



Timeline of Protest and Independence

1754

The French and Indian War (also known as the Seven Years' War) begins in North America. The British and their American colonists, along with allies from Prussia and Portugal, fight the French and their Native American, Spanish, Austrian and Russian allies over competing claims to land in North America

1756

The French and Indian War (also known as the Seven Years' War) begins in Europe.

1763

The Treaty of Paris ends the French and Indian War. France agrees to give Britain all of its mainland North American territory east of the Appalachian Mountains, as does Spain. Britain is left with more land, a more diverse group of people to oversee — including Native Americans and French and Spanish Roman Catholics — and large war debts. American colonists display symbols of British pride in their homes, businesses and government spaces. British troops remain in the colonies to protect colonists and keep the peace.

King George III establishes the Proclamation Line, a geographic border in British North America beyond which colonists should not move, to protect Native American land from colonial settlers.

1764

The Sugar Act is passed by British Parliament, setting a tax on sugar, molasses, and other goods being imported into the colonies, which impacts the manufacture of rum in New England.

The Currency Act is passed by British Parliament. This grouping of laws regulates paper money in the colonies and, because colonists have less access to silver and gold than their counterparts in England, it becomes more difficult for them to pay their taxes.

1765

The Stamp Act is passed by British Parliament, placing a tax on newspapers, playing cards, and pamphlets, among dozens of other everyday items. Some colonists see this as unfair taxation and as an attempt to limit the freedom of the press, which is often critical of British government.

1766

The Stamp Act and Sugar Act are repealed. However, British Parliament now passes the Declaratory Act, which states that "said colonies and plantations in America have been, are, and of right ought to be, subordinate unto, and dependent upon the imperial crown and parliament of Great Britain" and that the King and Parliament have "full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever."

1767

The Townshend Acts are passed by British Parliament, placing taxes on items imported by the colonists, including glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea. Money raised by these taxes would be used to pay colonial governors and judges

1769

Residents of Charleston, South Carolina agree to begin boycotting goods that are imported from Great Britain. They pledge to instead manufacture these goods themselves to avoid paying import taxes. In addition to manufactured goods, they also agree to stop buying enslaved people that are being sold by British merchants.

1771

A group of armed protesters known as the Regulators gather in North Carolina to oppose British officials that have been appointed by the

Royal Governor. Militia supporting the governor face off with the Regulators at the Battle of Alamance and quickly defeat them.

1772

In an event known as the Pine Tree Riot, colonists in New Hampshire ambush a Sheriff attempting to enforce an old law about harvesting special types of lumber. The Sheriff and his Deputy are beaten by the rioting colonists while their horses have their ears cut off and their tails and manes shaved.

Angered over the actions of the Royal Navy ship the *HMS Gaspee*, a merchant ship leads the *Gaspee* into shallow waters, grounding it and leaving it helpless. Locals surround the ship, capture the crew and burn the *Gaspee* in an act of defiance.

1773

In an attempt to help the British East India Tea Company sell more tea, the British Parliament passes the Tea Act. This act allows the company to sell tea directly to colonists, removing the role of middlemen and making tea cheaper. Despite the discount, colonists see this as an attempt by the British government to force them to buy from only one supplier.

Angry colonists dressed as Mohawk Indians destroy a cargo of the British East India Tea Company's tea held on board a ship in Boston Harbor. Other cities in the colonies refuse to allow ships to unload their cargoes of tea or refuse to allow merchants to sell it.

1774

In response to colonial protest, particularly in Massachusetts, British Parliament passes a series of acts known in Britain as the Coercive Acts and in America as the Intolerable Acts. These are meant to restore British authority in the colonies:

- Boston Port Act — Shuts down Boston's port until colonists repay the British East India Company for the tea destroyed in 1773.
- Massachusetts Government Act — Changes the

colony's charter to increase royal control.

- Administration of Justice Act — Allows British officials who are accused of murder or other capital crimes while performing their duties the ability to be tried in a different colony from the one in which they were accused, or for the trial to be held in England.
- Quartering Act — Expands on the previous Quartering Act (1765) and allows British soldiers to be housed in any occupied building.

British Parliament also passes the Quebec Act, which provides religious freedom to French Canadians, who are largely Roman Catholic. Many American colonists are angered, as they are largely Protestant, and view this as one of the Intolerable Acts.

The First Continental Congress convenes in Philadelphia, with representatives from the thirteen colonies currently in rebellion, to discuss how to resolve the conflict with Britain. Representative John Rutledge quickly argues that the Congress possesses no "legal, coercive, or legislative authority." since it was not convened or authorized by Great Britain. They send letters of invitation to Quebec, St. John's Island, Nova Scotia, Georgia, East Florida, and West Florida in the hopes that they will send delegates to CC. They agree upon a coordinated boycott of British goods and to limit their exports to Britain, prepare a list of grievances for the King and ask him to respond, and plan to meet again in the Spring of 1775. They also urge each other to begin training their militias.

John Wilkes, who sympathizes with the colonists, defeats a challenge to his seat in the House of Commons by John Malcom, a former tax collector from Boston. Wilkes continues to advocate for the colonists in Parliament.

1775

British troops march to Salem, Massachusetts to search for supplies that nearby militias are rumored to be storing there. Armed colonists meet them at the bridge leading town in opposition, but a local official negotiates a compromise between them and no blood is shed.

Patrick Henry demands that his fellow Virginians prepare for an inevitable war.

British troops march out of occupied Boston to locate and gain control of the Concord militia's supplies. Warned by riders, minutemen are prepared to harass and fight off the British soldiers and engage in battles and skirmishes between Lexington and Concord. The British do not get the supplies.

Militiamen begin gathering in the hills outside of British-occupied Boston, laying siege to the city. Hearing that the British will try to retake these areas, they build a defensive post at the top of Breed's Hill but are unable to hold the British off. They do inflict serious casualties upon the British. Meanwhile, the Second Continental Congress meets and names George Washington as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army. Washington bans the recruitment of people of African descent from the Continental Army.

A number of the King's subjects in London deliver a document to him requesting that he remove his ministers and advisers and to dissolve Parliament so as to protect the rights of their fellow subjects in America.

The Continental Congress send an Olive Branch Petition to King George III, seeking a peaceful resolution. The King declines to address their petition and declares the colonies to be in a state of "open and avowed rebellion", then recruits Hessian armies to supplement his troops.

In a sign of growing aggression following the King's declaration, British naval forces bombard the colonial town of Falmouth in New England and engage rebel militia forces at Hampton, Virginia.

The Royal governor of Virginia, John Murray, Lord Dunmore issues a proclamation stating that any enslaved people who are owned by rebels and who will fight with the British will be given their freedom. Thousands of men and women flock to his position, but many die of disease.

British Parliament increases pressure on the American colonies by passing the Prohibitory Act, officially removing the colonies from the King's protection, while criminalizing trade with them. The trade blockade is considered a declaration of war by many and colonists reconsider the likelihood of reconciling with Great Britain. Thomas Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense* is published in America around the time that news of the Prohibitory Act crosses the Atlantic. He argues that independence from Britain is the only logical choice remaining for the American colonies.

1776

Abigail Adams writes to her husband in Congress, expressing her hope that they will declare independence from Britain. She goes on to ask that he and his fellow representatives "Remember the ladies" when making new laws in an independent nation.

With several colonies not receiving instructions from their governments to vote for independence, Congress passes a resolution recommending that colonies reform or replace their governments with ones that support independence.

The Massachusetts government asks inhabitants of each town to debate independence, hoping it will inspire towns in other colonies to do so and increase pressure on representatives in Congress to vote in favor of separation from Britain.

Rhode Island declines to ask its inhabitants to debate Independence, noting that some towns will vote against. Declarations in support of independence are delivered by towns, governments, juries, unions, and militias elsewhere in the American colonies.

Richard Henry Lee officially proposes independence before Congress, setting the stage for a vote the next month. Members of Congress, sensing the possibility that the vote will succeed, create a "Committee of Five" shortly after the proposal to draft an official document declaring independence. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston are appointed to the committee. Jefferson takes primary responsibility for writing the first draft, with editorial advice provided by the others. Congress also establishes committees to draft the Articles of Confederation as a new governing document for the independent states, and a model treaty that can be used to form alliances with foreign powers.

Congress votes in favor of independence on July 2nd with New York representatives abstaining due to a lack of instructions from their government. Pennsylvania representative John Dickinson, one of the last to still oppose independence, also abstains. With no colonies voting against independence, the vote is unanimous. Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence is presented and edited over the next two days by members of Congress. A portion of the document condemning slavery is among several parts that are removed or changed. Congress approves the final document on July 4th.

The first printings of the Declaration of Independence are made by Philadelphia printer John Dunlap before being sent throughout the colonies and to courts in European nations. An engrossed (formal) copy of the Declaration is later made and signed by most members of Congress on August 2nd, 1776.