

# Lessons About Government Transparency from Our Founding Fathers

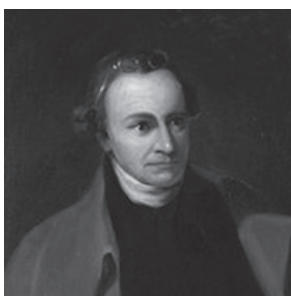
June 30, 2015

Before the colonies declared independence from Britain, most didn't realize how or why the British government was taxing them. There was no transparency or accountability, and it led to unrest.

Today, we find ourselves in a similar position. The federal government is hiding trillions of dollars off their balance sheets, keeping us in the dark when it comes to our nation's true debt.

The federal government reports our national debt as \$18 trillion. However, our true national debt is over \$80 trillion. This massive difference is a result of outdated accounting methods that do not require all debts to be reported on the government's balance sheet. Those debts include Social Security and Medicare benefits promised to seniors.

Truthful financial reporting is essential to government accountability. As the July 4th holiday approaches, we must remember the values and messages our country is based on. Here are six messages about government transparency and accountability from our founding fathers that the federal government should acknowledge today.



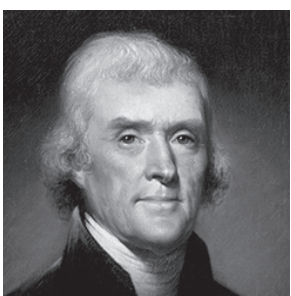
“It is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth -- and listen to the song of that siren, till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those, who having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it.”

- Patrick Henry, “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech



“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...”

- Declaration of Independence



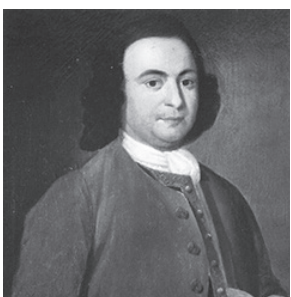
“the principle of spending money to be paid by posterity, under the name of funding, is but swindling futurity on a large scale.”

- Thomas Jefferson, “Letter to John Taylor”



“Perhaps no restraints are more forcible, than such as arise from responsibility to some superior power. — Hence it is that the true policy of a republican government is, to frame it in such manner, that all persons who are concerned in the government, are made accountable to some superior for their conduct in office. — This responsibility should ultimately rest with the People.”

- Antifederalist Papers, “Brutus,” #16



“That all power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people... That elections of members to serve as representatives of the people, in assembly ought to be free; and that all men, having sufficient evidence of permanent common interest with, and attachment to, the community, have the right of suffrage and cannot be taxed or deprived of their property for public uses without their own consent or that of their representatives so elected, nor bound by any law to which they have not, in like manner, assembled for the public good.”

- George Mason, Virginia Declaration of Rights



“No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time.”

- United States Constitution, Article 1, Section 9, Clause 7



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