

## **Declaration of Independence – July 4, 1776**

*When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.*

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, 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 to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.*

*Prudence will dictate that governments should not be changed for light and transient causes; and experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.*

*Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and now the necessity which constrains them to alter*

*their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.*

*He has refused his assent to laws necessary for the public good. We have petitioned for redress: 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 ruler of a free people. [T]o our British brethren... we have warned them of attempts to extend jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, 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, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, by the authority of the people of these colonies, solemnly declare, that these united colonies are free and independent states... absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown and the state of Great Britain. 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, President*

*Attested, CHARLES THOMSON, Secretary*