

The First Amendment

Each amendment included in the Bill of Rights serves a vital purpose to the United States. The reason we created the Bill of Rights is to ensure explicit rights, especially rights which serve as the cornerstone of our republic. The First Amendment is the most critical foundation to our republic, as it protects our most basic rights, religion, speech, and the right to organize.

The right to religion was first listed in the Bill of Rights for a reason: our Founding Fathers believed that religion is a personal choice, and a republic could not prohibit, encourage, or discriminate based on religion and remain a republic based on varied beliefs. In Florida, the Department of Education is looking to expand Judeo-Christian beliefs in public, secular schools. The DoE is looking to create mandatory moments of silence, intended to be used for prayer, along with teaching students that the Ten Commandments influenced the United States' laws. Our Founding Fathers wrote the First Amendment specifically to prevent these kinds of laws or statute, as a government forcing a specific religious belief upon students is not the role of a republican government. Our First Amendment is intended to strengthen and allow for a republican government to exist; brainwashing religious beliefs into children is more akin to the monarchy the Founding Fathers did not want to replicate in the United States.

The right to speech was another integral part of the First Amendment, which the Founding Fathers knew first hand was necessary for the continued health and well-being of our republic. Recently, many states have banned the use of Critical Race Theory in classrooms, often both in K-12 and college settings, through broad legislation that determines if a lecture is illegal based on how a student or parent may feel from the content. This broad legislation in effect will prohibit classroom discussion of race in America, from slavery to the Civil Rights Movement,

and the impact race has today based on our history. Eliminating discussion of controversial topics was a move America first saw when we were British colonies. The Founding Fathers knew that the right to speech, to discuss and debate controversial topics, to criticize the government, was essential to a healthy republic. Without the right to speech, a republic could not exist.

The right to organize is the third major part of the First Amendment, which the Founding Fathers included because of their own experiences organizing in protest of the British monarchy's tyrannical rule. A recent example is the Black Lives Matter protests that resulted from the murder of George Floyd. In many cases, these protesters peacefully assemble to protest police brutality, both in the case of George Floyd but also from day-to-day interactions with police officers across the nation. Often, these protests became violent after police arrived in riot gear, firing tear gas into crowds. These cases are a clear breach of the First Amendment right to organize, and are very similar to the British Redcoats arresting or killing protesters of the British monarchy. However, through the protection of the right to organize in the First Amendment, there is a basis for legal action against these cases of police brutality, and an ability to hold those police departments accountable.

Our Bill of Rights was created in an effort to protect and guarantee basic rights which British Colonists saw the British Monarchy take away. Additionally, the Founding Fathers thought that the First Amendment should guarantee the most basic freedoms, religion, speech, and protest. Without these basic rights, we would not be able to have a functioning, healthy republic.