

The bill of rights

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The Bill of Rights The first ten amendments to the US constitution are called the Bill of Rights because they provide basic legal protection for individual rights. The terms also applied to the English Bill of Rights of 1689 and the Canadian Bill of Rights 1960, and to similar guarantees in the constitutions of the American states. From the perspective of two centuries, it can be said that Madison chose well among the proposals in the state. He included all the great rights appropriate for constitutional protection. The US Bill of Rights contains the classic inventory of individual rights, and it has served as the standard for all subsequent attempts to safeguard human rights. The first American use of the term was in 1774 when the first Continental Congress adopted the declaration and resolves, which was popularly termed the Bill of Rights because it was an American equivalent of the English Bill of Rights. Two years later came the Virginia declaration of rights, which contained the first guarantees for individual rights enforceable by constitution. The distinctive feature of the provision in American Bill of Rights is that they are enforced by the courts. From the time they first settled in Virginia and Massachusetts, the American colonists relied upon the rights enjoyed by Englishmen. The struggle for independence, however, demonstrated to them that rights not specified and codified in constitutional documents were insecure. The result was a movement as soon as independence was declared, to adopt binding constitutions that limited governmental power and protected individual rights. Seven of the thirteen states adopted constitutions that included specific bills of rights. The first state bill of rights was the Virginia Declaration of Rights, adopted as part of the state's first constitution on June 12, 1776.

Virginia's declaration, drafted mainly by George Mason, served as the model both for similar state documents and for the US Bill of Rights. It provided guarantees for most of the rights secured in the latter document.