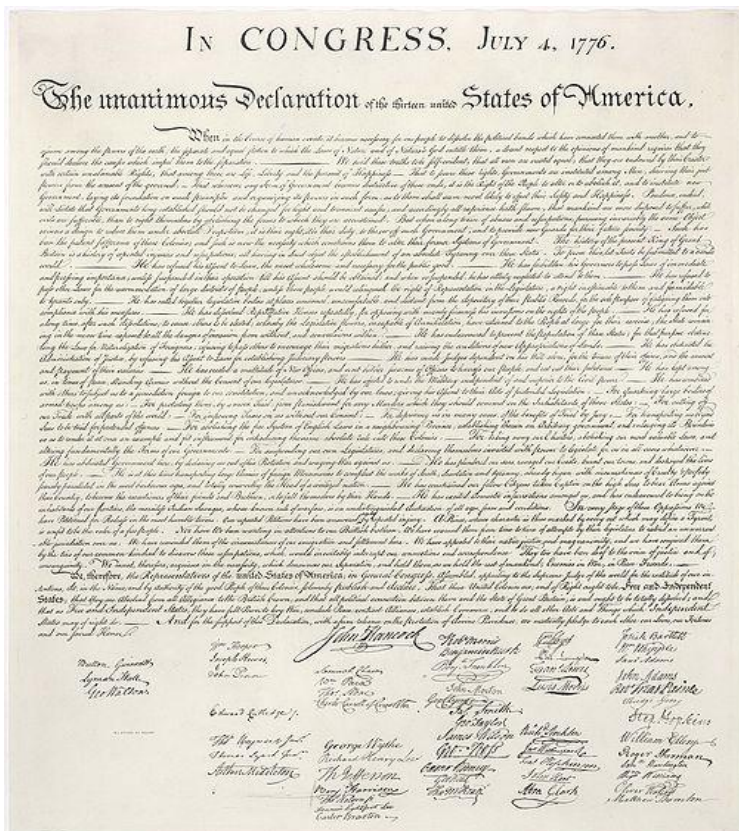


Declaration of Independence

The United States Declaration of Independence is a statement adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, which announced that the thirteen American colonies then at war with Great Britain were now independent states, and thus no longer a part of the British Empire. Written primarily by Thomas Jefferson, the Declaration is a formal explanation of why Congress had voted on July 2 to declare independence from Great Britain, more than a year after the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War. The birthday of the United States of America—Independence Day—is celebrated on July 4, the day the wording of the Declaration was approved by Congress.

After finalizing the text on July 4, Congress issued the Declaration of Independence in several forms. It was initially published as a printed broadside that was widely distributed and read to the public. The most famous version of the Declaration, a signed copy that is usually regarded as *the* Declaration of Independence, is on display at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Although the wording of the Declaration was approved on July 4, the date of its signing has been disputed. Most historians have concluded that it was signed nearly a month after its adoption, on August 2, 1776, and not on July 4 as is commonly believed. 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.



Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen

The *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (French: *Déclaration des droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen*) is a fundamental document of the French Revolution, defining the individual and collective rights of all the estates of the realm as universal. Influenced by the doctrine of natural rights, the rights of Man are universal: valid at all times and in every place, pertaining to human nature itself. Although it establishes fundamental rights for French citizens and *all men without exception*, it addresses neither the status of women nor slavery; despite that, it is a precursor document to international human rights instruments.

History ...

The last article of Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen was adopted 26 or 27 August, 1789 by the National Constituent Assembly (*Assemblée nationale constituante*), during the period of the French Revolution, as the first step toward writing a constitution for France. It was prepared and proposed by the marquis de Lafayette. A second and lengthier declaration, known as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1793 was later adopted.

