

## The Bill of Rights and Me

The Bill of Rights is the single most important modification to the Constitution and governs the way we live today. Why is this? The Bill of Rights contains the first ten amendments to the Constitution of the United States. These stated freedoms, liberties, and inalienable rights make America the country it is today. Our nation's history is steeped in protecting these amendments – from protests to lawsuits in lower courts to Supreme Court decisions. Since 1791, generations of citizens have defended these rights and freedoms to ensure our way of living is preserved.

To me, one of the most important amendments is the first amendment: freedom of speech, press, religion, and the right to petition and peacefully assemble to voice our grievances. These rights allow me to express my opinions and voice my dissent without threat of incarceration or harm. The amendment guarantees that people can have their say on important issues and move forward in a peaceful way to affect changes to laws, policies, and regulations. What is exciting to me is that I get to choose when, where, and how I voice my concerns. I can join like-minded people across the country with similar views.

The Bill of Rights, hotly contested and argued against by many while debating them in 1787, was eventually ratified in 1791. Even today, 229 years later, with many consequential issues on the doorstep of Congress and the courts, I see protests of all matters impacting or challenging the Bill of Rights. All over the country, people are exercising their first amendment rights to get their voice heard to attempt to steer the country in a new direction.

Exercising and defending my freedoms and rights is paramount for me and my generation – we will soon be young adults, able to vote, and be positioned to shape the future of our country. To me, the Bill of Rights is of the utmost importance; it guarantees that our way of living will last forever and that our pursuit of happiness and our liberties will not be infringed upon.