

Reasons for Independence

1. As the 13 colonies grew and prospered, conflicts with England began to develop. One of the main disagreements was in the area of government. The English Parliament believed that it had the legal right to govern the colonies. The colonies believed that their local assemblies should have this authority. After all, the colonies were very different from England and laws were needed that would address their unique needs. In addition, the Parliament believed that it had the right to tax the colonists and it began to pass new tax laws. A tax is money that citizens are required to pay their government. This made the colonists very angry because they had no say in the making of English laws. They had no representatives in the Parliament to share their views, wants, or needs.
2. King George III and the English lawmakers did not listen. They were determined to raise money for England by taxing the colonies. Several new tax laws were passed and enforced in the colonies. One of these new laws required the colonists to pay a tax to get married, buy land, or print a newspaper. Another forced colonists to pay a tax when they bought things like paint, paper, glass, or tea from England. The king also threatened to punish colonists in English courts if they did not pay the taxes.
3. Virginia led the colonies in speaking out against these unfair actions. The House of Burgesses declared that the Virginia Assembly was the only lawmaking body with the authority to tax Virginians. They also stated that colonial courts would decide when laws had been broken, not courts in England.
4. The problems between England and the colonies continued to grow, and the leaders of Virginia began to fear for the safety of their citizens. They asked the other colonies to choose some men to meet and talk about the growing threat. In 1774 representatives from all 13 colonies met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This important meeting was known as the Continental Congress. The Congress asked the king to repeal all of the unfair laws and give the colonists the rights and freedoms of English citizens. King George did not respond and the colonists began to talk of war.