

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 131

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 25, 2020

Sponsored by:

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District 9 (Atlantic, Burlington and Ocean)

SYNOPSIS

Urges all New Jersey residents to read Declaration of Independence at 12 noon on July 4 every year and begin planning to celebrate its 250th anniversary in 2026.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** urging all residents of New Jersey to
2 read the United States Declaration of Independence at 12 noon
3 on every July 4th, and to begin planning for the 250th
4 anniversary of its ratification on July 4, 2026.
5
6 **WHEREAS**, The United States Declaration of Independence from Great
7 Britain was adopted by the Second Continental Congress meeting at
8 the Pennsylvania State House, in Philadelphia, on July 4, 1776; and
9 **WHEREAS**, The purpose of the Declaration was to announce formally
10 that the 13 American colonies were at war with the Kingdom of
11 Great Britain and would henceforth regard themselves as 13
12 independent, sovereign states, no longer subject to British rule; and
13 **WHEREAS**, The Declaration passed Congress with no opposition after
14 it was drafted by a committee of five representatives that included
15 John Adams, a leader in the push for independence, and Thomas
16 Jefferson, who did most of the original drafting of the document;
17 and
18 **WHEREAS**, Adams wrote to his wife Abigail after the Declaration’s
19 signing that he believed that independence day “will be celebrated,
20 by succeeding Generations as the great anniversary Festival. It
21 ought to be commemorated as the Day of Deliverance by solemn
22 Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with
23 Pomp and Parade, with shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells,
24 Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the
25 other from this Time forward forever more”; and
26 **WHEREAS**, After ratifying the text on July 4th, Congress issued the
27 Declaration in several forms, with copies sent to each of the
28 colonies, to King George III of England, and General George
29 Washington, and an official, engrossed copy was ordered by
30 Congress that was eventually placed on display at the National
31 Archives in Washington, D.C. in February, 1924; and
32 **WHEREAS**, It is notable that the Declaration justified the independence
33 of the United States by listing the colonial grievances against King
34 George III and asserting certain natural and legal rights, including
35 the right of revolution; and
36 **WHEREAS**, Perhaps the most memorable phrase in the Declaration, the
37 one that was especially significant to President Lincoln during the
38 American Civil War was the one which stated: “We hold these
39 truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are
40 endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that
41 among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”; and
42 **WHEREAS**, President Lincoln considered the Declaration to be the
43 foundation of his political philosophy, calling it “a rebuke and
44 stumbling block to tyranny and oppression,” and he argued that it is
45 a statement of principles through which the United States
46 Constitution should be interpreted; and
47 **WHEREAS**, The Declaration inspired many other similar documents in
48 other countries, including the Declaration of Flanders issued during

1 the Brabant Revolution in what is modern-day Belgium, and other
2 independence movements in Europe, Latin America, Africa and
3 New Zealand; and

4 **WHEREAS**, Given the importance of the Declaration to this State, to
5 this country, and to many other nations, it is fitting and proper for
6 this House to urge residents of this State to pause at 12 noon on
7 July 4th of every year, during the normal course of their day, during
8 appropriate celebratory activities, or during private or public
9 commemorations, to read the Declaration either privately or
10 publicly and to begin planning to celebrate the 250th anniversary of
11 its ratification on July 4th, 2026; now, therefore,

12
13 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the General Assembly of the State of New
14 Jersey:

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16 1. This Assembly Resolution urges all residents of New Jersey
17 to read the United States Declaration of Independence at 12 noon on
18 July 4 of every year and to begin planning for the 250th anniversary
19 of its ratification on July 4, 2026.

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21 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
22 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to each
23 person elected to public office in this State and to each media outlet
24 operating in this State.

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STATEMENT

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29 This Assembly Resolution urges all residents of New Jersey to
30 read the United States Declaration of Independence at 12 noon on
31 July 4 of each year and to begin planning for the 250th anniversary
32 of its ratification on July 4, 2026.

33 The Declaration, as ratified on July 4, 1776, reads as follows:

34 “The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of
35 America, When in the Course of human events, it becomes
36 necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have
37 connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of
38 the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of
39 Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the
40 opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes
41 which impel them to the separation.

42 We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created
43 equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain
44 unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the
45 pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are
46 instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent
47 of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government
48 becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to

1 alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its
2 foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such
3 form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and
4 Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long
5 established should not be changed for light and transient causes;
6 and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more
7 disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right
8 themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.
9 But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing
10 invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under
11 absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off
12 such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future
13 security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies;
14 and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their
15 former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of
16 Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all
17 having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny
18 over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid
19 world.

20 He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and
21 necessary for the public good.

22 He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and
23 pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his
24 Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly
25 neglected to attend to them.

26 He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of
27 large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the
28 right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to
29 them and formidable to tyrants only.

30 He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual,
31 uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public
32 Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance
33 with his measures.

34 He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing
35 with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

36 He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause
37 others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of
38 Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise;
39 the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of
40 invasion from without, and convulsions within.

41 He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for
42 that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners;
43 refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and
44 raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

45 He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his
46 Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

47 He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure
48 of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

1 He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither
2 swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their
3 substance.

4 He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies
5 without the Consent of our legislatures.

6 He has affected to render the Military independent of and
7 superior to the Civil power.

8 He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction
9 foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws;
10 giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

11 For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

12 For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any
13 Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these
14 States:

15 For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

16 For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

17 For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

18 For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended
19 offences;

20 For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a
21 neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary
22 government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once
23 an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute
24 rule into these Colonies:

25 For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable
26 Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

27 For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves
28 invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

29 He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his
30 Protection and waging War against us.

31 He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns,
32 and destroyed the lives of our people.

33 He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign
34 Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and
35 tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy
36 scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy
37 the Head of a civilized nation.

38 He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high
39 Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the
40 executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by
41 their Hands.

42 He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has
43 endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the
44 merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an
45 undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

46 In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for
47 Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been
48 answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus

1 marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the
2 ruler of a free people.

3 Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren.
4 We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their
5 legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We
6 have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and
7 settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and
8 magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our
9 common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would
10 inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too
11 have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We
12 must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our
13 Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies
14 in War, in Peace Friends.

15 We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of
16 America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the
17 Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do,
18 in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these
19 Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies
20 are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they
21 are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all
22 political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is
23 and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent
24 States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract
25 Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things
26 which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of
27 this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine
28 Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our
29 Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”