Third Grade

DISCOVER AMERICA

Teacher Guide



Foundations of Religious Liberty: Understanding Faith, Freedom, and the Constitution

LITTLEPATRIOTS

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Key Themes

- The Legacy of Religious Freedom
- Religious Freedom vs. Religious Uniformity
- What is "Separation of Church and State"?
- Thomas Jefferson's Role in Religious Liberty



Core Values

- Community
- Life
- Faith
- Liberty

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- Explain what the Pledge of Allegiance is and describe how it shows respect for the United States.
- Define key vocabulary words such as honor, opportunity, faith, unity, motto, and worship using examples.
- Explain what religious freedom means and why it is important in the United States.
- Recognize that religious freedom allows people to practice their beliefs in different ways without government control.
- Identify how the Founding Fathers protected religious freedom through documents like the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Key Terms

01 **Declaration of Independence:** an important document that declared the colonists' independence in 1776.

02 **faith:** belief in someone or something even when it can't be seen.

03 **First Amendment:** part of the United States Constitution which guarantees that the government cannot create an official religion or stop people from practicing their faith.

04 **Founding Fathers:** the leaders who helped create the United States of America.

05 **government:** a system of rules and leaders that help keep people safe and make sure everyone is treated fairly.

06 **honor:** to show great respect for something.

07 **motto:** a short phrase or saying that represents an important belief or value.

08 **natural rights:** special freedoms that belong to you just because you are a human being.

09 **opportunity:** having the chance to do something or achieve something.

10 **religious freedom:** the freedom, or right, to practice one's faith in their own way.

11 **unity:** coming together as one, despite our differences.

12 **worship:** practicing your faith, often by praying, singing, or attending a religious service.

Introduction

TELL Students

Hello, little patriots! Today, we are going to start by talking about the Pledge of Allegiance. When we say the Pledge, we stand tall, place our right hand over our heart, and look at the flag to show respect for our country. **Honor** means showing deep respect for something. We honor our country because it gives us freedom, safety, and the opportunity to grow. **Opportunity** means having the chance to do something, like learning new things, trying different activities, and becoming the best version of ourselves. In our country, we have many opportunities to grow and make our dreams come true.

ASK Students

What opportunities are you most grateful for? [Create a list on the board of the many opportunities students have in our country. Guide students in recognizing and reflecting on the wide range of possibilities available to them and how these opportunities can help them grow, learn, and pursue their goals.]

TELL Students

Now, let's look at these coins. [If possible, give groups of students American coins to review. If coins are not available, printed cut-outs of coins will suffice.] Ask students: What is written on the coins? Did you know that the motto "In God We Trust" is on our money? A **motto** is a short phrase or saying that represents an important belief or value. This motto reminds us that our country was founded with faith in mind. When we say the Pledge of Allegiance and see the motto on our money, we are reminded that our country was built on faith and freedom. **Faith** is a belief in someone or something, even if it can't be seen or touched. For example, believing in God or following a certain religion is a way to practice faith. When you do these things, you are believing in something even though you may not be able to physically see it. **[Reference Praying Image]** Let's say the Pledge and think about the words in it that remind us that our country was founded on faith. [Recite the Pledge of Allegiance with the class.]

ASK Students

What does it mean when we say we are "One Nation Under God"?

Introduction

TELL Students 📷🔑
"One Nation Under God" means that our country is united under the protection and guidance of God. **Unity** is the idea of coming together as one, even if we are different in many ways—whether it's how we look, speak, or what we believe. Just like a family or a group of friends working together toward a common goal, our unity helps us support one another and build a better world. **[Reference Unity Image]** As we honor our country by saying the Pledge, we also honor the unity that holds us together. Together, as one, we can work to make our country a better place.

ASK Students
Did you know that the words "under God" were added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954 when Dwight D. Eisenhower was president? The change was made to emphasize that the United States believed in God, while communist countries were atheist.

TELL Students 📷🔑
This was also done to remind us that our country is built on faith and freedom. Faith and religious freedom are at the heart of who we are as Americans. **[Reference American Flag]** These two ideas are different, but they are closely connected. **Religious freedom** means that everyone has the right to practice their faith in their own way. Religious freedom is important because it gives people the right to fully express and practice their beliefs in a way that is meaningful to them, without being afraid or told what to do.

ASK Students
Why is religious freedom important for everyone in our country? How does it help people express and practice what they believe?

TELL Students 📷🔑
Imagine believing in something but not being able to talk about it with anyone. You would still believe in your heart, but it would be hard to practice your faith. Unfortunately, in some countries, people are not allowed to talk about or practice their beliefs openly. But in the United States, we have the freedom to express our beliefs. This freedom, called freedom of speech, is one of our natural rights.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

Remember from our earlier lessons that **natural rights** are special freedoms that everyone is born with simply because they are human. Our **Declaration of Independence**, which declared that the colonists were no longer controlled by Great Britain, says that every person has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. **[Reference Declaration of Independence Image]** The **Founding Fathers**—like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson—are the leaders who helped create the United States of America, and they believed that these rights (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) came from God. **[Reference Washington and Jefferson Images]** Religious freedom is an important natural right, and it makes our country special.

ASK Students

Why do you think the Founding Fathers thought religious freedom was so important? [Give students three minutes to discuss with their neighbor and then discuss as a class.]

TELL Students

Religious freedom is one of the most important natural rights we have in our country. Remember, natural rights are special freedoms that come from God and cannot be taken away or given away by anyone. These rights belong to every person simply because they are human. They include the right to speak freely, the right to be free to make choices for ourselves, and the right to follow our faith. Religious freedom means we have the freedom to worship in the way we choose. **Worship** means practicing your faith, often by praying, singing, or attending a religious service. **[Reference Worship Image]** No one can tell us what to believe or how to practice our faith because religious freedom is a natural right.

ASK Students

How does religious freedom help make America different from other countries? Who should protect our natural rights?

TELL Students

It's important for the government to protect our rights, such as religious freedom, because it ensures that everyone can live freely and fairly. So, what exactly is a government?

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

A **government** is a system of rules and leaders who help keep people safe and ensure everyone is treated fairly. **[Reference Government Image]** The government makes decisions about what we can do without being punished, and decides what happens when rules are broken. It also helps protect our rights, like the right to practice our faith freely, and works to keep the country fair and safe for everyone.

ASK Students

Why do you think the Founding Fathers believed that faith and religious freedom were so important when creating the United States? How do you think these beliefs helped shape the country?

TELL Students

Religious freedom is often called "America's first freedom." It was one of the most important rights the Founding Fathers wanted to protect. It means people have the right to openly follow their faith without anyone telling them what to believe. This freedom also supports all the other freedoms in America because when people can choose their beliefs, they are also free to speak, act, and live the way that feels right to them. But many people misunderstand religious freedom. President Thomas Jefferson once described a "wall" of separation between church and state. Today, that phrase is often misunderstood, but it's important for us to understand what he meant. As you watch today's Star Spangled Adventures cartoon, listen for this phrase and see what you can learn!

WATCH ▶

Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon
Ep. 40: Thomas Jefferson/Religious Liberty



Lesson

TELL Students

Now, let's talk about what we saw in the cartoon today! When the cartoon starts, we see some leaders of the Danbury Baptist church. One of the leaders, called an elder, is very worried after overhearing that "the governor's office said that they had to close the church if they won't use the practices of the Congregationalists."

ASK Students

What do you think this means?

TELL Students

That's right! The Danbury Baptist Church represents one group of people with their own religious beliefs. While their beliefs may be similar to those of the Congregationalist Church, the Danbury Baptists do not want to be required to support a different church—they want the freedom to support their own church. The Danbury elder in the cartoon is explaining that the governor's office was telling churches they could be forced to close if they did not support the Congregationalist Church. This is not an example of religious freedom or freedom of religion. Freedom of religion means people can choose what they believe and how they worship without the government forcing them to support a different church. When a government official, like a governor, requires one church to support another or does not allow them to freely practice at a different church, they are taking away that important freedom.

ASK Students

Why is it important that people are allowed to choose their own church or beliefs without the government telling them what to do?

TELL Students

In the cartoon, we see the elders continuing their conversation as they enjoy some delicious-looking muffins! As they talk, we hear one elder explain that everyone in the state of Connecticut is required to pay money each year to the Congregationalist church. Then, the other elder says, "Baptist churches like us get no support from the government. And, that's how it should be. The U.S. Constitution makes that clear. But the state is acting like there is a state religion."

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

The Founding Fathers believed that religious freedom would help bring peace and unity to the country. **[Reference Founding Fathers Image]** They knew that if the government made everyone follow the same religion, it could cause fights and problems; that is exactly what happened in Europe while America was still colonies of Great Britain. Instead, the Founding Fathers thought real unity could happen when people are free to worship in a way that feels right to them and live according to their beliefs, while also respecting the beliefs of others.

ASK Students

Do you think the state of Connecticut, by making everyone support the Congregationalist church, is upholding the United States Constitution?

TELL Students

Let's learn more about what the United States Constitution says about religious freedom. To protect religious freedom, the Founding Fathers included the First Amendment in the United States Constitution—the most important law in our country. **[Reference United States Constitution Image]** The **First Amendment** is part of the United States Constitution and guarantees that the government cannot create an official religion or stop people from practicing their faith. This means everyone has the freedom to worship in their own way—whether that's praying, attending a religious service, or reading religious texts. This freedom helps ensure that people can follow their beliefs without pressure or control from the government.

ASK Students

What do the Danbury Baptists decide to do next?

TELL Students

That's right! The Danbury Baptists decided to write a letter to President Thomas Jefferson. Remember that Thomas Jefferson was the main author of the Declaration of Independence. As a Founding Father, he believed that we have natural rights that no government can take away. In the cartoon, we hear him discussing the letter from the Danbury Baptists with James Madison, another important Founding Father.**[Reference James Madison Image]** Madison talks about how the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments of the Constitution, protects individual rights.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)
Remember, the famous words Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration? Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are rights that come from God. That means no one, including the government, can take them away.

ASK Students
What is the Bill of Rights? Who does it protect?

TELL Students 📷
That is right! The Bill of Rights protects all of us as long as we continue to uphold the United States Constitution! As President Jefferson and James Madison continue their discussion, Madison reminds President Jefferson of the Virginia Statute that he wrote when he was a member of the Virginia House of Delegates. **[Reference Virginia Image]** The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom is a very important law passed in 1786 that said everyone has the right to believe what they want, and the government cannot force them to believe anything else. It said that you should be able to pick your own beliefs—your mind is free, and no one, not even the government, can tell you what to believe about God or religion. The Virginia Statute says you should be able to talk about your beliefs without being punished or treated unfairly. Whether you are Christian, Jewish, or have no religion at all, this law protects your right to choose your beliefs. Thomas Jefferson wrote it because he believed that forcing someone to pray is wrong, and it was so important that it helped inspire the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion for the whole country.

ASK Students
Who wrote the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom?

TELL Students
We also hear Liberty the Eagle say that, "All of the Founders knew that faith was very important to the people of America." This leads to a point that is important to the Founders' understanding of religious freedom: "freedom of religion" doesn't mean "freedom from religion." This means the government isn't supposed to remove religion from people's lives or completely remove religion from public issues—it just means that the government does not get to tell people how to worship, and no church gets to control the government.

Lesson

ASK Students
What do we hear Liberty the Eagle talk about next in the cartoon?

TELL Students 📷
That is right! Liberty the Eagle explains the "wall" of separation between church and state that President Jefferson discussed in his letter to the Danbury Baptists. **[Reference Wall of Separation Image]** This is a very commonly misunderstood phrase. Jefferson meant that the state (or government) is in charge of government matters, and the church is in charge of church matters. He did not mean that faith has no place in public life. Remember earlier we talked about how hard it would be to have faith and not be able to talk about it. Jefferson thought that people should be free to talk about their faith and religion, regardless of what faith or religion they practiced. As a Founding Father, he knew faith was important to our country. But he used this phrase to help us understand that the government should not be able to create a national church that everyone must attend or support. The government can't make one religion for everyone.

ASK Students
Did President Jefferson's letter change the state of Connecticut's mind about religious freedom?

TELL Students
That is right! In the cartoon, we learn that the letter did not change the state's mind. But Liberty the Eagle tells us that, "Connecticut did revise their state rules to allow for freedom of religion and to not have a state-sponsored church, but it took 18 years for that to happen." That is a long time! Today, because of the Founding Fathers and the protections they put in the United States Constitution, we have freedom of religion. Religious freedom is one of the most important values in our country today. It is what allows everyone to worship in their own way. That's why the phrase "One Nation Under God" is so important—it reminds us that, no matter where we come from or what we believe, we are all part of the same united country.

Multiple Choice Quiz

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Directions: Read each question and answer set carefully. Circle the correct answer.

1. What does the Pledge of Allegiance show respect for?
    a. Friendship
    b. Our country
    c. Anger
    d. Fear

2. What does "One Nation Under God" mean?
    a. a) Our country is led by one person.
    b. b) Our country is united under God's protection.
    c. c) We all believe the same thing.
    d. d) God controls our government.

3. What is freedom of religion?
    a. The government can tell us how to worship.
    b. We can choose our own religion and practice it freely.
    c. We have to follow one religion.
    d. We are not allowed to believe in anything.

4. What is a motto?
    a. A rule
    b. A song
    c. A short phrase that represents a belief or value
    d. A government law

Multiple Choice Quiz

5. What phrase is on U.S. money to remind us of faith?
    a. "In God We Trust"
    b. "One Nation Under God"
    c. "Freedom for All"
    d. "We the People"

6. When were the words "under God" added to the Pledge of Allegiance?
    a. 1776
    b. 1801
    c. 1954
    d. 2020

7. What is faith?
    a. A belief in something or someone, even if we can't see it
    b. A rule we must follow
    c. A skill we practice every day
    d. A type of job

8. What does having religious freedom mean?
    a. The government can make laws about religion.
    b. People can choose their religion and practice it freely.
    c. Everyone must follow the same religion.
    d. Religion is only for the church.

Answer Key: Multiple Choice Quiz

1. What does the Pledge of Allegiance show respect for?

Answer: b) Our country

2. What does "One Nation Under God" mean?

Answer: b) Our country is united under God's protection

3. What is freedom of religion?

Answer: b) We can choose our own religion and practice it freely

4. What is a motto?

Answer: c) A short phrase that represents a belief or value

5. What phrase is on U.S. money to remind us of faith?

Answer: a) "In God We Trust"

6. When were the words "under God" added to the Pledge of Allegiance?

Answer: c) 1954

7. What is faith?

Answer: a) A belief in something or someone, even if we can't see it

8. What does having religious freedom mean?

Answer: b) People can choose their religion and practice it freely



"Freedom Times" Newspaper Article

Objective

Students will work together to explain where the phrase "separation between church and state" comes from and what it means in their own words.

Set-Up

- Put students in small groups of 3–4.
- Each group becomes a news team for the "Freedom Times."

Directions

Students will create a short newspaper article answering:

- Where does the phrase "separation between church and state" come from?
- What was happening with the Danbury Baptists and Thomas Jefferson?
- What does this idea mean in simple terms?

Article Must Include

1. Headline

Example:

- "Danbury Baptists Write to President Jefferson!"
- "New Idea About Church and Government Explained!"

2. Who/What Happened

Students explain:

- The Danbury Baptists were worried about their religious freedom
- They wrote a letter to Thomas Jefferson
- They felt the government was making rules about religion



3. Jefferson's Idea (Simple Explanation)

Students explain:

- Jefferson wrote about a "wall of separation"
- It means the government should not control religion
- Church and government have different roles

4. What It Means Today

Students explain in their own words:

- People are free to choose their religion
- The government cannot force one religion

5. Illustration (Optional but Fun!)

- Jefferson writing a letter
- Danbury Baptists meeting
- A "wall" between church and government

Sharing Option

Each group reads their headline and one sentence from their article to the class like real reporters.

Teacher Wrap-Up

Emphasize: The phrase "separation between Church and State" comes from Jefferson's letter.

Resources

- https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-01-02-0057
- https://minio.la.utexas.edu/webeditor-files/coretexts/pdf/163020model20of20christian20charity.pdf
- https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%205%3A13-15&version=KJ21
  https://www.history.com/news/pilgrims-puritans-differences
- https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/church-of-england-in-virginia/
- https://www.history.com/news/religion-13-colonies-america
- https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/gods-mosaic/
- Thomas Jefferson, "Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom," The Jefferson Monticello, https://www.monticello.org/research-education/thomas-jefferson-encyclopedia/virginia-statute-religious-freedom/.
- United States Supreme Court, "Reynolds v. United States (1879)," Library of Congress, https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/usrep/usrep098/usrep098145/usrep098145.pdf.
- James Madison, "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 22 January 1786," National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-08-02-0249.
- Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Margaret Bayard Smith, 6 August 1816," National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-10-02-0186.

Images

Praying



Credit: Canva Pro

United



Credit: Canva Pro

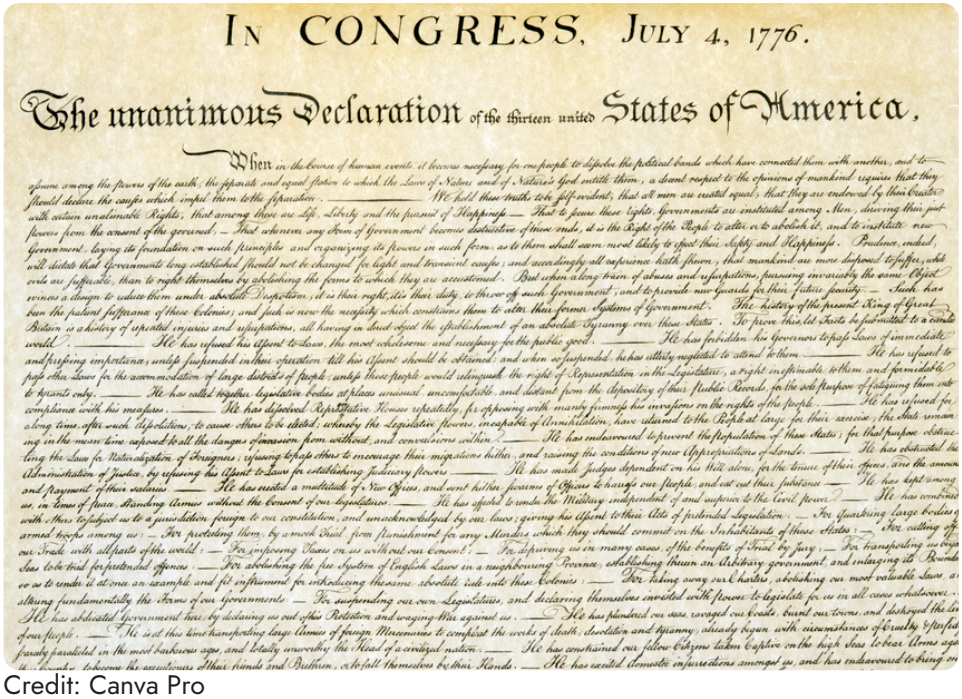
Images

American Flag



Credit: Canva Pro

Declaration of Independence



Credit: Canva Pro

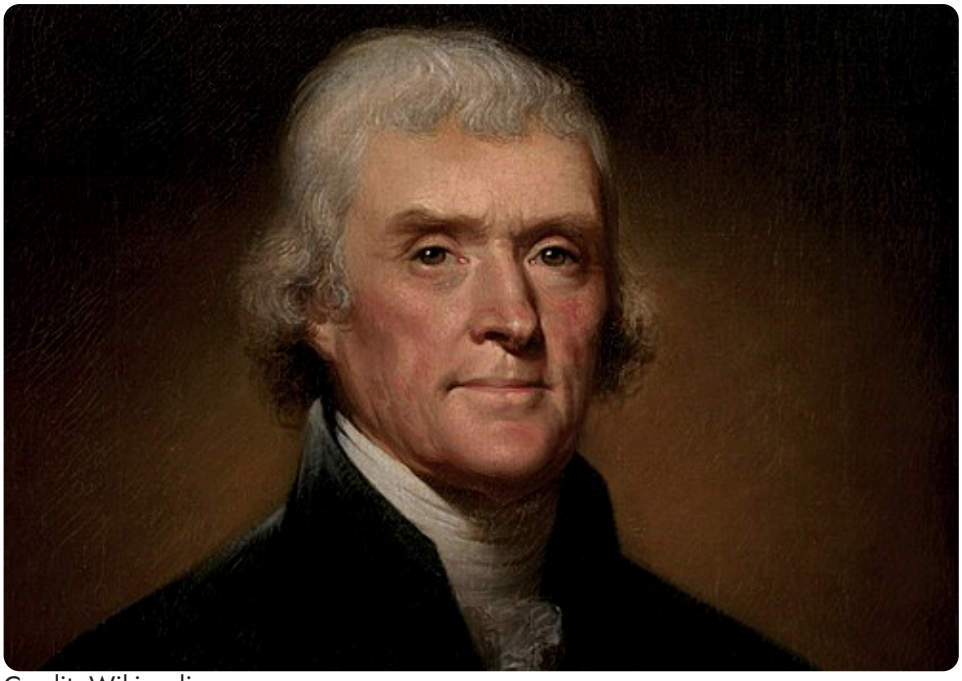
Images

George Washington



Credit: Canva Pro

Thomas Jefferson



Credit: Wikipedia

Images

Worship



Credit: Canva Pro

Government



Credit: Canva Pro

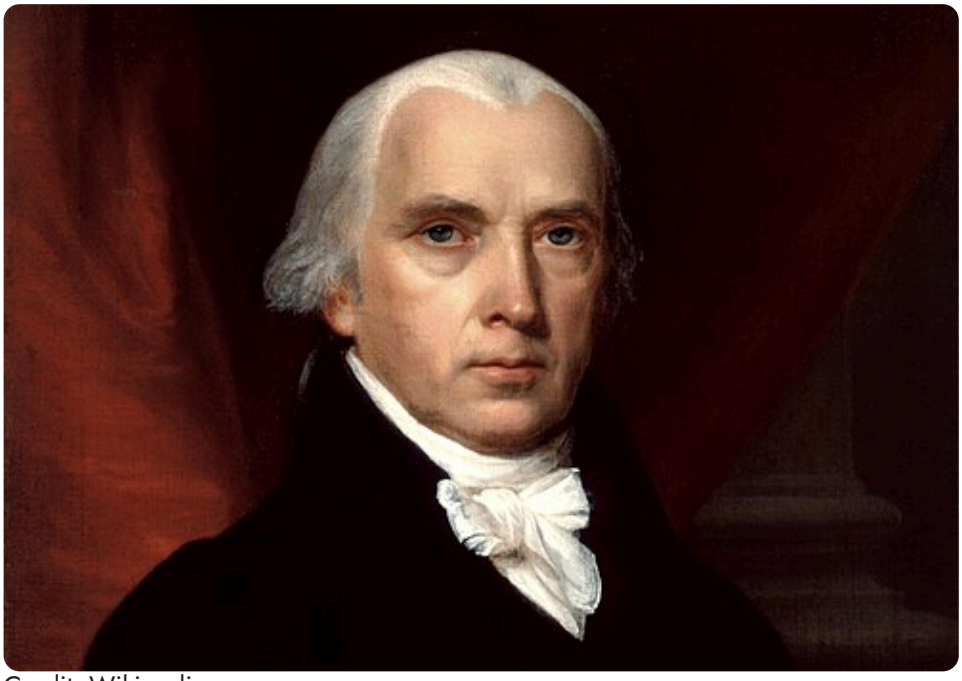
Images

United States Constitution



Credit: Canva Pro

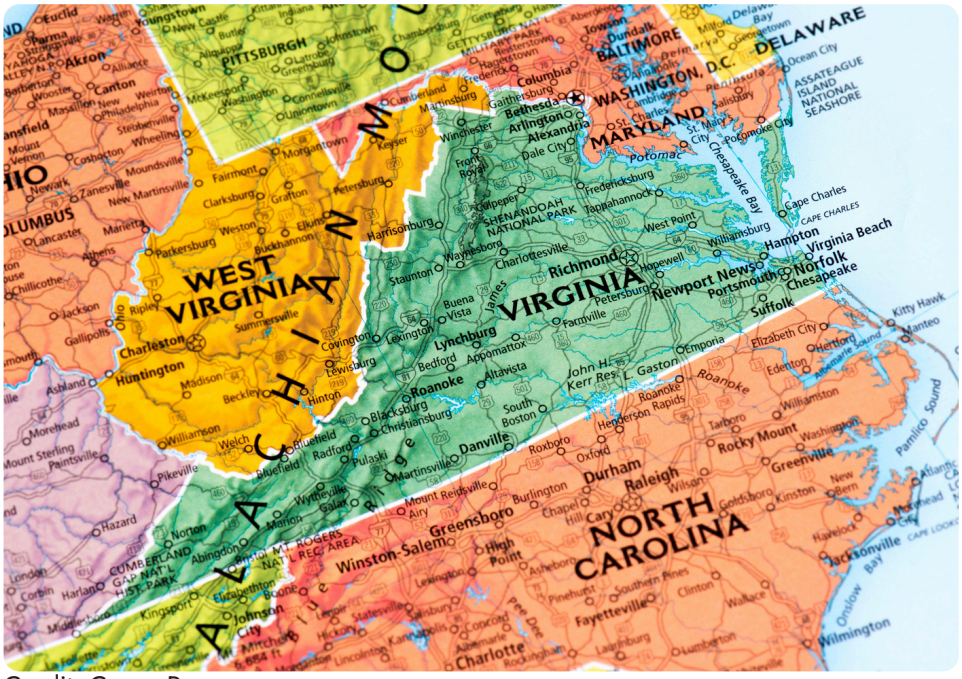
James Madison



Credit: Wikipedia

Images

Virginia



Credit: Canva Pro

Wall of Seperation



Credit: Canva Pro

Notes