**Declaration Principles**

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Abraham Lincoln said, in Independence Hall, February 22nd, 1861: *"I never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence."*

We who share Lincoln's views must make clear to ourselves and to our countrymen what those "Declaration sentiments" are.

We hold that what Lincoln referred to as the "sentiments" of the Declaration are the principles of the American Republic. And we understand them to include the following:

* All men are CREATED equal. Hence they have equal natural rights as a gift of the CREATOR.
* Our duty to seek and follow the will of the Creator is prior to all government. Accordingly, so is the liberty of religious conscience.
* The authority of the Creator, being prior to all civil society and human authority, must be respected for liberty to endure.
* There is a natural right to life, prior to all positive law, including the Constitution.
* There is a natural right to acquire, secure, and use property for safety and happiness.
* Men have a right and a duty to form governments to secure their rights, and to assist one another in striving for happiness.
* Men are authorized by the Creator to defend these rights, and accordingly, so are the governments they form. From this authority proceeds the right and duty to defend national sovereignty and security.
* Governments are made legitimate by the consent of the free and equal persons who form and sustain them. Governmental powers are always to be understood as a delegation from the persons who compact to form the political community.
* To enjoy the right of political self-government, men must be capable of personal self-government--the virtue of self-control. A people without decency cannot be secure in its liberty.
* The institutions by which the life of liberty is fostered — especially the marriage-based two-parent family, the churches, and other associations aiming at the good life — are to be protected and cherished.
* The vocation of citizenship in a free republic is noble and honorable. Public service, especially in the defense of the rule of law, merits praise and respect.
* The right to self-government entails the right to arms by which tyranny can be resisted and new government established when necessary.
* Governments may fail in many ways and still be tolerated. Peace is a precious good, and the people may be well advised to be patient with occasional governmental abuse to avoid rashly unleashing the season of popular passion and violence that will accompany any change in the fundamental form of government.
* But the worst failures, tending irrevocably to excessive concentration of power, consolidating the branches and depriving the people of its liberty, or withdrawing the protection of the laws from the people, constitute tyranny or anarchy, and may and sometimes should be resisted, even to the point of rebellion, as our Founders declared.
* Free speech and a free press are both required for the practice of responsible liberty, as necessary means by which the people can act together to govern themselves according to the laws of nature and of nature's God.
* All persons have a right to equal treatment under the laws without regard to race, creed, or ethnicity.
* It is the duty of the people, individually and in their associations, private and public, to declare the principles of self-government, including the fundamental American creed that our liberties come as a gift of the Creator.
* Personal religious belief is not a requirement for American citizenship, but acknowledgment of our national belief that human equality and rights come from an authority beyond human will is a moral duty of citizenship. Its rejection constitutes a denial of natural rights and human equality, and is inconsistent with ordered liberty.

***On the basis of these principles****,* we would like to add a new term to American grassroots politics: ***DECLARATIONIST****.* A ***"Declarationist"*** is anyone who *believes in the principles of the American Republic as outlined in the Declaration of Independence.*

(Adapted from "Summary of Declaration Principles," by Dr. Richard Ferrier.)

****[**Click here to read the Declaration of Independence.**](http://www.renewamerica.com/readings/declaration.htm)

***They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.* —Isaiah 40:31**