

# 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment Rights

## By Jackson Clark

The first amendment outlines five rights mainly based around freedoms of the American people. These are the fundamental rights that our nation is built upon.

First is the freedom of religion. It has 2 separate parts: (1) that Congress cannot favor any one religion in any law, and (2) that freedom of religion is guaranteed. Let's look at the first part of the right first. This prevents the United States from excluding religions or being biased toward one. It is an essential part of the amendment because it ensures freedom to practice the religion to which you feel morally inclined. The second is crucial to personal freedom to practice as we please. It also plays a part in free speech.

The second right that is guaranteed in the first amendment is probably the most talked about branch. It is, of course, freedom of speech. We can see clearly that this must be spelled out. Without it we couldn't say anything that the government doesn't like. An obvious example can be found in the USSR, where freedom of speech was not a right guaranteed to the people, and people were imprisoned and killed for the things they said as a result. Here we can criticize the government; this makes the U.S. a better place to live and the Government can be better through it. We can also exchange ideas with each other and the people in power cannot restrict the dialogue that flows from such an exchange. It clearly underlies the entire amendment and many parts of our government and several other amendments.

Another cornerstone of freedom comes in the third part of the amendment that is: free press. Without the freedom of press we can't make informed choices in many matters. The Government would have a complete monopoly on the information that we receive. They could, of course, favor themselves, thereby maintaining control of the government. One can imagine that this could result in a dictatorship which would perpetuate itself. One example of such a country is North Korea -- a country with an awful dictator and an uneducated populace.

The fourth piece is the right to assemble peacefully. A crucial emphasis to make is that it is peaceful, so violent forms of rioting don't count. This is a very underrated part, but it allows people to commune, discuss ideas, and publicly air opinions; the right to free speech is nothing without one being able to share their ideas with others. It also allows that, when a corrupt company or the Government does something controversial, we can all come out and protest without being arrested.

The fifth and final part: the right to petition the government for the redress of grievances. What this really means is that someone can sue the government for damages. This is invaluable to us because it puts limits on the government so that they can't get away with abusing its citizens and going unpunished. It also allows for people or corporations to lobby the government, which is important in and of itself. We must be able to actually regulate the government and not let it run free to do as it pleases.

These rights outline essential liberties that we must have. These rights allow us to communicate and keep our government in check.