



Revolutionary Times



Containing the Latest News from the Sons of the American Revolution

Virginia Declaration of Rights

After the members of the Fifth Virginia Convention voted in favor of preparing a new plan of government, the Virginia Declaration of Rights was drafted by George Mason.

Mason's initial draft contained ten paragraphs that outlined rights.

These included the ability to confront one's accusers in court, to present evidence in court, protection from self-incrimination, the right to a speedy trial, the right to a trial by jury, and the extension of religious tolerance.

The final version of the Virginia Declaration of Rights consisted of sixteen sections.

The Virginia Declaration of Rights was unanimously adopted by the Virginia Convention of Delegates, on June 12, 1776.

The same Convention also framed and adopted the Virginia Constitution

The Virginia Declaration of Rights was an influential document and a forerunner for many documents that followed.

This declaration was the first state declaration establishing the fundamental human liberties that government was created to protect.



It was widely read by political leaders on both sides of the Atlantic.

Thomas Jefferson drew upon it when writing the Declaration of Independence and James Madison expanded on Mason's ideas of guaranteed rights when he wrote the Bill of Rights to the US Constitution.

The declaration was particularly influential on later state constitutions because it represented the first protection of individual human rights under state constitutions of the American revolutionary period.

In language echoed later in the Declaration of Independence (that was drafted the next month by Thomas Jefferson).

Section 1 of the Virginia Declaration proclaimed that all men "are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights," including "the enjoyment of life and liberty" and property and that of "pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety."

Much of the rest of the Declaration of Rights outlined rights similar to those later incorporated into the US Bill of Rights.

This broadsheet is dedicated to the 250th Anniversary Celebration of the Declaration of Independence for more information visit the National Society Sons of the American Revolution website at: www.sar.org

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