



Florida Veterans for Common Sense, Inc.
P.O. Box 2311, Sarasota, FL 34230
contact@flvcs.us
www.flvcs.us

July 31, 2024

Margaret Downey, President
Thomas Paine Memorial Association
PO Box 448
Madison, WI 53701-0448

Dear Ms. Downey,

Florida Veterans for Common Sense Inc. supports a Paine Monument. We are a veterans organization committed to our fellow veterans, democracy and combating climate change that we view as a national security issue.

From our name, it's clear that we view ourselves as following the legacy of "The Founding Father" Thomas Paine.

In our view, Paine is "The Founding Father" because his political pamphlet, *Common Sense*, was the intellectual fount that turned the rebellion against the king into a revolution for independence. This quote is often attributed to John Adams, "Without the pen of Paine, Washington would have wielded his sword in vain." Although it's more likely that diplomat and poet Joel Barlow said it, we know how Adams felt. He once said to Jefferson, "History is to ascribe the American Revolution to Thomas Paine."

In any event, we know Washington agreed with the sentiment. He wrote soon after *Common Sense* was published that Paine's "sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning" would persuade most colonists of the "propriety of separation." A few months later, he wrote again that he judged that Paine's pamphlet was "working a powerful change in the minds of men."

Not only did Paine stir Americans to revolution, he helped save the Continental Army. On the desperate retreat from New York, the army faced disintegration. General Washington asked Paine to write something to lift morale.

By the light of a campfire, Paine wrote *Crisis Paper Number One*, which begins with these immortal lines, "These are times that try men's souls..." Washington ordered it read to the troops. Morale soared and the army crossed the Delaware to win the Battle of Trenton that turned the tide.

Paine was a Revolutionary War veteran who was willing to sacrifice his all for his country. Of course, that does not entitle him to be among the pantheon of Founding Americans. He deserves a monument because he visualized the promise of America. He believed, "We have it in our power to begin the world over again."

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Paine stood tall for democracy, freedom, free thought, justice, natural rights, equality, popular sovereignty, and religious freedom. Paine never shied from speaking out against injustice and advocating for a better America. As one of the first abolitionists he cried out against slavery while championing the rights of women and working men. He gave us the idea of social security for the elderly and a nest egg for young people to begin their adult life. He was the first to use the term The United States.

In short, Paine was an advocate for the American dream. On some controversial topics, other founders agreed with him, but choose to remain silent. Benjamin Franklin advised Paine not to publish *The Age of Reason*. Jefferson refused to have his correspondence with Paine published. Paine had the courage to speak up.

Paine stands alone as The Founder with who advanced the promise of America even when some aspects of his ideas were considered radical and dangerous. Now, many of those same ideas are considered conventional wisdom.

A monument to The Founder is long overdue so the world can celebrate his integrity and courage to advance America's and mankind's possibilities.

Sincerely,

Gene Jones

Gene Jones (Jul 31, 2024 16:41 MDT)

Gene Jones,
President Florida Veterans for Common Sense

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