

July 3, 2006 On the fourth day of July, in 1776, a small group of men, representing 13 colonies in the far-off Americas, boldly told the most powerful nation on earth that they were free. They declared, in terms that still are radical today, that all men are created equal, and endowed with certain inalienable rights that government neither grants nor can take away. In the Declaration of Independence, the founding fathers sought to demonstrate to the world that they were rejecting a tyrannical king. They listed the “injuries and usurpations” that contain the philosophical basis for our Constitution and Bill of Rights. One point of consternation to our founding fathers was that the king had been “imposing Taxes on us without our Consent.” But 230 years later, taxation with representation has not worked out much better. Indeed, one has to wonder how Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin would react to the current state of affairs. After all, they were outraged by mere import tariffs of a few pennies on the dollar. Today, the average American pays roughly 50 percent of their income in direct and indirect taxes. In fact, most Texans will not start working for themselves for another week. Texans, like most Americans, work from January until early July just to pay their federal income taxes, state and local taxes, and the enormous costs of regulation. Only about half the year is spent working to pay for food, clothing, shelter, or education. It is easy to simply blame faceless bureaucrats and politicians for our current state of affairs, and they do bear much of the blame. But blame also rests with those who expect Washington DC to solve every problem under the sun. If the public demanded that Congress abide by the Constitution and pass only constitutional spending bills, politicians would have no choice but to respond. Everybody seems to agree that government waste is rampant and spending should be cut—but not when it comes to their communities or pet projects. So members of Congress have every incentive to support spending bills and adopt a go-along, get-along attitude. This leads to the famous compromises, but the bill eventually comes due on April 15th. Our basic problem is that we have lost sight of the simple premise that guided the actions of our founding fathers. That premise? The government that governs least is the government that governs best. When we cut the size of government, our taxes will fall. When we reduce the power of the federal bureaucracy, the cost of government will plummet. And when we firmly fix our eyes, undistracted, on the principles of liberty, Americans truly will be free. That should be our new declaration.