



Speaker's Name  
Speech Theme/Occasion  
Speech Date  
Location

**SPEECH**

---

Thank you dearly for the chance to speak to you today, it's an honor to be back in my hometown.

America's birthday, The Fourth of July, Independence Day. No matter what you call today, it's a date that binds Americans of all stripes together.

It's the day we celebrate with cook-outs, fireworks, and of course, a well-deserved day off. We also honor and remember the Declaration of Independence—our nation's founding document—first adopted by just 13 American colonies. But what is it, really? Well, it's a piece of paper, containing a specific set of ideas seared into the consciousness of every person who calls America "home" today.

Among those ideas are what Jefferson called self-evident truths, that all men are created equal, and that their Creator endows them with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

More than a full year before delegates of the Second Continental Congress put their names on that essential piece of paper, they formed a unified Army to fight the tyranny of Great Britain.

Its commander, of course, was a general by the name of George Washington.

Just five short months later, in Philadelphia, the same Congress established the first two battalions of Marines.

Without the brave not-quite-yet-Americans fighting on behalf of a nation whose Declaration was still a year away, the words Jefferson famously wrote would ring hollow. Without the assurance that blood would be shed in her defense, America very well may have remained lifeless as the sheet of paper carrying her birth.

Washington received word about the document in a letter dated July 6th, 1776. In it, John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, explained that Congress had wrestled with the very notion of independence. He wrote that Americans would have to control "Both Causes and Events to bring about his own determination," a sentiment which Washington shared.

For the troops serving in Washington's largely untrained Army, a declaration of independence meant that they would be fighting not for the defense of their colonies, but for the birth of a new nation, for a new way of life where they-- and only they--would control its direction.

The words were so moving, so emotionally charged, that a statue of King George III in New York City was melted down for bullets needed to defend the new nation that laid beyond.

The Declaration of Independence is also an aspiration. It was—and remains—a goal, just as the Constitution seeks to form A More Perfect Union. The Declaration summarizes and eloquently explains out why our founding fathers would not only seek but demand independence from the Crown in London.

Having stated the reasons, of "a long train of abuses" it closes with "these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States...Absolved from all Allegiance to Britain." This marked the beginning of the end of the chord that tied the Colonies to a tyrant.

What guarantees goals such as these? For one, the promise, of Colonial—now American—faces will meet British ones on the field of

battle, willing to die for their own freedom, and the freedom of their families, their neighbors, and for future generations of Americans, whom they never had the chance to meet.

The same persistence was shown just 36 years after America was declared independent when they again took on the greatest naval power the world has ever known, Great Britain, in the War of 1812.

It was on display later when the country was tearing itself apart, during the civil war. And in the trenches of Europe, on the shores of Utah Beach, on islands of the Pacific. In the hills of Korea, and the jungles of Vietnam.

And it's ongoing today, in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq.

The spirit of freedom will prevail wherever tyranny is met, through American Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and yes, even Coasties, willing to stand up and face freedom's enemy.

I'll leave you with General George Washington's fitting words inscribed at the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in Washington, D.C:

"To that meritorious class of veteran, non-commissioned officers and privates, who have been discharged for inability...nothing should be a more melancholy sight, than to behold those who have shed their blood or lost their limbs in the service of their country."

Today, we honor the memory of those who boldly declared independence, by living free—thanks to those who continue to show the bravery and selflessness required to keep us that way. Thank you.

**<END>**