



*THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT ON THE FOURTH OF JULY 2008*  
*INDEPENDENCE AS THE FOUNDATION*  
*OF SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY*

On this Fourth of July – the 232<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of America's declaration of our independence – we remember that independence is and always will be the foundation of sovereignty and self-sufficiency.

The ideals of independence, sovereignty and self-sufficiency have always been precious to Navajos. As a people, we never hesitate to stand up for our inherent right to be free and independent. Even today, our young men and women in uniform around the world once again find themselves in harm's way. It is for us at home for whom they put their lives on the line to protect and preserve our Navajo way of life, and the freedoms we enjoy and cherish as a country – the right to speak freely, the right to worship and pray freely, the right to due process, and the right to live under the rule of law freely.

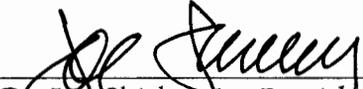
Although this is a day of jubilation and celebration, we cannot think of the Fourth of July without remembering our servicemen and servicewomen, our veterans and warriors of today and the past who made this day possible. They remain in our prayers and our thoughts throughout the land.

On June 7, 1776, the Continental Congress listened as Richard Henry Lee of Virginia read his resolution to first declare national independence. Thomas Jefferson took these thoughts, and from June 11 to June 28 drafted what was to become the Declaration of Independence, penning the most cherished ideals of the American people that still reverberate today.

The philosophy and ideals contained in the Declaration were not new at the time. Jefferson summarized what was already held deeply, and listed the grievances against King George in order to justify to the world why it was necessary to change the form of government this new country was living – enduring – under, to make a better life for their people.

On July 4, 1776, after weeks of deliberation throughout a hot summer, the Second Continental Congress adopted the document that became known as the Declaration of Independence. John Hancock, as the elected President of Congress, was the only person to sign the Declaration of Independence on July 4<sup>th</sup>. The remaining 55 delegates signed on August 2.

The Fourth of July has always been a day of fun, jubilation, family and community gatherings and, on Navajoland, rodeo. This year, as we celebrate, let us remember with thanks that the United States remains the freest country in the world.

  
Dr. Joe Shirley, Jr., *President*  
**THE NAVAJO NATION**