



Founders' Influence:
SS.7.CG.1.2
Founding Principles
READING #2

Name: _____

Date: _____



SS.7.CG.1.2 Benchmark Clarification 2: Students will explain why religious liberty is a protected right.

U.S. citizens enjoy many rights that are considered protected, or inalienable (note spelling). Inalienable rights may not be denied. The U.S. Constitution lists all rights guaranteed to its citizens; specifically, the Bill of Rights lists the first ten amendments written to protect the rights of individual people.

One protected right in particular is religious liberty, or freedom of religion, found in the First Amendment of the Constitution. **Religious liberty** is the right for citizens to practice the religion of their choice without government involvement. Specifically, the First Amendment states, *“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”*

Religious liberty has existed well before the establishment of the United States and has roots in the British colonies. Many people left England and settled in America for religious freedom and to freely practice their beliefs. Colonies such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania became popular to those seeking religious freedom. Thomas Jefferson, the Founding Father who drafted the Declaration of Independence, also wrote the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom in 1779. This document was one of the first to express the idea of the rights of everyone to choose their own religious practice, and to promote **tolerance** within the colonies.

religious liberty - is the right for citizens to practice the religion of their choice without government involvement

tolerance – the ability to express a fair attitude towards opinions, beliefs, practices, racial