

The preamble and the bill of rights

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THE PREAMBLE AND THE BILL OF RIGHTS By 1787, Americans were dissatisfied with the current form of the United States government. The Articles of Confederation, although adequate when created, had some major draw backs. An elite group, known as the framers, assembled to form a more perfect union. The framers believed the United States needed a Constitution that would be for the common man. Over the summer of 1787 several committees met to create the preamble for the people. The most renowned committee responsible for writing the preamble consisted of William Johnson, Rufus King, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and Gouverneur Morris. This assembly, known as the Committee of Stile and Arrangement, was tasked with gathering all of the previously agreed upon articles and clauses and arranging them into a coherent order. On September 12, 1787, they revealed the final copy of the Preamble and it was signed into law five days later. The Preamble does not grant nor prohibit any particular authority to the federal government. Along with explaining the purpose of the Constitution, It outlines the boundary of the government's authority. The Preamble contained seven articles which defined the people's rights. Article one establishes the legislative powers of congress and divided it into the House of Representatives and the senate. The house members are to be divided proportionally among the states. This article establishes the method of election and the required qualifications of the members of each house and senate. It provides that each state may establish its own methods for electing members of congress. Article one also restricts the authority of congress and limits individual states powers. Article two grants the power of the executive branch to the president. It establishes the duties and powers,

as well as the qualifications for both the president and vice president. This article allows for civil officers to be impeached and removed from office. Article three goes into detail about judicial power. The judicial branch includes the court system and the Supreme Court. This article requires a trial by jury in all criminal cases. Article four spells out the powers and restrictions allotted to the states. The relationship between the states and the federal government are further broken down to avoid discrimination. This article also allows for the creation and admission of new states and guarantees that the federal government will protect the states against invasion and insurrection. Article five describes the process for amending the Constitution. It gives Congress the option of requiring ratification by state legislatures or by special conventions assembled in the states. Article six covers the federal power and establishes the Constitution. It guarantees that the United States would take responsibility for all debts and contracts entered into by the United States under the Articles of Confederation. This article also imposes that the laws and treaties of the United States, made in accordance with the Constitution, would be the supreme law of the land. Article seven explains the requirements for ratifying the Constitution. It would require the support of nine out of the original thirteen states to ratify the Constitution. Many people contested this preamble. They believed it would pave the way to tyranny. On September 25, 1789, the First Congress of the United States responded to their concerns and proposed amendments that would spell out the immunities of individual citizens. Twelve articles were suggested, but only ten were agreed upon by the required three quarters of the state legislatures. These ten amendments, known as the Bill of Rights, became law

on December 15, 1791. The Bill of Rights was formed to protect the people's rights from being taken away by the government. The Bill of Rights opened with this preamble: " We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. " The first amendment grants the rights to freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of peaceful petition to the government. The second amendment instills that a well-regulated militia is necessary for security of the states. It also guarantees the right of individuals to possess firearms. The third amendment prohibits the government from quartering soldiers in privately owned homes without the consent of the owners during peacetime. The fourth amendment protects against searches, arrests, and seizures of property without a warrant issued with sufficient probable cause. The fifth amendment prohibits trial for a major crime except after indictment by a grand jury. It inhibits being tried twice for the same offense and forbids punishment without due process of law. It states that any accused person may not be compelled to testify against themselves. It also prohibits government from taking private property for public use without just compensation. The sixth amendment guarantees the right to a speedy public trial for criminal offenses. It requires a trial by an impartial jury and guarantees the right to legal counsel for the accused. It also grants the accused the right to know the charges against them. The seventh amendment guarantees trial by jury in federal civil cases and no fact tried by

jury shall be reexamined in any court. The eighth amendment prohibits excessive bail or fines. It also safeguards against cruel and unusual punishment. The ninth amendment proclaims that the listing of individual rights in the Constitution and Bill of Rights is not meant to be comprehensive. Furthermore, any rights not specifically mentioned are to be retained by the people. The tenth amendment endows to the individual states, or to the people, any powers the Constitution did not delegate to the United States, nor prohibit the states from exercising. Although several amendments have since been added onto the original Bill of Rights, it still plays a vital role in American law and government. It remains a fundamental icon of the freedoms of the United States. One of the original fourteen copies of the Bill of Rights is on public exhibition at the National Archives in Washington, D. C.