

72 — THE BILL OF RIGHTS, 1791 —

To make sure the new national government could not violate individual rights of the people—some dating back to the Magna Carta, Americans insisted that the U.S. Constitution be amended to include a bill (or listing) of these rights, thus guaranteeing them. Several states made this a condition for ratification. So in 1789 Congressman James Madison led the House of Representatives in recommending such amendments to the states for ratification. In 1791 the states ratified the first ten amendments to the Constitution—the Bill of Rights.

1st AMENDMENT:

CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECTING AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION, OR PROHIBITING THE FREE EXERCISE THEREOF; OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS; OR OF THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.

THIS IS THE LONGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT AMENDMENT. NOW LOOK AT WHAT EACH OF ITS 5 PARTS MEANS.



Freedom of Religion



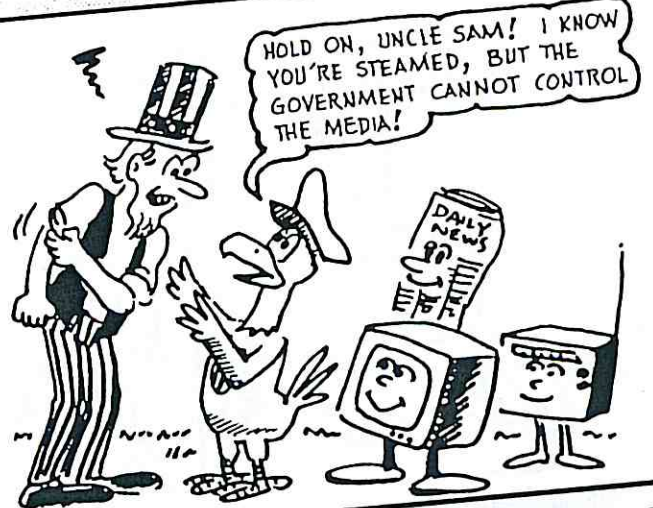
THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT ESTABLISH AN OFFICIAL RELIGION. THIS MEANS YOU CAN'T BE FORCED TO ATTEND, OR SUPPORT WITH TAXES, ANY RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION.



Freedom of Speech



Freedom of the Press



Freedom of Assembly



Freedom of Petition

