

The Halifax Resolves

As you read...

“DECLARING INDEPENDENCY”

Adopted April 12, 1776 by the Fourth Provincial Congress, the “Halifax Resolves” gave North Carolina’s delegates to the Continental Congress the authority to vote for independence. The Halifax Resolves are so called because the Provincial Congress was meeting in the town of Halifax.

The Halifax Resolves list briefly the charges against King and Parliament. (They note specifically that royal governors have armed slaves against their masters.) They point out that attempts at compromise have failed. Finally, in supporting independence, they insisted that North Carolina should have its own constitution and laws.

Joseph Hewes, one of North Carolina’s delegates to the Continental Congress, presented the Resolves to the Congress in Philadelphia. On June 7, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia formally proposed that the Continental Congress declare independence, and the resolution was adopted on July 2. The colonies were now independent states — assuming, of course, that they could win their war against the most powerful army in the world.

A MEMORABLE DATE

To commemorate the Halifax Resolves, April 12, 1776, is one of the two dates on North Carolina’s state flag. The other is May 20, 1775, the supposed date of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.



Figure 1. Joseph Hewes, one of North Carolina's delegates to the Continental Congress, at first ignored his instructions to support independence. He believed that it was still too soon in the spring of 1776 for the colonies to cut their ties with Britain. Although he presented the resolves to the Congress in May, he argued against independence during the debates that followed. Sometime in June, though, he changed his mind, and on July 2 he voted with the other delegates to declare independence.

The Select Committee taking into Consideration the usurpations and violences attempted and committed by the King and Parliament of Britain against America, and the further Measures to be taken for frustrating the same, and for the better defence of this province reported as follows, to wit,

It appears to your Committee that pursuant to the Plan concerted by the British Ministry for subjugating America, the King and Parliament of Great Britain have usurped a Power over the Persons and Properties of the People unlimited and uncontrouled; and disregarding their humble Petitions for Peace, Liberty and safety, have made divers Legislative Acts, denouncing War Famine and every Species of Calamity against the Continent in General. That British Fleets and Armies have been and still are daily employed in destroying the People and committing the most horrid devastations on the Country. That Governors in different Colonies have declared Protection to Slaves who should imbrue their Hands in the Blood of their Masters. That the Ships belonging to America are declared prizes of War and many of them have been violently seized and confiscated in consequence of which multitudes of the people have been destroyed or from easy Circumstances reduced to the most Lamentable distress.

And whereas the moderation hitherto manifested by the United Colonies and their sincere desire to be reconciled to the mother Country on Constitutional Principles, have procured no mitigation of the aforesaid Wrongs and usurpations, and no hopes remain of obtaining redress by those Means alone which have been hitherto tried, Your Committee are of Opinion that the house should enter into the following Resolve to wit,

Resolved that the delegates for this Colony in the Continental Congress be impowered to concur with the delegates of the other Colonies in declaring Independency, and forming foreign Alliances, reserving to this Colony the Sole, and Exclusive right of forming a Constitution and Laws for this Colony, and of appointing delegates from time to time (under the direction of a general Representation thereof) to meet the delegates of the other Colonies for such purposes as shall be hereafter pointed out.

On the web

A call for independence

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/4259>

After the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge, North Carolina's fourth Provincial Congress met at Halifax in April 1776, and resolved that the colony's delegates to the Continental Congress should support a move to declare independence.

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