



Written by [David Kelly](#) on December 15, 2022

# The Bill of Rights Keeps Tyranny at Bay

To many Americans, Thursday is just another day in the week of no consequence as they go about their daily lives. If we were to do man-on-the-street interviews asking passersby what significant event happened on this day in our nation's history 231 years ago, this writer is certain that very few would know the correct answer: The ratification of the [Bill of Rights](#) became an official part of the U.S. Constitution following vigorous national debate on December 15, 1791.

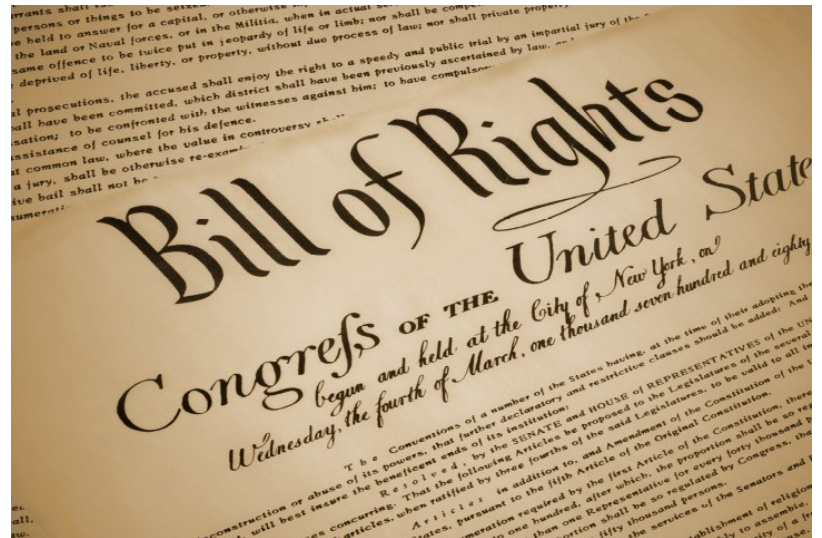
The Bill of Rights was birthed at the [Constitutional Convention](#) in October of 1789 by [Anti-Federalists](#) who were opposed to the ratification of the 1787 U.S. Constitution because they feared that the new national government would be too powerful and thus threaten individual liberties, given the absence of a bill of rights.

One Anti-Federalist, Virginia's George Mason, at the beginning of the Convention in 1787, wrote to his son in a letter, "The eyes of the United States are turned upon this assembly and their expectations raised to a very anxious degree. May God grant that we may be able to gratify them, by establishing a wise and just government." But by the time the Convention was coming to a close, Mason refused to sign the Constitution, as he and other Anti-Federalists thought the new central government threatened their traditional belief in the importance of restraining government power. Mason then [declared](#) he would "rather chop off my right hand than put it to the Constitution as it now stands."

After the Constitution was signed by state delegates, the document faced ratification by the agreed upon three-quarters of the states. This is where the debates continued throughout the young nation as the Federalists and Anti-Federalists squared off with written and open debate over the Constitution. We now know the [Federalist Papers](#) and Anti-Federalist [Papers](#) were key to the debates and instrumental not only in the ratification of the Constitution, but the eventual agreement and ratification of the Bill of Rights.

In fact, Virginia's James Madison initially believed that the amendments guaranteeing personal liberties were unnecessary because the Constitution as written gave only certain rights to the federal government. But during the Virginia ratifying convention, Madison began to see the importance of amending the Constitution to include these guarantees, and then became quite supportive of a Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights was modeled from the [Virginia Declaration of Rights](#), which George Mason had written, and was adopted by the Virginia Constitutional Convention on June 12, 1776. Thomas Jefferson



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used part of Mason's work for the opening paragraphs of the [Declaration of Independence](#). Madison used much of his fellow Virginian's writings [arguing](#) for what is now the Bill of Rights.

Since the Bill of Rights was ratified, codifying unique freedoms for all Americans, those rights have been under constant attack by enemies of liberty. Those enemies argue that the Constitution is a living document and should be updated to suit the needs of today's society. These enemies are those who have been pushing quite openly for generations to destroy the United States from within.

French historian Alexis de Tocqueville wrote about the enemies of our liberty and the Bill of Rights in America in his book *Democracy in America*. [He stated](#), "When the taste for physical gratifications among them has grown more rapidly than their education ... the time will come when men are carried away and lose all self-restraint.... It is not necessary to do violence to such a people in order to strip them of the rights they enjoy; they themselves willingly loosen their hold.... They neglect their chief business which is to remain their own masters."

Our Constitution and Bill of Rights are in place for us to use to keep the enemies of liberty and the risks associated with the tyranny of the majority at bay. The ratification of the Bill of Rights and the fact that it still protects us today is a victory for liberty and freedom. It also is a reminder that we must continue to fight for our freedoms, as soft tyranny is in full force in our nation's government. Only if we remain vigilant will our liberties survive.



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