IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

A DECLARATION

BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

WHEN in the Course of human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands 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 of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Experience hath shewn, 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 and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, 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 such is now the necessity which compels them to resist. The History of the present King of Great-Britain is a History of repeated Injuries and Usurpations, all 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, for the Accommodation of large Districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the Right of Representation in the Legislature, a Right indestructible to them, and formidable to Tyrants only.

He has called together Legislative Bodies at Place uneaten, unaccountable, and distant from the Depository of their public Records, for the sole Purpose of fudging them into Compliance with his Measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly Firmness the Invasions on the Rights of the People.

He has refused for a long Time, after such Dissolutions, to cause others to be elected, whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the meantime exposed to all the Dangers of Invasion from without, and Convulsion within.

He has endeavored to prevent the Population of these States; for that Purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their Migrations hither, and raising the Conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

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

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the Tenure of their Offices, and the Amount and Payment of their Salaries.

He has erected a多民 of New Offices, and sent hither Swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their Substance.

He has kept among us, in Times of Peace, Standing Armies, without the Consent of our Legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a Jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws, giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For quartering large Bodies of Armed Troops among us:

For transporting those People thus quartered in times of peace into remote Territories:

For the arbitrary Detaining of Captives:

For foraging the private Goods of the Inhabitants:

For compelling Lieutenants of Corps to quarter themselves into the Houses of those who are at any Time in Military Service:

For appropriating their Labor in Building Fortifications, etc.:

For enacting Extensive and solemn Oaths and Swearing in public Officers:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For organizing a System of regular Systems of Draughts:

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

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all Cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and 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 and Perfidy, far surpassing the most horrid Imagination.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to execute the Execution of their Friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic Insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the Inhabitants of our Frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known Rule of War, is an undistinguished Destruction, of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions.

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 Attention to our British Brethren. We have warned them from Time to Time of Attempts by their Legislatives to extend an unwarrentable Jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the Circumstances of our Emigration and Settlement here. We have appealed to their natural Justice and Magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the Ties of our common Kindred to dissist from these Usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our Connections and Correspondence. They too have been deaf to the Voice of Justice and of Conscience. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the Necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold ourselves free and independent States; that we are absolved from all Alliances with the British Crown, and that all political Connexion 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 Commerc, and abdow all other Rights and Powers which FREE AND 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.

Signed by ORDER and in BEHALF of the CONGRESS,

JHON HANCOCK, PRESIDENT.

ATTEST.

CHARLES THOMSON, SECRETARY.

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http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/DeclarInd.html