

To the Selectmen of *Seabrook Town*  
(*now Effingham*)  
COLONY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.  
In COMMITTEE of SAFETY,

April 12th, 1776.

**I**N Order to carry the underwritten RESOLVE of the Hon'ble Continental CONGRESS into Execution, You are requested to desire all Males above Twenty One Years of Age (Lunaticks, Idiots, and Negroes excepted) to sign to the DECLARATION on this Paper ; and when so done, to make Return hereof, together with the Name or Names of all who shall refuse to sign the same, to the GENERAL-ASSEMBLY, or Committee of Safety of this Colony.

*M. Weare, Chairman.*

In CONGRESS, March 14th, 1776.

*Resolved,* **T**HAT it be recommended to the several Assemblies, Conventions, and Councils, or Committees of Safety of the United Colonies, *immediately* to cause all Persons to be *disarmed*, within their Respective Colonies, who are *notoriously* disaffected to the Cause of AMERICA, Or who have not associated; and refuse to associate, to defend by *ARMS*, the United Colonies, against the Hostile Attempts of the British Fleets and Armies.

(COPY)

*Extract from the Minutes.*

Charles Thompson, Sec'y.

**I**N Consequence of the above Resolution, of the Hon. Continental CONGRESS, and to shew our Determination in joining our American Brethren, in defending the Lives, Liberties, and Properties of the Inhabitants of the *UNITED COLONIES* :

**WE** the *Subscribers*, do hereby solemnly engage, and promise, that we will, to the utmost of our Power, at the Risque of our Lives and Fortunes, with *ARMS*, oppose the Hostile Proceedings of the British Fleets, and Armies, *against the United American COLONIES*.

## Transcript

To the Selectmen of Leavits Town (now Effingham) [handwritten marginal note]

Colony of New Hampshire.  
In Committee of Safety,  
April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1776.

In Order to carry the underwritten Resolve of the Hon'ble Continental Congress into Execution, You are requested to desire all Males above Twenty One Years of Age (Lunaticks, Idiots, and Negroes excepted) to sign the Declaration on this Paper; and when so done, to make Return hereof, together with the Name or Names of all who shall refuse to sign the same, to the General-Assembly, or Committee of Safety of this Colony.

M. Weare, Chairman.

### In Congress, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1776.

Resolved, That it be recommended to the several Assemblies, Conventions, and Councils, or Committees of Safety of the United Colonies, immediately to cause all Persons to be disarmed, within their Respective Colonies, who are notoriously disaffected to the Cause of America, Or who have not associated; and refuse to associate, to defend by Arms, the United Colonies, against the Hostile Attempts of the British Fleets and Armies.

(copy)

Extract from the Minutes.

Charles Thompson, Sec'ry.

In Consequence of the above Resolution, of the Hon. Continental Congress, and to shew our Determination in joining our American Brethren, in defending the Lives, Liberties, and Properties of the Inhabitants of the United Colonies:

We the Subscribers, do hereby solemnly engage, and promise, that we will, to the utmost of our Power, at the Risque of our Lives and Fortunes, with Arms, oppose the Hostile Proceedings of the British Fleets, and Armies, against the United American Colonies.

## Questions

### Content

Who wrote the document?

What is its purpose?

What are the reasons that this document has been sent?

Who are the intended recipients of the document?

What do you think will be the effects of this document?

### Form

What differences in style can you identify in comparing this document with a modern document (e.g., typography, punctuation, spelling)?

## Questions with Answers

### Content

#### Who wrote the document?

Often referred to as the “Association Test,” the document was written by the New Hampshire Committee of Safety, under the chairmanship of Meshech Weare (later to become the first constitutional “president”, i.e., governor, of the state). The Committee consisted of several leading legislators chosen to act when the legislative body was not in session. Internally, the document refers to a resolution passed by the Continental Congress and sent to the Committee as minutes of the proceedings of the Congress. The minutes are signed by the secretary, Charles Thompson.

#### What is the document’s purpose?

The document calls for two actions: the signatures of every adult male willing to take arms against the British *and* the names of all those who refuse to sign. Note the exclusion, not only of “Lunaticks, Idiots, and Negroes,” but also of women. (As late as 1790, New Hampshire was home to 157 slaves.)

#### What are the reasons that this document has been sent?

The document is dated April 12, 1776, almost a year to the day after “the shot heard round the world” was fired at the battle at Concord and Lexington, marking the beginning of the Revolutionary War. Note that the Committee and the Congress still refer to themselves as *colonists*. It would take a few more months before the colonies would officially declare their independence from Great Britain.

#### Who are the intended recipients of the document?

Although the document is addressed to the selectmen of Effingham (formerly known as Leavittstown), the handwritten notation serves merely to identify the recipients of this particular copy (from the **State of New Hampshire Division of Archives and Records Management**); the requirement undoubtedly was intended for residents in all New Hampshire towns, and copies would have been addressed to selectmen in other towns as well.

#### What do you think will be the effects of this document?

Many colonists were opposed to taking up arms against Great Britain, not to mention declaring independence from their country—including some who would otherwise agree that Americans had been treated shabbily by recent British laws. Many were undoubtedly non-committal—wishing simply to be left alone to live their private lives. This document, however, forces people to declare themselves. Reluctant signers ran a risk of being required to take arms—and perhaps be killed—for a cause they didn’t wholly support. Those who refused to sign, on the other hand, ran the risk of being shunned by their neighbors and even being driven from their homes by patriot activists. Certainly, there were acts of violence committed against Tories, though New Hampshire stands with Georgia as one of two colonies that never resorted to hanging.

Records indicate that more than 90% of New Hampshire's men signed the resolution. Even so, not all the non-signers were Tories. Some men of conscience felt they could not bear arms against England, but agreed to abide by the new laws and new government and not to take up arms against fellow Americans. This is true, for example, of Mark Hunking Wentworth, the father of John Wentworth, the last Royal Governor.

## Form

**What differences in style can you identify in comparing this document with a modern document (e.g., typography, punctuation, spelling)?**

### Spelling

*risque* is *risk*

*lunaticks* is *lunatics*

*shew* is *show*

*hon'ble* is *honorable*

*sec'ry* is *secretary*

### Punctuation

18<sup>th</sup>-century custom included the use of more commas to break up phrases than is our custom today. Also, periods marked the ends of title lines as well as the ends of sentences.

### Typography

All nouns were capitalized (as is the German custom today), and words or phrases could be placed entirely in upper case or in italics for the sake of emphasis.

In the 1700s, the letter "s" took three different forms. The capital letter "S" was in use as it is today; the lower-case "s" appeared where the letter occurred at the end of a word. In other contexts, the letter "s" looks to us more like the letter "f," but with only a partial dash through the middle. This letter form went out of style around 1820.

Ligatures (also called logotypes) were also more common. A ligature binds two characters together in a single type. In this document, for example, ligatures for "ct" are noticeable in several words.



Respective