

# The Bill of Rights

## As you read...

Respecting the states' calls for a bill of rights, Congress passed twelve amendments to the Constitution in 1789. Ten were ratified by three-quarters of the states and became part of the Constitution in December 1791 — the Bill of Rights we know today.

One of the two remaining amendments would have adjusted the manner of representation in Congress. The other would have made it more difficult for Congress to raise its own salaries. The first was never ratified by the states, but the second was revived in the 1980s and was ratified by three-quarters of the now fifty states in 1992, to become the twenty-seventh amendment.

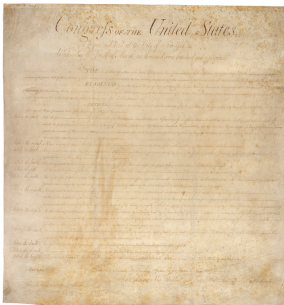


Figure 1. The Bill of Rights as approved by Congress in 1789.

## 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.

## Amendment III

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.

## Amendment IV

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.

## Amendment V

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.

## 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.

## Amendment VII

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.

## Amendment VIII

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

# Amendment IX

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

# Amendment X

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.

---

## On the web

### Interactive Constitution

<http://ratify.constitutioncenter.org/constitution/>

This website from the National Constitution Center provides commentary on each section of the Constitution. You can read it straight through, search the text, or select a theme or a famous court case.

### Acting on the Bill of Rights

<http://www.sog.unc.edu/programs/civiced/resources/docs/ActingontheBillofRights8.pdf>

In this lesson from the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium, students will gain an understanding of the rights guaranteed to citizens in the Bill of Rights, the modern controversies that can arise from such rights, as well as the importance and relevance of the Bill of Rights to every individual by participating in role plays.

### The Constitution of the United States

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/4074>

An original print copy of the Constitution, 1787. Page 2 of 2 of the original printed Constitution. We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure...

### The Constitution of the United States: Amendments 11-27

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/4996>

Amendment XI Passed by Congress March 4, 1794. Ratified February 7, 1795. The Judicial power of the United States shall not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity, commenced or prosecuted...

### More from LEARN NC

Visit us on the web at [www.learnnc.org](http://www.learnnc.org) to learn more about topics related to this article, including Bill of Rights, Constitution, United States, government, and history.

## Image credits

More information about these images and higher-resolution files are linked from the original web version of this document.

**Figure 1 (page 1)**

. This image is believed to be in the public domain. Users are advised to make their own copyright assessment.