

Our Voices Need to Be Heard

CELEBRATING THE BILL OF RIGHTS

“We the People of the United States”

is how our Constitution begins because our government is about us, the citizens of this country. It is not about the rich and the famous or the president and Congress. The Framers of the Constitution, the men who wrote it, knew that the only way that our government would stay about the citizens of this nation, was for us to be able to criticize or disagree with the government. They knew our voices needed to be heard in speech and in writing. That is why they added the First Amendment to the Constitution.



We can lose our freedom of speech and press.

How? We invite government control of our freedoms when we do not care about our freedoms or when we abuse the freedom of speech and press by using social media and speech to bully people, to use bad language, to post inappropriate photos and to bad-mouth teachers and parents.

We the people will exist only as long as the government hears our voices.



The First Amendment guarantees us the freedom to express our opinion about the government in speech and in the press.

It guarantees us that we and our news sources will not be punished for criticizing the government. It guarantees us that the government cannot control what we read in newspapers and see on television news programs.

How important is freedom of speech and press to you? One group of high school students who were asked this question said it was not all that important, and half of them felt that

the government should control what we say more than it does now. That attitude is extremely scary to people who genuinely care about this country.

That attitude brings tears to the eyes of all the veterans who have fought wars so that we and others could be free.

If you want to know what our country would look like without freedom of speech and press, look to the very popular “Hunger Games” stories. Do we

want a government where people know they will die even if they say they are hungry? That very thing has happened in many countries.



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In your local newspaper, find stories on national, state and local governments. Look at the editorial and opinion section. How many of the letters to the editor, opinion columns and editorials are about government? How do these stories and opinions demonstrate that we are a government for and by the people?

To read more about American's opinions on the First Amendment, visit:
firstamendmentcenter.org/34-say-first-amendment-goes-too-far
knightfoundation.org/blogs/knightblog/2012/11/8/first-amendment-education-surveys-keep-challenging-us-try-new-things/

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