

The Declaration of Independence

Once fighting began between the colonists and the British, Virginia's Congress met to talk about **independence**, the freedom to govern themselves. They decided to ask **Thomas Jefferson** to write the **Declaration of Independence**, which would explain why the colonists wanted independence from Great Britain.

The Declaration of Independence was an important document written to King George III and British Parliament which stated that the authority, or power, to govern belongs to the people, not to kings, and that all people are created equal and have rights to **life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness**.

When Thomas Jefferson finished the Declaration of Independence, the Congress adopted it on **July 4, 1776**. Since it was adopted on the 4th of July, Americans consider this date our country's birthday.