

The Bill of Rights

CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
ARTICLES IN ADDITION TO, AND AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, PROPOSED BY CONGRESS, AND
RATIFIED BY THE LEGISLATURES OF THE SEVERAL STATES, PURSUANT
TO THE FIFTH ARTICLE OF THE ORIGINAL CONSTITUTION.

AMENDMENT I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

AMENDMENT II

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

AMENDMENT VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of Counsel for his defense.

THE CORNERSTONE OF LIBERTY: UNDERSTANDING THE U.S. BILL OF RIGHTS

When the U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1788, it established the framework for a powerful new federal government. However, many citizens—known as Anti-Federalists—feared that this centralized authority lacked sufficient safeguards for individual freedoms. Their demand for explicit protections led directly to the creation of the Bill of Rights.

Far from being an afterthought, these ten foundational amendments are the essential guarantee that the government cannot infringe upon fundamental personal liberties.

WHAT IS THE BILL OF RIGHTS?

The Bill of Rights comprises the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution. Proposed by James Madison in 1789, they were officially ratified and adopted on December 15, 1791.

Crucially, the Bill of Rights does not grant rights; instead, it recognizes inherent rights and places strict limitations on the power of the federal government. It serves as a definitive statement that certain areas of life, thought, and belief are beyond the reach of state authority.

WHO WROTE THE BILL OF RIGHTS?

The Bill of Rights consists of the initial ten amendments to the Constitution. These amendments were drafted by James Madison to restrict governmental authority and ensure the protection of individual freedoms within the framework of the Constitution.

For instance, the Founding Fathers regarded freedom of speech and religion as inherent rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, which forbids Congress from enacting laws that establish a religion or limit free speech. Additionally, the Fourth Amendment protects citizens from unwarranted government searches of their homes by mandating the issuance of a warrant.

BILL OF RIGHTS AMENDMENTS

FIRST AMENDMENT

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

SECOND AMENDMENT

A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

THIRD AMENDMENT

No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

FOURTH AMENDMENT

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

FIFTH AMENDMENT

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

SIXTH AMENDMENT

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the state and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature

and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

SEVENTH AMENDMENT

In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise reexamined in any court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

EIGHTH AMENDMENT

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

NINTH AMENDMENT

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

TENTH AMENDMENT

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.

THE INDISPENSABLE DEFENSE OF LIBERTY: WHY THE BILL OF RIGHTS INSTITUTE MATTERS NOW MORE THAN EVER

In an era defined by polarization and instantaneous, often superficial, discourse, the foundational principles that hold our republic together are too often taken for granted. We speak about freedom, rights, and responsibilities, but how many citizens truly understand the historical context, legal precedent, and ongoing debates surrounding the Constitution?

The unfortunate truth is that civic literacy is in crisis. This is precisely why the work of the Bill of Rights Institute (BRI) is not just helpful—it is indispensable.

For additional information, please visit:
<https://www.BillOfRightsInstitute.org>.