

# The Declaration of Independence Usurped

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*“...when a long train of abuses and usurpations... evinces a design to reduce [a people] under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.”*

In 1776, the Declaration of Independence laid out a “long train of abuses and usurpations” that justified severing ties with the British Crown. Those grievances were not hastily written complaints; they were a sober indictment, a catalog of betrayals by a distant government that had forfeited its legitimacy. Today, nearly 250 years later, we find ourselves confronting a disturbing realization: many of the very abuses that spurred a revolution have returned, not at the hand of a monarch, but through the slow accretion of federal power—bureaucratic, financial, military, and judicial—across all *three* branches of government.

The founders’ warnings were meant to be timeless. And if we are to remain the rightful heirs of their legacy, we must recognize when their concerns have become our own.

## **A Multitude of New Offices**

Among the Declaration’s sharpest charges was the proliferation of “a multitude of New Offices,” and the dispatching of “swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.” Today’s federal bureaucracy—with its millions of employees, tens of thousands of regulations, and sprawling administrative state—is the modern embodiment of this grievance. Elected leaders change, but the **Permastate** endures: unaccountable, entrenched, and increasingly autonomous, seemingly immune to every attempt to scale back its power and influence. The regulatory apparatus now governs vast swaths of daily life with minimal oversight from Congress and scant consent from the people.

## **Taxation Without Consent**

The colonists also revolted against taxation imposed without true representation. While Americans today vote for their leaders, the principle of consensual taxation has eroded. Congress routinely approves trillions in spending beyond collected revenues, financing ever-growing programs with borrowed money that current *and* future generations will be forced to repay. A tax deferred is still a tax imposed.

The federal income tax—introduced and enshrined during the Progressive Era, a period whose constitutional and institutional legacy includes many of the most regrettable expansions of federal authority—has become a tool for redistribution and debt accumulation, all without meaningful consent from a citizenry that overwhelmingly opposes perpetual deficit spending. (The notable

exception from that era, women's suffrage, arose from a separate moral and democratic movement. By contrast, the same period gave rise to policies such as Prohibition, the direct election of Senators who were previously chosen by state legislatures, the creation of the Federal Reserve Bank, and the permanent capping of House membership at 435 representatives—measures that centralized power and severed key constitutional constraints.)

### **The Rise of an Unchecked Military Power**

The founders feared a standing army independent of civilian control. “He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power,” Jefferson warned. In today's America, while formal civilian oversight persists in theory, the scale and autonomy of the military-industrial complex dwarf anything envisioned by the framers. The Department of Defense's budget exceeds the economies of most nations. Foreign interventions—from Korea and Vietnam to Iraq, Afghanistan, and most recently Iran—have largely bypassed constitutional processes requiring congressional declarations of war. The people's voice in questions of peace and conflict has been systematically sidelined.

### **Judicial Power Beyond Constitutional Design**

The Declaration condemned making judges “dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.” Although federal judges no longer serve at the pleasure of a monarch, many Americans increasingly view the modern judiciary as politically and ideologically aligned with broader institutional and partisan interests. Federal courts at both the district and circuit levels have increasingly acted as politicized institutions, issuing rulings that reshape public policy, intrude deeply into executive and legislative powers, and influence the daily lives of citizens far beyond the framers' original constitutional design.

Since the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Congress has also vastly expanded the lower federal judiciary—particularly through the Judiciary Acts of 1891 and 1925—ostensibly to ease the Supreme Court's growing caseload. Yet in doing so, it created a sprawling network of district and appellate courts whose *unelected judges* now exercise enormous influence over public policy, often with little direct accountability to the people. Today, a single unelected district judge can override the elected branches of government, blocking even constitutional actions—including efforts to streamline, reform, or eliminate bloated federal agencies. Shielded by lifetime appointments, judges often impose policy preferences with the force of law, without the consent of the governed. What was meant as a guardian of rights now sometimes functions as an unelected legislature.

### **The March Toward Despotism**

The founders understood the tragic inertia of political decline. Abuses of power rarely appear overnight; they accumulate quietly, through neglect, normalization, and the abdication of constitutional duty.

*“...all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves...”*

Today, the warning signs are all around us.

The House of Representatives—once the most responsive body of government—has largely abandoned its central obligation to control the nation’s purse. Rather than debating and defending budgets grounded in revenue, it routinely passes spending bills that far exceed receipts—by trillions of dollars—fueling a debt crisis through profligate and unsustainable borrowing.

The Senate, originally conceived as a deliberative chamber of wise counsel, has evolved into a launchpad for presidential hopefuls. Since the direct election of Senators began in the Progressive Era, this chamber has increasingly prioritized partisan spectacle over statesmanship. What was once intended as a consultative body has become a platform for grandstanding and national posturing, with campaign entry often requiring millions—or tens of millions—of dollars. In this transformation, the Senate has grown more distant from the people it was meant to represent, and more beholden to national political machines than to state interests.

Both branches of Congress now serve, in too many cases, as vehicles for the accumulation of wealth—even generational wealth. Public service has become a path to personal enrichment, with long tenures and strategic committee assignments yielding influence that benefits families, donors, and careers far more than constituents.

These are not transient dysfunctions. They are evidence of a governing class that has, over decades, severed its tether to accountability. And as Jefferson warned, “when a long train of abuses and usurpations... evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism,” the people must not merely observe—they must act.

### **On the Edge of the Precipice**

The American people are not reckless. They do not demand perfection. But they do expect their government to remain tethered to its founding promises—to preserve liberty, safeguard prosperity, and act within its constitutional bounds. We are now nearing the limits of what a free people can tolerate. Spiraling debt, institutional decay, and executive, legislative, *and* judicial overreach are not merely policy failures; they are signs of a republic in distress.

The founders did not urge revolt at the first sign of dysfunction. They urged prudence, patience, and reform—until the abuse became intolerable. But they also left behind a final safeguard:

*“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.”*

This is not a call to chaos. It is a call to conscience.

We are not yet at the brink of dissolution—but we are closer than prudence should allow. The choice before us is not rebellion, but restoration. We must reassert the primacy of consent, the discipline of limited government, and the sanctity of intergenerational responsibility. Through constitutional amendments—spearheaded by civic vigilance and unrelenting public pressure—we must recall a truth the founders knew well: liberty is not the default state of human affairs. It must be defended—patiently, persistently, and at times, urgently.

We can no longer afford to comfort ourselves with illusions of permanence. Republics, too, can falter and fail. The Declaration of Independence is not merely a relic; it is a mirror. And what we see reflected today should stir us to action before it is too late.

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