

SOL 4.6b identify the ideas of George Mason, as expressed in the Virginia Declaration of Rights, and Thomas Jefferson, as expressed in the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom

### **The Role of Virginia in the Establishment of the New Nation:**

#### *The Virginia Declaration of Rights & the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom*

1. The United States Constitution set up a government where the people were given the power to make laws and elect those who would represent them. They were also given certain freedoms. These freedoms were located in a section of the U.S. Constitution known as the Bill of Rights. Many of the ideas found in the Bill of Rights originated from two earlier Virginia documents: the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom.
2. The Virginia Declaration of Rights was written by George Mason in 1776. It was a part of the constitution written for the new state of Virginia. This document stated that all Virginians had certain rights that could not be taken away. Freedom of religion and freedom of the press were two of the rights listed in this paper. The writers of the U.S. Constitution believed that all Americans should have those same rights and voted to add them to the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution.
3. Another Virginia document was also used in the writing of the U.S. Constitution. This document, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, was written by Thomas Jefferson. It stated that all people should be free to worship as they please. This meant that no one could be punished or have their rights taken away because of their religious beliefs. This document was the basis for the First Amendment to the Constitution, which protects freedom of religion.
4. Ideas expressed in the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom served as models for the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States of America.