



The Five Elements of the First Amendment Are About Activism!

By Frank Meeink

A lot of American's do not know their First Amendment rights. "The First Amendment guarantees freedoms concerning religion, expression, assembly, and the right to petition." (Cornell Law School, 2018) It forbids Congress from both promoting one religion over others and restricting an individual's religious practices. The amendment guarantees freedom of expression by prohibiting Congress from restricting the press, and the rights of individuals to speak freely. Further, it also guarantees the right of citizens to assemble peacefully and to petition their government.

1. Freedom of speech may be exercised in a direct (words) or a symbolic (actions) way. Freedom of speech is recognized as a human right under article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The right to freedom of speech allows individuals to express themselves without government interference or regulation.

When you hear on the news that a police officer or police department is acting or doing things to citizens that are inappropriate, we have the right to call the police departments. In the activist community this is called flooding the lines. It is important to note that you should never call 911 as this is against the law, but you are able to call all other phone numbers associated with that department. This is legal and uses two parts of the First Amendment, the right of freedom of speech and the right to petition our government.

2. The right to petition our government for a redress of grievances. We have the right to call and write to our government workers and representatives.

This gives us the right to have our voices heard in an official matter. This right has given us the opportunity to file complaints against officers, police departments and other governmental offices and officials.

3. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. So, you have the freedom of, and to have your own religion.

This segment of the first amendment was implemented due to the British King forcing his religion/morality on the people. Our founding fathers truly wanted a country where you would not be punished for practicing or not practicing any sort of religion.

4. The right to assemble or allows people to gather for peaceful and lawful purposes. Implicit within this right is the right to association and belief. (Library of Congress)
Freedom of assembly is recognized as a human right under [article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). It works with the right of assembly by allowing people to join and seek change from the government. (Cornell Law School)

This gives us the right to get our friends or family and fellow citizens who want the same things, to gather in public places and events. We want our voices heard and sometimes we are able to disrupt the normal flow of things to prove our point.

5. The freedom of the press is so the government cannot censor the press or tell us who can and can't be the press.

The First Amendment allows anyone to be press through the use of simple tools, such as a pen, keyboard, or camera. Our founding fathers used underground printing presses and anti-British rule pamphlets

Sources

Cornell Law School

Library of Congress

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