

Events Leading to the DoI

June 1776: members of the 2nd Continental Congress were debating independence

Richard Henry Lee (representative from VA) was the first to call for a formal declaration

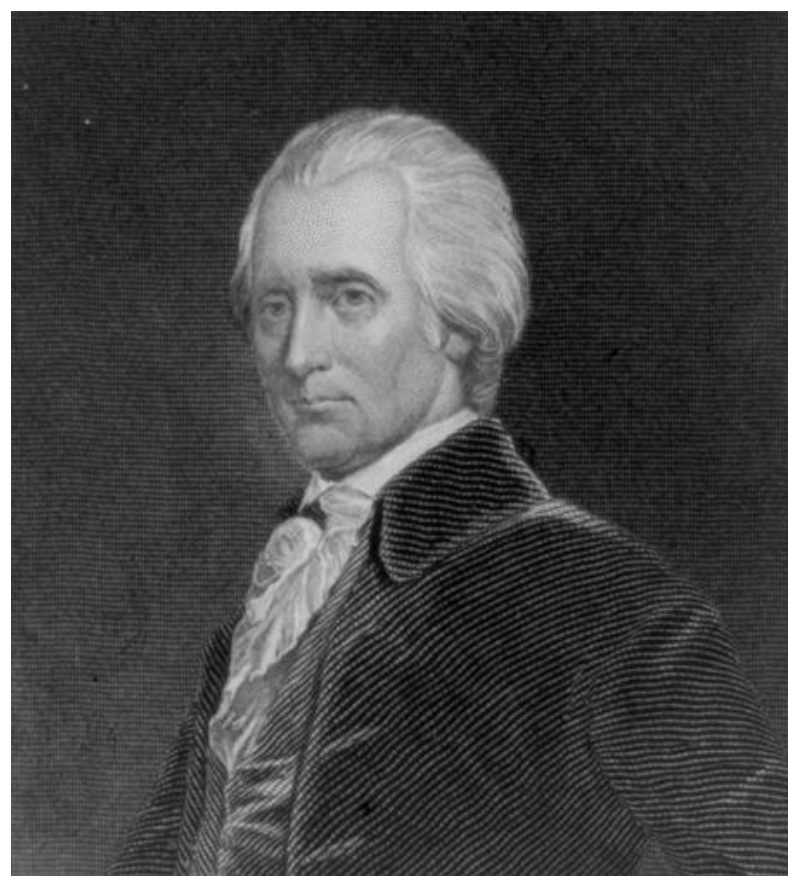
A committee was appointed to begin work on a formal document

Purpose: explain reasons for independence

Mostly written by Thomas Jefferson (Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman)

Congress edited and adopted the draft on **4 July 1776**

Signed August 2nd



Resolved, That these United Colonies are, 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.

That it is expedient forthwith to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign Alliances.

That a plan of confederation be prepared and transmitted to the respective Colonies for their consideration and approbation.

DoI Breakdown

Part I

“Eternal Statement” - people have the right to abolish a government that doesn't abide by its rules and fails to follow its principles

Part II

New theory of government

Part III

“27 Grievances” against King George III: justify him and Parliament as being unfit to rule the colonies

Part IV

Formal separation and 56 signatures





Eternal Statement

“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.*”

Concepts in the Declaration

Jefferson took ideas from many Enlightenment “thinkers”

1. **Natural Rights** and **Social Contract** from **John Locke**
2. “Egalitarianism”
3. Listed specific reasons for our independence; “Grievances” against *King George III* & the British Parliament

Does not describe any particular form of govt for the new nation

