

“25 Declarations in the Declaration of Independence”

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By Craig Seibert

EL CERRITO, Calif.—While it’s questionable how many younger Americans have been exposed to the Declaration of Independence, signed 250 years ago, on July 4, 1776, most Americans probably know the famous preface.

■ “The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America, 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 them include, Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

What fewer people know is that the remainder of the document rests on core principles about the human condition, man’s relationship to God and government and man’s relationship to each other.

My studies of the Declaration of Independence have allowed me to distill 25 of the principles that undergird our nation. Thus, the Declaration of Independence declares the following.

1. There is a higher law to appeal to—The Laws of Nature and Nature’s God.
2. There is a Higher Power to appeal to—nature’s God.
3. There is a universal truth.
4. These truths are self-evident.
5. Truth 1: Man is valuable because God created him.
6. Truth 2: All men are equal in their standing before God.
7. Truth 3: God endows man with rights.
8. Truth 4: Rights do not come from government.

9. Truth 5: Because the rights come from God, a government cannot revoke them.
10. Truth 6: The primary rights are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness (a happiness understood to flow from virtue, not transient pleasures of the flesh).
11. The purpose of government is to secure these rights.
12. The government's authority comes from God—"just" powers—and from the people (the people give consent to be governed).
13. The government is accountable to God and the people.
14. A government is illegitimate when it becomes destructive to these ends (truths).
15. The people have the right to alter or abolish the government.
16. Change should not be made for trivial reasons.
17. When the government usurps the people's rights over a long period, that fact demands change.
18. Tyranny is the steady quest to have greater and greater power over people.
19. It is the people's duty to act for future generations.
20. God is the Supreme Judge.
21. God is the One who knows men's hearts and can judge their motives and actions.
22. God holds people and rulers accountable.
23. God will be relied on for protection.
24. The Founders would commit their lives, fortunes and sacred honor to these principles (words).
25. And, by signing the Declaration, they did, in fact, commit their lives, fortunes and sacred honor (deeds).

No other form of government has ever been founded on these principles. And that is why America remains the most free and dynamic country in the world today.