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# THE FIRST AMENDMENT: FREEDOM WORTH PRESERVING

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*By Julia Chen*

It was late September in 1789. Representatives from each of the thirteen colonies were discussing an important strand of America's foundation: The Bill of Rights. Since America had earned her liberty from England, there were many new rights to protect. Her citizens deserved the freedoms of religion, speech and press, and the right to petition for change. Thus, the First Amendment was created.

The absence of a monarch ruling America led to more religious freedom. Even before the Revolutionary War, the Thirteen Colonies had been a safe harbor for immigrants. Throughout Europe, people had suffered restrictions to religion from their governments, and they'd fled to America. After America won her freedom in the late 1700s, the freedom of religion was one of the first rights preserved in the Bill of Rights.

America's independence also meant that her citizens could speak more freely. No longer subjects of a king or queen, they could publish newspapers and give speeches without worrying about punishment. People were less fearful of giving their opinions on the government, and authorities couldn't control the news. Granting Americans the freedom of speech in the First Amendment was a wise decision.

Finally, the First Amendment permitted citizens to petition to revise unjust laws. The British government made a mistake when they taxed the American colonists in 1765. The colonists weren't angry about the heavy taxes; they were upset since they couldn't send representatives to Parliament to dispute it. This tension eventually grew into war. In contrast, America allowed her people a voice in politics. Citizens could sign a petition in order to alter a law.

Gaining independence from Great Britain has given America many freedoms. Our founding fathers made sure to protect those freedoms in the Bill of Rights. No one can be discriminated because of their ethnic group. People can't be punished for speaking their opinions, and they have the power to make adjustments to unfair parts of the legislature. The Bill of Rights and its First Amendment are an important part of our government's framework. They are the foundation of our country.