

Thomas Paine Day Sponsor Testimony

Chair Brenner, Vice-Chair Hayes, Ranking Member Fedor, and committee members, thank you for letting me speak on HR 269, establishing Thomas Paine Day here in Ohio.

John Adams once said, "Without the pen of [Thomas Paine], the sword of Washington would have been raised in vain."

Paine came to America in 1774 at the request of Benjamin Franklin and went on to author a number of works that ultimately helped ignite the spark of rebellion in America.

In *Common Sense*, he urged everyday Americans to declare independence from Britain. The work was widely distributed from street corners to local taverns. It was read or heard by virtually every rebel—George Washington commanded it be read to all of his troops—and is still one of the best-selling works in American history. To put it in perspective, a higher percentage of Americans read *Common Sense* than will watch the Super Bowl this year.

In addition to his writing, he also advocated against slavery, pushed for universal human rights, and called for social security for the poor and elderly.

Thomas Paine Day on January 29, his birthday, would allow Ohioans to celebrate his contributions to our nation. It would also give teachers the opportunity to focus on some of the most influential texts in American history—texts that inspired a nation to break free from tyranny and begin a bold new experiment in freedom and self-governance. Establishing this day would encourage Ohio students to further explore our nation's founding documents and come to value the power of writing, critical thinking, and the establishment of American democracy.

Paine is already commemorated around the world. His monument in New York sits across from the Thomas Paine National Historical Association, whose Center for Citizenship works to encourage dialogue on a range of issues. There are also memorials of him in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Britain and France.

He was the first to propose the idea of "the United States of America." His impact on American society—and American thought—ought to be remembered. Paine's writing, especially in *Common Sense*, *The Age of Reason*, and *The Rights of Man*, challenged the status quo and pushed for social, economic and political change both in America and throughout the West.

Thomas Paine inspired people to think and act differently. In many ways, he was the most influential of our nation's founders. His works fostered a sense of national unity and paved the way for American independence. We should celebrate his tremendous achievements and declare January 29 Thomas Paine Day. Thank you.