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 lead 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 This massive difference is a result of outdated accounting methods that do not require all debts to be reported on the government's balance sheet.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.

- Patrick Henry, "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech

- Declaration of Independence

- Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to John Taylor"

- Antifederalist Papers, "Brutus," #16

- George Mason, Virginia Declaration of Rights

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