

It's Your Right

Soon after the Constitution was completed in 1788, ten amendments were added to it, the Bill of Rights. Actually, twelve amendments were proposed by Congress to the states. The Constitution required that states approve, or ratify, amendments before they could be added. Ten were approved and added to the Constitution in 1791.

1. Congress not to interfere with freedom of religion, speech or press, assembly, and petition.
2. The people secured in their right to bear arms.
3. Quartering of soldiers on the people restricted.
4. Unreasonable searches forbidden.
5. Individuals guaranteed rights when on trial and the right to life, liberty, and property.
6. Accused persons assured of right to speedy and public trial by an impartial jury, to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation, to have assistance of defense counsel.
7. Right to trial by jury.
8. Excessive bail, fines, punishments forbidden.
9. People retain the rights not assigned to government.
10. Powers not delegated to the federal government are reserved to the States or the people.

Discussion Points:

The following questions all require you to analyze and infer.

- Why would people have needed to add these amendments to the Constitution?
- Who would have supported each one?
- Who might have opposed each one at the time they were added?
- What do you think might have been included in the two amendments that the states did not approve?

The Importance of Voting

Four amendments to the Constitution helped increase people's right to vote in elections in this nation.

Article 15, passed in 1870, guaranteed voting rights to all citizens of all races.

Article 19, passed in 1920, guaranteed voting rights to women.

Article 24, passed, in 1964, required that states could not require a tax to vote.

Article 26, passed in 1971, lowered the voting age from 21 to 18.

Ask three people why they think voting is important:

Person 1: _____

Person 2: _____

Person 3: _____

What do you think--why is voting important?

Think It Through

Choose the one right in the Bill of Rights that you think is the most important. Explain why. Then look in the Newspaper to find an example of this right. How would the situation have been different without this amendment to the Constitution?

Voting is a right that people have fought for in this nation. Why might some people choose not to vote in a national election? What might the people who fought for voting rights say to them?

Get It Across

At the time the amendments were passed, some people opposed them. Choose one that you think has helped your own community. Then write a narrative about a day without that right. Write the story in the day of your community if that Amendment had not become part of the Constitution.

Newspaper Connection

Draw a newspaper cartoon about voter turnout. First, look at the editorial page of the Newspaper to see how editorial cartoonists get their message across. Voting in elections is important. Your cartoon should make that point. Show how the founders of this nation would feel about the importance of voting.