

Why is the First Amendment still important?

Recent studies show for the first time ever, almost half of Americans feel the First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees.

Is our society too free for its own good? Can we be free *and* safe? Are we willing to trade some personal freedoms for the greater personal security? Clearly, terrorist activity has taken its toll. We need to remember that it is the freedoms provided by our First Amendment that make America vastly different from other countries.

We as Americans need to do everything we can to preserve and strengthen our rights, rather than allow them to be eroded by fear.

Today, the need to sustain and expand our forefathers' experiment in liberty is made more urgent by the challenge of living with our deepest differences in a diverse and complex society. The need to commit ourselves to the rights and responsibilities that flow from the First Amendment has never been more vital — or more difficult. The ignorance and contention now surrounding the First Amendment threaten to divide the nation and undermine our freedom.

Free Speech

The First Amendment says that people have the right to speak freely without government interference. You are free to speak your mind without fear of censorship or imprisonment.

Free Press

The First Amendment gives Americans the right to publish news, information and opinions without government interference. This also means people have the right to print their own newspapers, newsletters and magazines. Because of the First Amendment, people can create their own radio and television shows, and freely express their views.

The full and open disclosure that the press provides allows us to oversee what the government does and helps protect us from the dangers of government fraud. We also use the First Amendment to gather information and educate audiences about issues that are important to us.

Religion

The First Amendment prohibits government from establishing a national religion and protects each person's right to practice (or not practice) any faith without government interference.

Assembly

The First Amendment allows people the right to gather in public to march, protest, demonstrate, carry signs and otherwise express their views in a nonviolent way. It also means people can join and associate with groups and organizations without interference.

Petition

The First Amendment says that people have the right to appeal to government in favor of or against policies that affect them or that they feel strongly about. This freedom includes the right to gather signatures in support of a cause and to lobby legislative bodies for or against any kind of proposed law.

For more than 200 years, the First Amendment has been at the heart of history's boldest and most successful experiment in liberty. The history of our nation is the story of the ongoing struggle to extend the promise of freedom more fully and fairly to each and every citizen.

The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibit 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.

What you can do

Remember that the First Amendment allows every citizen to have "Government of the people, by the People, for the People..." Continue to exercise the rights and freedoms provided to you by our government and the First Amendment.



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1st Amendment

The First Amendment:
The Key to Freedom

