

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 attentions 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 Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are,

How have we acted?

While the king was doing all the bad things we have listed, we begged him to listen to us. Each time we have asked him to listen, he only hurt us more. Such a king is not fit to rule a free people.

We have called upon the English people, who are like family to us under the same king, for help. We have told them about the things the Parliament has done to try to rule us unfairly. We reminded them that many of us came here from England looking for a better life.

We know the people of England to be kind and fair. Based on that, we asked them to help us as family members in need of help. We even said that if they did nothing, the family ties would have to be broken. They acted just as the king did. They did not listen to us.

Therefore, we must do what is now needed. We must declare our separation from the English people. We will think of the people of England as enemies in war but friends during peace.

What are we, as representatives of the United States, going to do?

We have acted as representatives for the people of the United States. We hope that God will approve of what we are doing. We have decided that these colonies are what they should be—free and independent states.

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.

John Hancock

All our ties to the king and the government of Great Britain are cut. Because of our independence, we can do what any nation does. We can make war or peace, make friends with other countries, and do business with them. We may do whatever free countries have the right to do.

To support this Declaration, we trust in God. To support what we have done, we each offer our lives, our money, and our good names.

[*New Hampshire*]
Josiah Bartlett
Wm. Whipple
Matthew Thornton

[*Massachusetts Bay*]
Saml. Adams
John Adams
Robt. Treat Paine
Elbridge Gerry

[*Rhode Island*]
Step. Hopkins
William Ellery

[*Connecticut*]
Roger Sherman
Sam'el Huntington
Wm. Williams
Oliver Wolcott

[*New York*]
Wm. Floyd
Phil. Livingston
Frans. Lewis
Lewis Morris

[*New Jersey*]
Richd. Stockton
Jno. Witherspoon
Fras. Hopkinson
John Hart
Abra. Clark

[*Pennsylvania*]
Robt. Morris
Benjamin Rush
Benja. Franklin
John Morton
Geo. Clymer
Jas. Smith
Geo. Taylor
James Wilson
Geo. Ross

[*Delaware*]
Caesar Rodney
Geo. Read
Tho. M'Kean

[*Maryland*]
Samuel Chase
Wm. Paca
Thos. Stone
Charles Carroll of Carrollton

[*Virginia*]
George Wythe
Richard Henry Lee
Th. Jefferson
Benja. Harrison
Ths. Nelson, Jr.
Francis Lightfoot Lee
Carter Braxton

[*North Carolina*]
Wm. Hooper
Joseph Hewes
John Penn

[*South Carolina*]
Edward Rutledge
Thos. Heyward, Junr.
Thomas Lynch, Junr.
Arthur Middleton

[*Georgia*]
Button Gwinnett
Lyman Hall
Geo. Walton