The year after the Constitution was ratified, the US Congress met again in New York to draft the Bill of Rights, the first ten Amendments to the Constitution. These amendments were made to further restrict the influence of the government and to give more rights to the people. Twelve amendments were proposed, and out of them ten amendments were passed. These proposed amendments were ordered by what article of the Constitution they modify.

The first two amendments, which were rejected, would have modified Article I (regarding the Legislative Branch). The first of the ten ratified amendments restricts Congress. It protects the people’s right to religious freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom to petition by disallowing Congress to pass a law limiting these rights. If this amendment were not passed, Congress would be able to take control of the states by repressing the people’s ideas. A political takeover by Congress would greatly threaten the people’s freedoms.

The Second, Third, and Fourth Amendments focus on Article II of the Constitution and limit the executive branch. The Second Amendment holds much weight and is a topic of many political arguments today. It protects the people’s rights to assemble as a militia and to own arms. This is very important, as it protects the people’s rights to defend themselves, be it against criminals or against those trying to repress their rights by force. It also allows people to make a living by hunting game. The Third and Fourth Amendments protect the people’s rights to their property by restricting the executive branch from the quartering of soldiers and unreasonable searches and seizures. Without these three amendments, the executive branch would be given near-total control over the people. This could make way for martial law, with the government stripping all power from citizens and holding them defenseless.

The next four amendments restrict the judicial branch and modifies Article III. Protections under these amendments defend the prosecuted from improper process, self-incrimination, double jeopardy, denial of a speedy and public trial, and from excessive bail, among others. It also gives the accused the right to a trial by jury. Without these amendments, the judicial branch would be able to accuse anyone and hold private, unfair trials, even those in office, which could result in a political takeover.

The final two amendments revise Article IV and expand the rights of people and individual states. Article 9 declares that the Constitution must not be used to strip power from the people or give additional power to the government unless this power is specifically mentioned. This essentially future-proofed the Constitution. The final Amendment in the Bill of Rights declares that any power not specifically delegated to the Federal Government must be handed over to the states or the people. These amendments are important to allow the people and states to check the power of the Federal Government.

Overall, the Bill of Rights is used to redistribute power from the government to the people. This allows for a country with power balanced between the three branches of the Federal Government, the states, and the people. Though some of its powers have been restricted by more recent amendments, the Bill of Rights laid a foundation of anti-federalism that is still upheld today.