**Standard 8-2:** The student will demonstrate an understanding of the causes of the American Revolution and the beginnings of the new nation, with an emphasis on South Carolina’s role in the development of that nation.

**Enduring Understanding:**

The events surrounding the American Revolution transformed British colonists into American citizens. To understand South Carolina’s pivotal role in this process, the student will…

**8-2.6 Explain the role of South Carolinians in the establishment of their new state government and the national government after the American Revolution.**

**It is essential for students to know:**

South Carolina formed an independent government even before the first shots of the Revolution were fired. The General Meeting elected a Committee of 99 [15 merchants, 15 artisans and 69 planters] that became the de facto government. Although the royal governor was still in Charleston, most of the residents of the city obeyed the Committee of 99, so it was the government in fact (de facto) if not by law (de jure). In November of 1774, the General Meeting called for the election of delegates to a Provincial Congress. Representation in this congress was disproportionally from the Lowcountry. The Provincial Congress raised an army, issued currency, created a committee to enforce nonimportation and commissioned the writing of a constitution that eventually was approved as the Articles of Confederation. However not everyone in South Carolina was happy with this government or agreed with nonimportation, especially the people of the backcountry. The provincial government sent a delegation to the backcountry in an attempt to make peace. In the Treaty of Ninety Six, the backcountry agreed that they would remain neutral in the fight with Great Britain. Later the Provincial Congress sent a force to defeat the loyalist militia and silence opposition from the backcountry.

South Carolina adopted its first constitution establishing an independent state government before the Declaration of Independence was signed. It was written by the provincial government and was to serve as the foundation of government until the disagreements with England were

resolved. This constitution provided for a two house legislature with the lower house elected by the people and the upper house elected by the lower house. The president, who was elected by the legislature, had the right to veto laws. The Lowcountry had more representation in the new government than did the backcountry. A second constitution was written after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, however, it included only a few changes. The president would now be called the governor, representation was slightly more equally distributed and the Church of England was no longer the official, state-supported church of South Carolina.

South Carolinians took an active role in the establishment of the new national government. The Continental Congress acted as the first national government of the United States. South Carolina was the only one of the thirteen states to fully meet its financial obligation to the Continental Congress. South Carolinian Henry Laurens served as president of the Continental Congress and later on the committee that negotiated the Treaty of Paris for the government under the Articles of Confederation.

After the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation were written to officially establish the first national government for the new United States. Although South Carolina ratified the Articles quickly, other states did not until a compromise was reached over the ownership of western lands. These lands were ceded to the national government and the Confederation government went into effect. The government under the Articles of Confederation was modeled on the Continental Congress with one vote for each state. However, a government that was effective in a time of war when all of the states agreed on the need to defeat Great Britain found itself not effective once the war was over. The problems of the United States government under the Articles of Confederation were similar to the economic problems of indebtedness and depression faced by South Carolinians after the Revolutionary War (8-3.1). Disagreements over interstate trade, currency, and taxes proved the Confederation government too weak to meet the needs of the new nation. South Carolinian Charles Pinckney was an early advocate for a stronger national government. Pinckney chaired a committee of the Confederation Congress that recommended amendments that would strengthen the government under the Articles of Confederation and also served on a committee trying to persuade other states to pay their obligations to the national government. When a backcountry rebellion in Massachusetts [Shay’s] raised the fear of insurrection, other states called for a meeting in Philadelphia to amend the Articles and strengthen the national government.