

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business for up to 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, 232 years ago the Declaration of Independence established that humans have the right to self-government because of their unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Preserving these principles requires the same wisdom, courage and spirit of sacrifice that characterized many 18th century Americans.

"What will our children say," wrote Boston attorney Josiah Quincy II in 1768, "When they read the history of these times, should they find we tamely gave away, without one noble struggle, the most invaluable of earthly blessings? . . . let us . . . swear we will die, if we cannot live freemen!"

Indeed, the Americans chose to fight nobly and courageously. After the British surrender at the Battle of Saratoga, Lord Chatham, a member of the British House of Lords, concluded, "I know that the conquest of English America is an impossibility. You cannot, I venture to say it, you cannot conquer America . . ."

These principles to which the representatives of the 13 colonies pledged their lives, their resources, and their honor still apply to our Nation today.

It was on this day, July 8, 1776, that the Declaration of Independence was first read publicly, having been unanimously adopted by the Congress only 4 days before.

So, today, I am pleased to join with my colleague Senator LIEBERMAN in starting a new, bipartisan tradition in the U.S. Senate. We will read the Declaration of Independence again.

During the next hour, we will also hear from important leaders in our Nation's history who saw these principles of liberty, equality, and justice as timeless.

Patrick Henry urges us to consider the consequences of weakly submitting to a tyrannical authority in the hopes of obtaining peace, rather than persisting in the fight to secure our freedom. In his famous speech at the Touro Synagogue, George Washington establishes the importance of religious freedom for the Nation.

A few days before his inauguration, Abraham Lincoln makes an impromptu speech at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, where he argues that the principles of the Declaration are incompatible with slavery. Finally, in his last letter, Thomas Jefferson reflects on

the significance of the Declaration and its timeless value.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator LIEBERMAN and myself may enter into a colloquy on the reading of the Declaration of Independence and that following our colloquy, Senators WHITEHOUSE, MURKOWSKI, WEBB, MARTINEZ, and LIEBERMAN be, in that order, speakers for the remainder of morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COBURN. "When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

Mr. LIEBERMAN. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.—That 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. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a design to reduce them 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.—Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world."

Mr. COBURN. "He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

"He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be ob-

tained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

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

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

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

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

Mr. COBURN. "He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migration hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

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

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

Mr. LIEBERMAN. "He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.

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

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

"He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their acts of pretended legislation:"

Mr. COBURN. "For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

"For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

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

Mr. LIEBERMAN. "For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

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

"For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

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

Mr. COBURN. "For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

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

Mr. LIEBERMAN. "He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

"He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the Lives of our people.

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

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

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

Mr. COBURN. "In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free People."

Mr. LIEBERMAN. "Nor have We been wanting in attention to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends."—"

Mr. COBURN. "We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be free and independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and

that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do.—And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

TOURO SYNAGOGUE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, my home State of Rhode Island has the distinction of being home to the oldest Jewish house of worship in the United States, the Touro Synagogue in historic Newport. This synagogue was founded in 1763. Today, the synagogue stands as a handsome landmark, designed by the famous colonial architect Peter Harris, a reminder of historic days past for a community that this year, 2008, will celebrate the 350th anniversary of the first Jewish settlement in Rhode Island and a living expression today of our Jewish community's faith.

But during the infancy of our young Nation, Touro Synagogue played a major political role in defining what religious freedom would come to mean to Americans.

In 1790, the congregation at Touro Synagogue wrote to President George Washington, then in only his second year in office, when he visited Newport on a political tour to rally support for an American bill of rights. The warden of the synagogue, Moses Seixas, sought Washington's assurance that religious freedom would be guaranteed to Jews throughout the country.

In those first tumultuous years of our Republic, there was much uncertainty as to the guaranteed rights of individuals. Our Declaration of Independence had declared certain unalienable rights to be self-evident, but our Constitution did not yet include our Bill of Rights. There was no guarantee of an American's right to freely exercise his or her religion as we have today in the first amendment.

President Washington's public letter to the Touro congregation, coming from a political leader whose word was gold, left no doubt that the United States Government would defend the religious freedoms of all people, including those whose beliefs were different from the common ones, and it assured that this Government would have no part in stifling the beliefs of any who chose to worship as their conscience and traditions directed.

It was, at the time, a revolutionary promise from a revolutionary man, and I am pleased to read the full text of this historic correspondence.

To the President of the United States of America.

Sir: Permit the children of the Stock of Abraham to approach you with the most cordial affection and esteem for your person and merits, and to join with our fellow citizens in welcoming you to Newport.

With pleasure we reflect on those days, those days of difficulty and danger, when the God of Israel, who delivered David from the peril of the sword, shielded your head in the day of battle: and we rejoice to think, that the same Spirit, who rested in the Bosom of the greatly beloved Daniel, enabling him to preside over the Provinces of the Babylonish Empire, rests and ever will rest, upon you, enabling you to discharge the arduous duties of Chief Magistrate in these States.

This was before the Civil War, so it was "these States" and not the "United States."

Deprived as we heretofore have been of the invaluable rights of free Citizens, we now with a deep sense of gratitude to the Almighty disposer of all events behold a Government, erected by the Majesty of the People, a Government, which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance—

You will see in Washington's reply that the wily fox knew a good phrase when he saw one.

—but generously affording to all Liberty of conscience, and immunities of Citizenship: deeming every one, of whatever Nation, tongue, or language equal parts of the great governmental Machine: This so ample and extensive Federal Union whose basics is Philanthropy, Mutual confidence and Public Virtue, we cannot but acknowledge to be the work of the Great God, who ruleth in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, doing whatever seemeth him good.

For all these Blessings of civil and religious liberty which we enjoy under an equal benign administration, we desire to send up our thanks to the Ancient of Days, the great preserver of Men, beseeching him, that the Angel who conducted our forefathers through the wilderness into the promised Land, may graciously conduct you through all the difficulties and dangers of this mortal life: And, when, like Joshua full of days and full of honour; you are gathered to your Fathers, may you be admitted into the Heavenly Paradise to partake of the water of life, and the tree of immortality.

Done and Signed by order of the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island August 17th 1790. Moses Seixas, Warden.

And then came the President's reply.

To the Hebrew Congregation in Newport Rhode Island.

Gentlemen,

While I receive, with much satisfaction, your Address replete with expressions of affection and esteem; I rejoice in the opportunity of assuring you, that I shall always retain a grateful remembrance of the cordial welcome I experienced in my visit to Newport, from all classes of Citizens.

The reflection on the days of difficulty and danger which are past is rendered the more sweet, from a consciousness that they are succeeded by days of uncommon prosperity and security. If we have wisdom to make the best use of the advantages with which we are now favored, we cannot fail, under the just administration of a good Government, to become a great and happy people.

The Citizens of the United States have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more