

# Informed Patriotism -15 American Principles Education

Definite and unique American Principles for governments do exist. It is the people who come together to form a government and fund the public treasury that give it power. The following truths provide the moral predicate for the citizens' *Bill of Rights* law added to the *Constitution* at the request of states. When persistently upheld, the law impedes the tyranny of government officials who speak deceptively and misuse their limited authority.

By DAVID A. NORRIS

Following an extended period of oppression under the leadership of the British King George III, Thomas Jefferson provided a catalog of immortal principles called by some America's Civic Religion. The Declaration of Independence was adopted unanimously by the Founding Fathers on July 4, 1776.

James Wilson, who became a Supreme Court justice, was one of six men who signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. Addressing the Pennsylvania Ratifying Convention for the new Constitution, Wilson said, "I beg to read a few words from the Declaration made by the representatives of the United States and recognized by the whole Union."

Following the reading he asserted that the Declaration of Independence was the foundation of the Constitution.

The citizens of our immigrant nation celebrate this world-shattering Declaration annually because the principles have great appeal and proved amazingly successful. The higher authority Creator-based concept has reversed countless centuries of deprivation that has accompanied authoritari-

an rule. Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. wisely focused citizen attention to the Declaration at a time of crisis in America.

Statesmen throughout our history have supported certain tenets of this Civic Religion.

**• The Spiritual Nature of Man is Supreme.**  
"All men are created ... endowed by their Creator ..."

*Declaration of Independence*

**• God is the Source of Man's Unalienable Rights**  
"... all men are ... endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

*Declaration of Independence*

**• The Traditional Family Is Paramount**  
"The most important consequence of marriage is, that the husband and the wife become in law only one person."

James Wilson, *Natural Rights of Marriage, 1792*

**• All Men Are Equal in the Sight of God and the Law**  
"... that all men are created equal ..."

*Declaration of Independence*

**• Liberty from Oppression by Big Government and Non-government Authoritarians**

"... unalienable Rights, that among these are ... liberty"  
*Declaration of Independence*

**• The Written Constitution Established by Americans Is a Tool for Governing**  
Governments derive "... their just powers, from the consent of the governed."

*Declaration of Independence*

**• Moral Duties of Civility Are Also a Predicate for Interpreting Constitutional Intent**  
"Tis substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. Who that is a sincere friend to it, can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?"

George Washington  
*Farewell Address*

**• The Overriding Concern When Designing the Constitution Was Checking Man's Sin-Prone Nature**  
"In questions of power then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution"

Virginia Resolutions  
Thomas Jefferson

**• Authoritarians in Government Are a Parasitic and Ever-present Danger**  
"... Taking away our charters. Abolishing our

most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of our governments [constitutions]."  
*Declaration of Independence*

**• Government Must be Decentralized**  
"The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositories, and constituting each the guardian of the public weal against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern; some of them in our country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them."

George Washington  
*Farewell Address*

**• Government or Union Monopolies Involving Education or Religion Prohibited for Liberty's Sake**  
"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

*Constitution of the United States*

**• American Work Ethic, Property Ownership Secure**  
"Our wish ... is, that ... [there be maintained] ... that the state of prop-

erty, equal or unequal, which results to every man from his own industry, or that of his fathers."  
*President Thomas Jefferson Second Inaugural Address*

**• Government Power and Taxes Limited for Liberty's Sake**  
"... imposing Taxes on us without our Consent ..."  
*Declaration of Independence*

"Liberty and security in government depend not on the limits, which the rulers may please to assign to the exercise their own powers, but on the boundaries, within which their powers are circumscribed by the constitution."  
James Wilson,  
*Lectures, 1790*

**• Life and Happiness—Humanity's Goal**  
"Unalienable rights, that among these are Life, ... and the pursuit of Happiness."  
*Declaration of Independence*

**• Benevolent Provision and Heart of God for Man Recognized**  
"And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."  
*Declaration of Independence*

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Confirmation of the *Declaration of Independence* as a Source  
of American Principles for Law,  
Termed by Some as “American Civic Religion”

The principles of republican democracy, ► **noun:** a basic truth or law or assumption

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“Drafted by Thomas Jefferson between June 11 and June 28, 1776, the Declaration of Independence is at once the nation's most cherished symbol of liberty . . . Here, in exalted and unforgettable phrases, Jefferson expressed the convictions in the minds and hearts of the American people. The political philosophy of the Declaration was not new; its ideals of individual liberty had already been expressed by John Locke and the Continental philosophers. What Jefferson did was summarize "self-evident truths . . . "  
([www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration.html)).

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The Congress passed the separatists *Declaration* officially on July 4, 1776. In the very first paragraph, the non-sectarian religious platform of the *Declaration* upon which the authority for the principles that followed are the “Laws of Nature and of Nature's God.”

There are additional American principles in other foundational documents listed below. The *Declaration* provided the basis for law to justify the separation of the American Colonies from British authoritarian rule. The principles were expanded and codified in greater detail for both the first Ten Amendments to the *Constitution* and the *Bill of Rights* portion of the state Constitutions. This is exemplified by the *Preamble* of the Iowa *Constitution* and the Iowa *Bill of Rights*.

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**The *Constitution* of the United States serves the people as a TOOL that is limited in its use of power by the principles of the *Declaration of Independence*:** The *Preamble* of the *Constitution* contains eight action words: form, establish, insure, provide, promote, secure our posterity, ordain and establish. Historically, governments powered by a tax on the people have been the chief source of exploitation and tyranny.

Americans made a complete break with that age-old pattern by choosing the higher authority non-sectarian Creator-based *Declaration of principles* that are superior to man's limited abilities and prejudices. Serving as a moral predicate for public policy, the principles read in part: "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 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, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. . . . And for the support of this *Declaration*, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor" (Library of Congress website, *Primary Documents in American History*).

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Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (January 31, 1801–July 6, 1835), John Marshall's higher authority basis for rejecting the **government "of men"** concurs in full with the civic religion standard of Benjamin Franklin whose call for prayer was adopted by the Delegates at the Constitutional Convention. This practice has been continued in legislative sessions today. Unfortunately, in my opinion, one of the decisions of the Marshall Court has been falsely applied and exploited by some tenured law professors and poorly educated judges. Instead of respecting the laws established by the representatives of the people, unelected activist judges change the meaning of the *Constitution* without being amended by the people, rewrite the law, and institute deviant and socially harmful rights according to their own secular inclinations.

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Henry Steele Commager, eminent historian of the 20th century, points to the Judeo-Christian heritage and *Declaration of Independence* as the source of America's unique principles of government, and refers to America's new political system for the vindication of God-given rights as "matchless logic" and of "permanent" rather than "transient" value (Henry Steele Commager, *Thomas Jefferson: The Man, His World, His Influence*, G. P. Putnam: New York, 1974).

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“Liberalism and religion share a long and complicated history. While most Americans hold that there is (and has been) a wall of separation between Church and State [e.g. no Catholic or Protestant or other religions’ Pope has authority over non-church government policy in America], the reality is far more nuanced. [The meaning of the word] Liberalism [used by early Americans included support of moral law, the work ethic, family, property ownership, minimal taxes, competition and a self-regulating market] arose out of the exhausted peace of Europe’s religious wars, but many of its early proponents were theists [of the Reformation type]. John Locke’s famous defense of [citizens rights to save, invest, and exchange] property, for instance, **relies upon God to ground humanity’s natural rights. Likewise, many of the Founding Fathers saw no conflict between their commitment to liberalism and their invocation of God to justify the Declaration of Independence**” (Google, CIVIC RELIGION, Allacademic Incorporated website; Kozma, Troy. Conference Paper, *America’s God: An Examination of Civic Religion . . .* Midwest Political Science Association, Palmer House Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, April 12, 2007).

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“The intimate relation . . . religious notions with the self-conception of the new republic is indicated by the frequency of their appearance in early official documents. For example, we find in Washington’s first inaugural address of April 30, 1789:

The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained. The preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are justly considered, perhaps, as deeply, as finally, staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people.

Nor did these religious sentiments remain merely the personal expression of the President. At the request of both Houses of Congress, Washington proclaimed on October 3 of that same first year as President that November 26 should be ‘a day of public thanksgiving and prayer,’ the first Thanksgiving Day under the *Constitution* . . . **The words and acts of the founding fathers, . . . shaped the form and tone of the civil religion as it has been maintained ever since.**” Google search— Civil Religion in America, Robert N. Bellah, *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* entitled, “*Religion in America*,” Winter 1967, Vol. 96, No. 1, 1-21.

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**Education and American Principles:** In contrast to the exclusivity demanded by radical professors for their atheistic secular philosophy, the American philosophy of education exposes students to both prominent worldviews. Recognition that political and religious liberty are totally dependant upon an unobstructed public market place for the expression of ideas came out of the Reformation. The people can then avoid being victimized by media censorship and what Thomas Jefferson called “tyrants of the mind.” America is testament to the fact most of the people, if fully informed, will, irrespective of their ethnic background, coalesce around the truth or the best idea. The Authoritarian church in Medieval Europe that demanded political correctness said, in effect, you will be punished if you do not teach that the world is flat. When the people rebelled and soul liberty became a reality, many left that church and took their stand for the truth. Traditional American education exposes students to both the old European secular authoritarianism and the traditional American philosophy and taught students the historic outcomes associated with the two worldviews. This is seen in the resolution proposed by both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison for the newly founded University of Virginia.

The resolution stated that “all students shall be inculcated [taught] with the **basic American principles of government** . . . None should be inculcated which are incompatible with those on which the *Constitution* of this State, and of the United States were genuinely based, in the common opinion.” The resolution also stated that the faculty had a standard of responsibility and were required to teach affirmatively these unique American principles. Only after they had done so were they to teach the conflicting principles as such, judging them by the soundness of the American principles that served as the basis. The resolution then specified six writings that, in the board's opinion, reflected the unanimously supported principles unique to America which youth should be taught. “These documents were **John Locke's *Essay Concerning the True Original Extent and End of Civil Government* (1690), Algernon Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government* (1698), the *Declaration of Independence*, Washington's *Farewell Address*, the *Virginia Resolutions of 1799* (adopted by the Virginia legislature), and the *Federalist Papers*” (Nathaniel F. Cabell, *Early History of the University of Virginia* as contained in the *Letters of Thomas Jefferson and Joseph B. Cabell*, Richmond, Virginia, 1856, 339).**

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