

What defines the character of America and makes this country a good place to live? For over 240 years, our prosperity and liberty have been the envy of the world. However, our prosperity is inseparable from our liberty. Take away freedom of speech, association, religion and enterprise, and our country would be neither free nor prosperous.

Unique among modern nations, the United States was literally *conceived in liberty*. The guiding philosophy of our Founders was the unalienable *rights* of the individual. As our **Declaration of Independence** states,

WE hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness – That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it

America's Founders experienced horrible examples of unlimited government: destructive taxation, brutal attacks by government agents, seizure of their property, and imprisonment of dissenters. To avoid these evils, our Constitution and Bill of Rights (the first ten Amendments) were created as *strict limitations on the power of government*.

Government was to be a moral policeman, stopping force and fraud whenever possible, and otherwise leaving citizens alone. Today, the Bill of Rights remains the supreme law of the land, and neither Congress, nor the Supreme Court, nor the President has the *moral* or *legal* right to ignore it.

Sadly, government has strayed very far from the original vision of limited powers. Today there is no aspect of our lives – public or private – that government regards as exempt from its control. Here is how our Bill of Rights is being destroyed:

AMENDMENT I

Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

America is fortunate to have a Bill of Rights which protects our freedom of speech, press, and religion. However that legal protection is being rapidly eroded.

Public universities are increasingly shutting down speech they don't like in the name of "combating hate speech," bias, or sexism. Teenagers who sext nude pictures of themselves

are being convicted as "child pornographers."

Political protestors are increasingly confined to tiny, fenced in "free speech areas" where few can see or hear them. Online, major service providers – like Google and Facebook – have begun blocking hundreds of politically-incorrect web sites, as "hate speech."

At U.S. airports simply speaking in Arabic or complaining about TSA man-handling your children can get you arrested. Across the U.S., in defiance of the law, police seize the cameras of citizens attempting to record brutal arrests or police killings. Our freedom of speech is under siege.

AMENDMENT II

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

Our right to self-defense is being gradually destroyed. Over 20,000 gun laws are now in effect in the U.S. and more are added every year. School children have been expelled and even arrested for wearing a T-shirt with the picture of a soldier or bringing a water pistol into a school.

AMENDMENT III

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

In Puerto Rico, National Guard troops were permanently stationed in 54 apartment buildings. Police and other government agents have also ordered people out of their homes and businesses, and used them for surveillance.

AMENDMENT IV

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 issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the person or things to be seized.

The National Security Agency now intercepts virtually all electronic communications, including Internet and cell phone use, and electronic medical records. Some 700,000 government employees and nearly 850,000 private security contractors can potentially access your personal communications and records.

Strip-searching those arrested for even minor traffic violations and "cavity searches" at airports are becoming more common. Courts and legislatures now consider virtually any government search and seizure "reasonable."

AMENDMENT V

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise

infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.

Our Founders believed that no one should be imprisoned or have their property seized without a trial. Today the IRS can seize your bank account, the FBI can take your computer, the Coast Guard can take your boat, and welfare authorities can take away your children, without any hearing or indictment by a Grand Jury.

AMENDMENT VI

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; which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and the cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process or obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have assistance of counsel for his defense.

Thousands of Americans now languish in jail awaiting trial. One man in Baltimore was actually held for over six years! In thousands of drug cases, defendants have been convicted based on hearsay evidence from secret witnesses. Children as young as 13 have been given life imprisonment. Prosecutors are also seizing the assets of defendants before trial, making it impossible for them to hire a competent attorney.

AMENDMENT VII

In Suits of common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

Less than 3% of criminal defendants now get a trial. The Supreme Court has ruled that you don't even have to be given a jury trial if you face less than six months in prison. The government routinely fines businesses thousands or even millions of dollars without hearing or trial.

AMENDMENT VIII

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

Bail has become increasingly excessive -- often hundreds of thousands of dollars for minor offenses and millions for alleged felonies. Bail has also been abolished for virtually all federal crimes.

Dozens of federal agencies now impose enormous administrative fines, without trial or hearing. In northern Idaho, Chantell and Mike Sackett were given EPA administrative fines of \$37,500 a day without a hearing, for beginning construction (permitted by the state) of their retirement home.

Punishments and prison conditions are becoming increasingly harsh. In Wisconsin, 17-year-old Austin Yabandith (charged as an adult) faces 40 years in prison for having consensual sex with his 16-year-old girlfriend. Across the country, defendants are getting years or even decades in prison for minor drug, sex, and gun offenses.

AMENDMENT IX

The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

The Constitution and Bill of Rights were intended as strict restrictions on government power. Powers not explicitly granted to government were retained by the individual. Today the Constitution has been stood on its head.

Courts are now saying that nearly anything the government does is permissible, unless explicitly prohibited by the Constitution. We the people are rapidly losing control of our lives, property, and destinies.

AMENDMENT X

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.

Today very few rights are left for the people or the states. Thousands of federal laws and regulations that intrude into every aspect of peoples' lives, brutal enforcement by their agents, and universal surveillance have turned America into a virtual prison.

Your freedom is in danger. When government violates its own laws, it becomes the enemy of justice and freedom, rather than their protector. To stop our descent into tyranny we must speak, work together, and passionately defend our Bill of Rights.

Jarret B. Wollstein is co-founder of the original Society for Individual Liberty, a predecessor of Liberty International.

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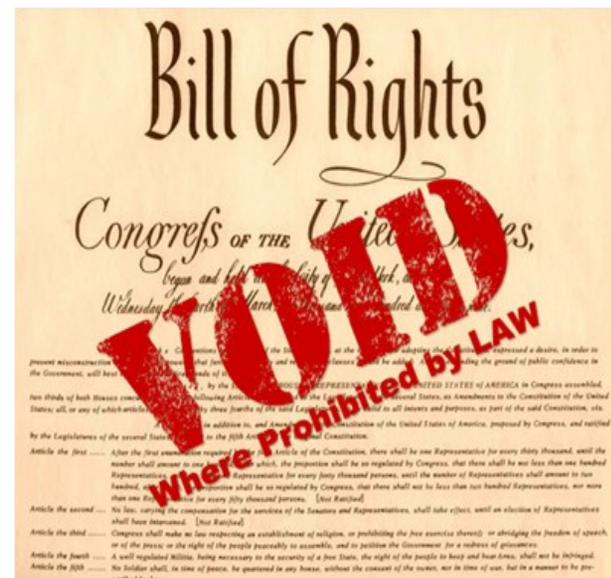
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Your Freedom Is In Danger



The Destruction of Our Bill of Rights

by Jarret B. Wollstein

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