

Overview: The American Declaration of Independence

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In brief:

Only Limited Government is justified and acceptable
Majority Rule, limited by: **Equal Rights** for all, **under God**

Color Key
Key Principles
Why Revolution

All "quotes" are from The Declaration

"The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America" (1,321 words) adopted 1776 July 4

Preface (in 4 paragraphs, 329 words)

"When in the Course of Human Events . . ." (71 words)
"to dissolve the Political Bands . . ." "declare the Causes" of "Separation"

"We hold these Truths to be self-evident," (111 words)
"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, . . ."

"Prudence, indeed, will dictate . . ." (117 words)
"Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while Evils are sufferable, . . ."

"But when a long Train of Abuses . . . **evinces a Design to reduce them under Absolute Despotism . . . it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, . . .**"

"The History of the present King . . ." (30 words)

List of Causes (667 words, 26 charges)

"To prove this, let Facts be submitted . . ." (11 words)
"He has . . ." (324 words, 12 charges)
As King, acting alone he has violated his executive authority by: making legislatures and judges dependent "on his will alone", standing armies, martial law and restricted immigration.
"He has . . . sent hither Swarms of Officers to harrass our People, and eat out their Substance."
"He has combined with others . . . For . . ." (182 words, 9 charges)
Unjust laws, such as, quartering troops, restricting trade, taxing without representation, denying jury trials
"For . . . declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all Cases whatsoever."
"He has abdicated government . . ." (150 words, 5 charges)
"waging War against us"

Conclusion (in 3 paragraphs, 325 words)

"In every stage of these Opressions . . ."
"We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America . . ."
"And for the support of this Declaration . . ."

The 56 Signers (1 President, 55 from all 13 states, by state)

9: PA 7: VA 5: NJ 4: CT, MA, MD, NY, SC 3: DE, GA, NC, NH 2: RI

Executive Summary

Revolution must be justified.
Here's how:

All People have the same God-given equal rights, such as life, liberty [and property: the fruits of labor?] The main [and only?] justification of government is to secure the equal rights of all; the only just powers are by consent of those governed [and by majority rule?] Revolution is justified if these are violated.

Limited abuses call for patient reform, but unlimited power is never acceptable, even in theory.

Executive authority has been abused: the courts and legislature should be independent, no standing armies, no martial law. Costs should be minimal.

Laws should respect equal rights: free trade, jury trials. No taxes or laws without consent of the people. No absolute powers.

If Government makes war against the people, it then releases all duty to it.

All peaceful means should be tried and were attempted.

We declare the United States to be a new nation.

Before God, we pledge our all to this Declaration.