

## Bill of Rights

The first ten amendments to the Constitution are called the Bill of Rights. These amendments, which protect individual liberties, were proposed by James Madison in Congress and sent to the states for adoption. Some states would not have ratified the Constitution without the addition of these amendments. Twelve amendments originally were proposed, and by December 15, 1791, enough states had ratified ten of the amendments to add them to the Constitution.

*Amendment 1* protects freedom of religion, speech, and the press, and grants citizens the rights to peaceful assembly and to petition the government.

*Amendment 2* prohibits the national government from restricting the right to carry weapons.

*Amendment 3* prohibits citizens from being forced to take soldiers into their homes. Congress must pass a law in wartime to require citizens to house soldiers.

*Amendment 4* prohibits the unreasonable search and seizure of people, their houses, papers, and effects. Searches, seizures, and arrests must, in most cases, be carried out under the authority of a warrant issued by a judge after the judge has heard the reasons for the warrant to be issued.

*Amendment 5* describes the rights of citizens in criminal cases. A person may not stand trial for a crime unless he or she has been accused by a grand jury, a special group of people selected to determine if there is enough evidence against a person to turn him over for trial. A person may not be tried twice for the same offense, and a person may not be forced to testify against himself. The amendment also states that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without "due process of law." The amendment further says that the government must make fair payment when taking land for public use.

*Amendment 6* guarantees the right to a fair trial. A person must have a speedy and public trial heard by an impartial jury. The defendant must be told of the charges against him, be confronted by the witnesses against him, be allowed to introduce witnesses on his behalf, and have the benefit of legal counsel.

*Amendment 7* guarantees the right to a trial by jury in civil cases where the disputed amount exceeds \$20. Either party in the suit may ask for a jury trial.

*Amendment 8* prohibits courts from imposing excessive bails and fines. The amendment also prohibits "cruel and unusual punishments."

*Amendment 9* states that those rights not specifically listed in the Constitution are retained by the people.

*Amendment 10* states that the powers not delegated to the federal government by the Constitution are retained by the states or the people.