PASS IT ON!***

## **HAPPY 243<sup>RD</sup> INDEPENDENCE BIRTHDAY!**

In their epic struggle for freedom, our American forefathers stood up to the world's most powerful empire and declared themselves free in the midst of what seemed to be a hopeless war for survival.

This is the document they presented to their ruler, England's King George III, and to the rest of the world

## **IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776 The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America**

When events make it necessary for a people to break political ties and assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal rights which the laws of Nature and Nature's God entitles them to, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which drove them to the separation.

We believe these truths to be undeniable, that all men are created equal, and that all are granted by their Creator certain Rights that are absolute and non-negotiable, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to safeguard these rights, Governments are set up among Men, and are given their powers by permission of the governed—Whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of that purpose, it is the Right of the People to change or eliminate it, and to establish new Government, laying its foundation on principles and organizing its powers in a way that is most likely to result in Safety and Happiness.

Special care, indeed, will dictate that Governments established for a long period of time should not be changed for trivial reasons. Experience has shown that People are more willing to suffer and endure evils as long as they can rather than to right themselves by abolishing what they are used to. But when a long list of abuses and injustices end up looking like a design to reduce all to a state of absolute despotism, it is the people's right, it is their duty, to throw off such a Government, and to provide new means for guarding their future security.

These are the conditions under which these Colonies have patiently suffered and and the necessity which forces them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is one of repeated injuries and usurpings of authority—all working toward the establishment of absolute tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted frankly and openly to the world.

He has refused to approve Laws that are the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate

and pressing importance, requiring them to be delayed until his Approval is obtained. When delayed, he has utterly neglected to deal with them.

He has refused to pass other Laws which would meet the need of large districts of people, unless those people would give up the right of representation in the Legislature, a right precious to them—but an obstacle only to tyrants!

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, inconvenient, uncomfortable, and far away from their offices of Public Records—for the sole purpose of wearing them down until they give in to his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

Long after these closures, He has refused to let others be elected, allowing legislative powers and the rule of law, which cannot be abolished, to fall into the hands of the general public; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from outside and upheavals within.

He has tried to prevent the population of these States. For that purpose, he has obstructed the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; has been refusing to pass other laws to encourage their migrations here, and has refused to improve conditions for new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice by refusing to Approve Laws for establishing Judicial Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone for the terms of their offices, and for the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent swarms of Officers here to harass our people and consume their substance.

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

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He has made the Military independent of and superior to the Civilian Authorities.

He has joined with others to subject us to authorities foreign to our constitution, and not recognized by our laws; giving his Approval to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For using our homes to give lodging to 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 benefit 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 Authoritarian government, and enlarging its Boundaries, immediately making it an example and effective means for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies.

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

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves to have the power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has given up Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and by 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 & treachery scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy for the Head of a civilized nation.

He has forced 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 stirred up domestic insurrections among us, and has endeavored to bring upon the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is to destroy without restraint all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Remedies in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been lacking in communicating to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unjustified jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and fairness and we have recalled for them the ties of our common kindred to reject these injustices, which would inevitably interrupt our relations. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and kinship. We must, therefore, give in to necessity, by opposing any who denounce our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, and 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 righteousness 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 released 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 wage War, negotiate Peace, form 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 dependence on the protection of Divine Providence, we pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

**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

**New York:**

William Floyd, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris

**New Jersey:**

Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, John Hart, Abraham Clark

**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

**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

**North Carolina:**

William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn

**South Carolina:**

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

**Georgia:**

Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton