

Speech by Jack Painter

The Freedom to Choose  
Cincinnati Tea Party  
Tax Day Rally  
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“These are the times that try men’s souls.”

This is the opening line of a pamphlet written by Thomas Paine in 1776.

George Washington had it read aloud to his troops on the eve of the battle of Trenton. At the time, his army was on the verge of defeat, and Washington wrote to a relative, “I think the game is pretty nearly up.”

But with inspiration from Paine, Washington and his troops crossed the Delaware River by boat in the dead of winter and defeated the British in the Battle of Trenton. This proved to be an historic turning point in the Revolutionary War.

We are again at a potential historic turning point, and Thomas Paine’s words apply as much today as they did in 1776. These are the times that try men’s souls.

We’re losing our rights. Our rights to be free from coercion and free to choose as long as we’re not harming anyone or your right to decide what you think is best for you and your family instead of having big, all-knowing government decide for you.

The people responsible for this have been hard at work for years to undermine your freedom to choose. They think they’ve won! They think things have gone so far we can’t turn back. After all, over half our population pays no income tax and has every incentive to vote themselves the wealth of the other half.

But I’ve got a message for our opponents. We haven’t pushed off from shore yet to begin our crossing of the Potomac River to take on big government. In fact, we haven’t even finished loading the boat!!

Now . . . as we prepare, we have to keep in mind what really unites us. It’s the core founding principle stated in the Declaration of Independence: “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.”

Most of our current debates over the size and role of government are really about whether this principle still applies. And when we fight for this principle, we are fighting for fundamental human rights and the dignity of all men and women.

So, what do these words from the Declaration of Independence really mean?

- First, that we have rights inherent in our nature as human beings that can't be taken away.
- Second, that we all have the same inherent rights regardless of our station in life.
- And third, that our rights include the right to liberty.

Our founding fathers also called these ideas self-evident truths, meaning they are undeniable. Why? Because they derive from the idea that we own ourselves.

Now . . . think about it for a minute. If you don't own yourself, who does?

- Does a king or master race own you?
- Does the government own you?
- Does everyone own everyone else?

That's right, we own ourselves. And because we own ourselves, we have the right to be left alone as long as we honor the equal right of others to be left alone. In other words, we have the right to be free from coercion and to be free to choose as long as we don't harm others. This is the essence of liberty.

The problem is that many people want the government to make more decisions for us, and they are willing to abandon the self-evident truths in the Declaration of Independence to achieve that.

Some explicitly attack the idea that we have inherent rights that can't be taken away. For example, Cass Sunstein, President Obama's top regulatory advisor, wrote a book in which he argues that all rights are a grant from the State. In other words, the government loans us rights, and it can take them away at any time.

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Others acknowledge we have inherent rights, but they have abandoned the idea that we are all equal and have the same inherent rights.

This has happened with unprecedented efforts to redistribute wealth in this country. When you are forced to give your earnings to another person, whether through taxes or government mandates, after a certain point, you are in effect the servant of the other person.

It has also happened with free speech, where some are trying to muzzle opinions they don't like. They've done this with campus speech codes and recent efforts to reinstate the so-called "fairness doctrine" designed to squelch conservative talk radio. They've also done it by claiming corporations don't have free speech rights under the First Amendment.

In the Citizens United case decided by the Supreme Court three months ago, the government's lawyer claimed the government has the power to ban movies, YouTube

videos and even books if they are published by a corporation and urge people to vote for or against a candidate.

Fortunately, the Supreme Court sided with free speech, but the 5 to 4 vote was close. If the vote had gone the other way, it would have established a dangerous precedent. After all, our major media companies, like the New York Times and CBS, are all corporations. What would prevent Congress from censoring editorials that criticize political candidates?

We're told not to worry. If Congress does that, the Supreme Court will exempt media companies based on the right to a free press. I can't wait to see who's on the list of protected media companies. Keep in mind, though, that just last October, the White House said Fox News isn't a real news organization and tried to ban it from the White House network pool.

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We have now reached the point where even the fundamental principle of self-ownership is under attack. This is the core issue in whether the federal government can require you to purchase health insurance. However you come out on that issue, one thing is clear. There is a difference between saying the federal government can regulate economic activity you choose to engage in and saying it can force you to buy goods or services. If the federal government can do that, there is no real limit to its power. And the principle of self-ownership that underlies our rights goes out the door.

So, you see, we're in a battle over whether the self-evident truths in the Declaration of Independence still apply or whether we still have equal inherent rights.

What's really at stake in this battle is the freedom to choose that is at the core of our liberty. Your freedom to choose, not the government's!!

Let me ask you some basic questions about your freedom to choose:

- Do you want a choice in whether to give others some of what you earn?
- Do you want the freedom to choose your own doctor? Your medical care? Whether to purchase health insurance?
- Okay now, how about the freedom to choose what benefits to offer your employees and what to charge your customers?
- Do you want a say in whether the government can take your home and give it to a private developer?
- Finally, do you want the freedom to choose what political speech you read and hear instead of having that speech filtered by the government?

Yes, we want the freedom to choose!! And I believe most Americans would feel the same way if they knew what's at stake. These are our decisions, not those of an elite in Washington. We didn't get rid of a king to have him replaced by Congressional Barons!!

Reclaiming decision-making from Washington isn't just about us, it's about the health and prosperity of our country. Here's what it will do:

- Reduce the debilitating dependency that people have as a result of government redistribution of wealth.
- Eliminate the corruption and partisanship that occur when government makes decisions for us.
- Eliminate the need for many government bureaucracies and dramatically reduce government spending and debt.
- Unleash innovation and enable entrepreneurs to create new businesses and jobs and compete in world markets.

And, most importantly, reclaiming decision-making will enable people from all walks of life to pursue the American dream.

Forty-six years ago, Ronald Reagan spoke about this battle for freedom when he said:

“You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We can preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth, or we can sentence them to take the first step into a thousand years of darkness. If we fail, at least let our children and our children's children say of us we justified our brief moment here. We did all that could be done.”

The question tonight is whether we will do all that can be done.

Thomas Paine and our founding fathers stood up to tyranny. And so did the other patriots who came before us and gave their lives so we could live free. Now it is our turn to stand up.

Yes, these are the times that try men's souls. But we have a powerful idea on our side – the idea of freedom. This powerful idea has defeated tyrants for over two hundred years. And it was the basis for the movements that abolished slavery, established women's rights, and fought racial discrimination.

So as we cross the Potomac together to take on big government in Washington, D.C, let's remember what this is all about. It's about human rights – our rights. And it's about one of the most important rights we have – the right to be free to choose!!

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