

"Writing the truth  
as I see it;  
trying not to  
offend  
those who will  
disagree."

# The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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## "We hold these truths to be self-evident"

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The birth of a nation, the realization of a dream, an eloquently simple statement: "We hold these truths to be self-evident." During June and July 1776, the Continental Congress was debating the future of the Colonies. King George III continued his abuse of the Colonies with over a year of armed conflicts between the British army and the Colonists' militias. The King seemed deaf to the Colonies' concerns. For the first time in history a people were considering creating a new nation with the people designing their own form of government. This new government would get its power from the people, not vice versa. The risks were frightening. The stakes could not be higher. No one defies the English Monarchy. No colony declares itself independent of the King of England, independent of the Empire. A unique plan. A grand experiment. A possible disaster.

Even so, was there a chance they could survive their defiance of the King? Could an infant of the English Empire go to war with the King of England? Could they successfully engage the British army and navy? Could they create a new nation? A free nation? A democratic nation? Or, were they foolish dreamers, doomed to failure? Surely, England would listen to their grievances. Surely, England would understand the Colonies' concerns. Surely, none of this talk of independence would be necessary. They could only await the King's response.

But what to do while waiting? Do they dare consider forcefully leaving the rule of the British Empire? That would be treason. They would be traitors. They would be executed just for their consideration of such treachery.

Pennsylvania, New York, and South Carolina, the middle colonies, were not convinced of independence. John Dickenson of Pennsylvania was

adamant their differences with the King could be resolved amicably; independence and war were unnecessary. Some others felt the same; reconciliation with the British was possible. The debates raged.

Dickenson pleaded, "You are pushing for independence from England prematurely. There is still hope we can find reconciliation with the mother country. Should we take the course you are suggesting, the full fury of the British wrath will be unleashed."

Agreeing, Griffith Rutherford of North Carolina hollered, "We will not vote for independence. Not now. Not ever!"

Benjamin Franklin calmly responded, "The question is not whether, by a declaration of independence, we should make ourselves what we are not; but whether we should declare a fact which already exists."

The British would accept nothing less than *carte-blanc*. The debate was severe. The debate was emotional. The debate was debilitating. Everything was at stake. The world was watching. What would these fledgling leaders do?

Could they be prepared, if forced, to declare independence? But they did not have a unanimous vote for independence and without unanimity they would be doomed to failure. What to do? How to proceed? Somehow they had to get those last few votes. They had to have a Declaration of Independence drafted, should it come to that.

Who to write such a document? The most eloquent with pen, Thomas Jefferson, was asked to draft the Declaration of Independence. In just seventeen days during the summer of 1776 he created the single most eloquent and important document in the history of the world.

The vote was coming with the next gathering of the Continental Congress,

when they would hear the King's response. The delegates would return from their "states" with instructions. What would they do? How could so many disagreements among them be resolved? All were fervent. All cared more than we can fathom, all were more terrified than we can imagine. They were debating declaring war with one of the mightiest empires in the world. Moreover, should they lose, these "rebels", these "traitors," would be executed.

The King's response was harsh. The King's response was unyielding. Did they have the votes? Two delegates deliberately "abstained" from the vote by not attending the session. The vote?

"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 require that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self evident. . ." (Declaration of Independence).

In 1777, John Adams wrote his wife, Abigail: "Posterity! You will never know how much it cost us to preserve your freedom. I hope you will make a good use of it." Let us, this Independence Day, look to our founding fathers with pride and with the commitment to be worthy of what they so cherished, what so many have died for – these "Free and Independent States", these United States of America.

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