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# The First Amendment: The Most Discussed Amendment In The Constitution

The first Amendment is one of many that the country of the United States of America follows. It is known where “Congress shall make no law respecting an 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”; meaning it protects several basic freedoms by giving the people ways to voice and act upon something in ways they think is justly/fair. This amendment has many powers within itself and is known to also create much controversy in some situations.

Within the first Amendment, a single state/federal government cannot set up a church and pass any sort of law that supports one or all religions that exists. They're not allowed to choose one belief and prefer it over the other, and cannot interfere with the people's ability to learn and practice in what they decide to put their faith in. Congress also can't take away the freedom of speech, giving people the power to say what it is they want about any subject. Although, this right can be taken away on platforms like social media and in public places when it is considered radical hate speech. This also applies to the press, which allows opinions to be made and physically printed without any form of censorship from our government, but what we say and do can be determined if it's suitable for the public based on the programs guidelines and false/defamatory statements are not protected. In this Amendment, the right to gather together as one group of people who believe and stand for something in a place to protest peacefully is something most countries would not tolerate. This gives groups like BLM, the Feminist movement, and the LGBTQ an overall voice and the capability to preach what they believe needs to happen in our society through marches and other non-violent acts. Lastly, we have the 'right to ask a governmental body to solve a problem', and a prime example of this given right would be when some LGBTQ organizations asked for help on the right for gay marriage to be legal.

In order to have these rights that are implemented in the first amendment, it had to be discussed about between two opposing groups. It is said that it was 'written by James Madison in response to calls from several states for greater constitutional protection for individual liberties' (Bill of Rights Institute). Federalists and Anti-Federalists had a heated disagreement on the idea that the Constitution lacked or did not lack limitations for the government, and also debated on if it lacked any sort of protections for the people. Even with this going on, Madison went and attempted to make changes that he believed fit best for the country, like the freedom of speech, religion, press, petition and assembly. Some Representatives though, like Roger

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Sherman, demurred that the Congress had no jurisdiction to changing the Constitution in any way. So, due to this, Madison prepared a basic idea of most of the Bill of Rights and presented them. When he did, the House endorsed 17 of them while the Senate approved 12 of those, and then sent those 12 to the States for further approval in the year 1789. It was picked apart and looked over to the point that 10 were officially made as our amendments, and was adopted in the year of 1791 on December 15th. Even though we have these rights to say what we want, believe what we choose, write about whatever, request a change and rally over what we want peacefully, there is much controversy and debates over all these rights. One current debate to this day about the first amendment would be when football players kneeled during the national anthem. The overall story about this subject is that in the eyes of President Donald Trump, if a player kneeled during the national anthem in protest over police brutality, then they should be fired. So, by using their first amendment, they continued to kneel or locked arms to show a sign of unity and support for doing this action.

Another current debate around the first amendment would be the Supreme Court case of *Packingham v. North Carolina*, which was when 'The Court ruled that a North Carolina law prohibiting registered sex offenders from accessing social media violates the First Amendment, due to the prominence of social media in modern communication'. This created some concern because some believed that men/women would be exposed and become in danger to registered sex offenders on some social media's, while others were more worried about taking away someone's ability to free speech. Overall, we are gained these unalienable rights, but over the years the first amendment has had laws created to help better define these rights; narrowing them down so that they can be less broad. A prime example of how over a period of time, the amendment was slightly changed or taken differently would be when Thomas Jefferson added the phrase 'separation of church and state' in 1802, or when some laws were passed in order to protect people's privacy, which limits the ability for people to report specific facts publicly about said individual.

All things considered, the First Amendment is one of the many amendments that the United States of America takes very seriously. It is taken into consideration when on specific topics and is highly looked up to due to the fact that many countries don't have the luxury of having them. As the years go on, it will continue to give the people freedom of speech, religion, press, petition and assembly, even when it will always be interpreted differently than what it might have meant 20 years before.

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