

The US Bill of Rights

In 1791, the following ten articles were added to the US Constitution. They are called 'the Ten Amendments'.

I - Freedom of Speech, Press, Religion and Petition

Congress shall make no law about the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free practice of religion; or limiting the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to get together, and to ask the Government for doing something against what people see as real problems.

II - Right to keep and bear arms

A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be limited.

III - Conditions for quarters of soldiers

No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the agreement of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be regulated by law.

IV - Right of search and seizure regulated

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall be given, but upon probable cause, supported by oath [...], and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

V - Provisions concerning prosecution

No person shall be held to answer for a capital [...] crime , unless on [...] indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases in the army or the navy, or in the militia, when in [...] service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be put on trial twice for the same reason; nor shall be forced in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor have his life, liberty, or property be taken away, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.

VI - Right to a speedy trial, witnesses, etc.

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, [...] and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; there should also be witnesses in his favor, and he should have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

VII - Right to a trial by jury

In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall be more than twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury shall be otherwise reexamined in any court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

VIII - Excessive bail, cruel punishment

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines asked for, nor cruel and unusual punishments infllicted.

IX - Rule of construction of Constitution

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be understood as to deny or disparage others held by the people.

X - Rights of the States under Constitution

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

Source (adapted): http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rights1.asp

Annotations :

amendment (n.)	Zusatz	due process of law (n.)	ordentlich nach Vorgaben des Gesetzes
petition (n.)	Eingabe, Gesuch	impartial (adj.)	unparteiisch
regulate (v.)	regulieren	commit (v.)	begehen
quarter (n.)	Quartier	counsel (n.)	Rat, Beratung
seizure (n.)	Ergreifung	law suit (n.)	Rechtsfall, Anklage
violate (v.)	verletzen	common (adj.)	allgemein
warrant (n.)	Durchsuchungsbeschluss ; Haftbefehl	controversy (n.)	Streit
probable (adj.)	wahrscheinlich	preserve (v.)	erhalten, bewahren
oath (n.)	Eid	reexamine (v.)	erneut begutachten
particularly (adv.)	besonders	excessive (adj.)	übertrieben
provision (n.)	Vorsorge	bail (n.)	Kaution
concern (v.)	betreffen	fine (n.)	Strafgebüh
prosecution (n.)	Verfolgung, Strafverfolgung	inflict (v.)	auflegen
capital crime (n.)	Schwerverbrechen	disparage (v.)	herabsetzen, verunglimpfen
indictment (n.)	Anklage	delegate (v.)	abordnen, abgeben
except (prep.)	außer	respectively (adv.)	jeweils
witness (n.)	Zeuge	reserve (v.)	vorbehalten, reservieren

Tasks:

- 1) Make sure you have understood what these amendments to the US Constitution are about. Then, without looking on the worksheet, explain to your partner what the Bill of Rights is.
- 2) If you had been a member of the US lawmakers in 1791, would you have also listed the amendments in this order, or would you have preferred another order. Give your reasons.
- 3) Think about why this Bill of Rights was added to the US Constitution.
- 4) In Germany, is there also some kind of 'bill of rights'? If you are interested to find out more about this question, go to <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/>. You might want to compare what you find there with the US Bill of Rights.