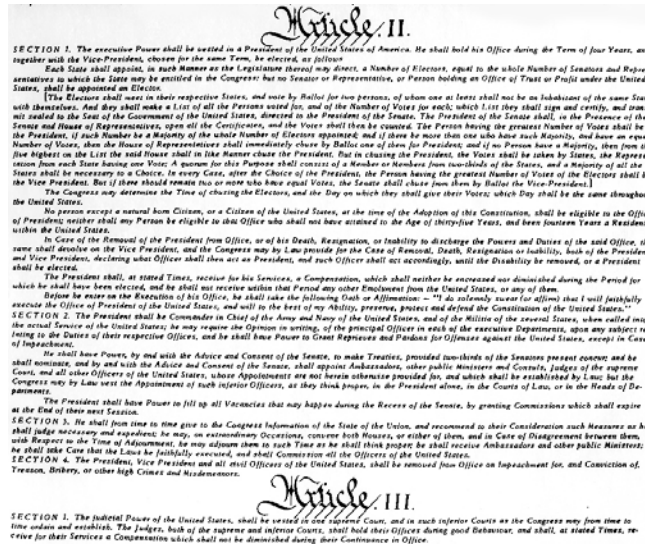


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# September 17

# It's Constitution Day!



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# So, who cares?

## Bill Chapman

from the League of Women Voters

Berkeley, Albany, Emeryville

<http://lwvbae.org/civics.htm>

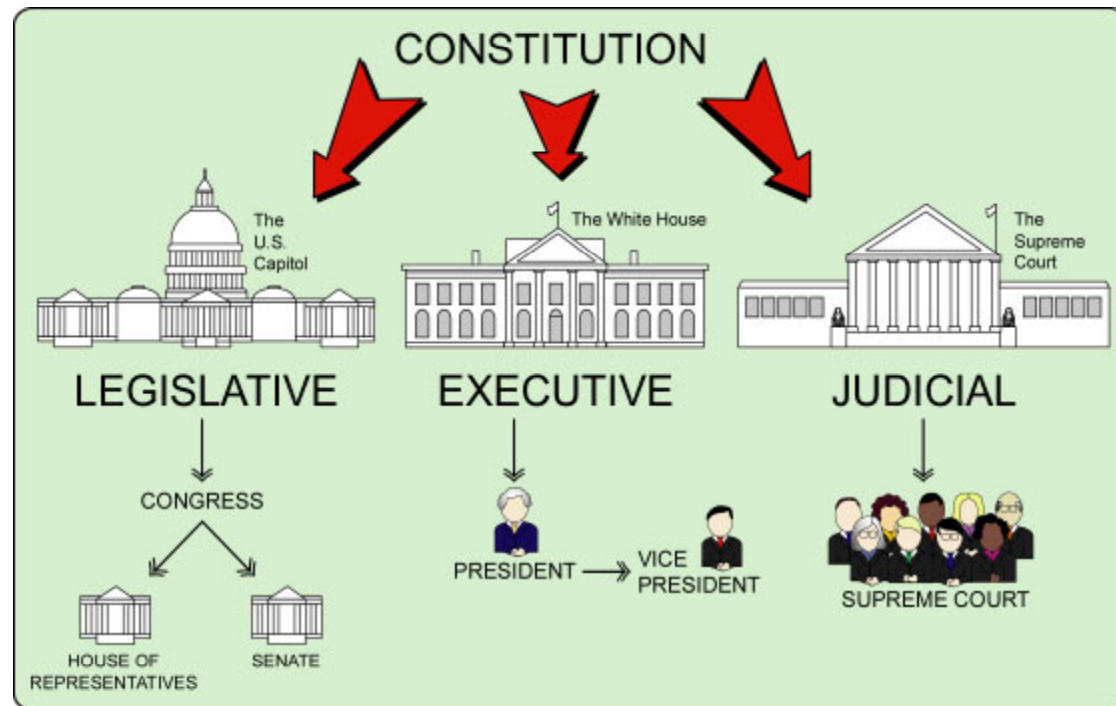
# says it should be you

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# **What is the Constitution?**

# What is the Constitution?

The document that set up the government under which laws (rules) are made and enforced in the United States.



**Do you ever think about  
the Constitution as you go  
about your daily life, or as  
you plan for your future?**

**If not, maybe you should.  
Virtually every aspect of  
your life is touched by  
constitutional government  
in action.**

# For example:

- This school is here because it was built, paid for and is operated by government employees. You are here because many generations of elected officials and voters determined that you and they would be better off if you had educational opportunities. Do you know of any proof of the benefits for young people from those decisions?

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Full Time Workers in the U.S. age 25 and older, 2007

Number of workers: 100,343,000,000

Highest Education Attained		Median Income	Difference from previous step	Cumulative difference from 1st step	% of Professional
less than 9th grade	2.96%	\$21,694			21.69%
Grades 9-12, no diploma	5.08%	25,802	\$4,108	\$4,108	25.80%
High School graduate	28.57%	32,464	6,662	9,089	32.46%
Some college, no degree	17.72%	38,728	6,264	15,353	38.73%
Associate degree (AA)	10.10%	41,837	3,109	18,462	41.84%
Bachelor's degree (BA)	22.81%	53,141	11,304	29,766	53.14%
Master's degree (MA)	9.16%	62,920	9,779	39,545	62.92%
Doctorate (Ph.D.)	1.60%	85,837	22,917	62,462	85.84%
Professional degree (Dr., lawyer, dentist, etc.)	1.99%	100,000	14,163	76,625	100.00%

Average annual expenditures per household (2006): \$48,398

# For example:

- This school is here because it was built, paid for and is operated by government employees. You are here because many generations of elected officials and voters determined that you and they would be better off if you had educational opportunities.
- Most of the food you eat, the fluids you drink, and the medicines you take are inspected by government agents, and are approved for sale only when shown to be safe. The federal Food and Drug Administration was created by an act of Congress in 1906 (112 years ago). What have been the effects of that decision?



# For example:

- Most of the food you eat, the fluids you drink, and the medicines you take are inspected by government agents, and are approved for sale only when shown to be safe. The federal Food and Drug Administration was created by an act of Congress in 1906 (112 years ago). What have been the effects of that decision?

Expectation of Life (in years) at birth, U.S.

1900	47.3
1910	50.0
1920	54.1
1930	59.7
1940	62.9
1950	68.2
1960	69.7
1970	70.9
1980	73.7
1990	75.4
2000	77.0
2004	77.8
2010 (projection)	78.5
2015 (projection)	79.2

# For example:

- This school is here because it was built, paid for and is operated by government employees. You are here because many generations of elected officials and voters determined that you and they would be better off if you had educational opportunities.
- Most of the food you eat, the fluids you drink, and the medicines you take are inspected by government agents, and are approved for sale only when shown to be safe.
- The streets on which you travel were built and paid for, and are maintained by people working for constitutionally elected officials. Suppose roads were privately owned, and you had to stop every mile or two to pay a toll to a different owner in order to use that stretch of roadway? Or, what if police and fire services were all private, and would only appear when you needed them if you could pay what they asked? Suppose your neighbor's house was burning and s/he couldn't afford to pay for fire protection?

# Government has the power to make life and death decisions



Washington Post, April 29, 2005

- In 2002, the United States government took us to war in Afghanistan. In 2003, it took us to war in Iraq. To date, 4,187 U.S. soldiers have returned from Iraq in flag draped coffins on flights like the one pictured above; while 622 have come back that way from Afghanistan.

# Government has the power to make life and death decisions



- Those decisions effect others besides U.S. citizens.

# Government has the power to make life and death decisions



New York Times, September 11, 2007

- Those decisions effect other species too.



# Government has the power to make life changing decisions



Photo by Nina Berman

- Ty Zeigel and Renee Kline prior to Ty's deployment to Iraq in 2003.

# Government has the power to make life changing decisions



Photos by Nina Berman



- Marine Sgt. Ty Zeigel and Renee Kline on their wedding day in late 2006.

In 2004, Ty's tour was cut short when a suicide bomber blew up near his truck during a routine patrol. The searing heat melted most of the skin off his body and left him blind in one eye. His skull was so badly shattered that doctors had to replace it with plastic. Ty was taken to Brooke Army Medical Center, where he underwent 19 surgeries.

# What can you do about any of this?

- The Constitution establishes a system of representative government that depends on the informed participation of citizens if it is to work as intended.



# What can you do about any of this?

- The Constitution establishes a system of representative government that depends on the informed participation of citizens if it is to work as intended.
- If citizens do not understand how the government is supposed to work, or do not care enough to stay informed, discuss issues facing the community, vote thoughtfully and keep an eye on what their representatives are doing; then the government designed by the framers will not function in the interests of the citizens.

# What can you do about any of this?

- The Constitution establishes a system of representative government that depends on the informed participation of citizens if it is to work as intended.
- If citizens do not understand how the government is supposed to work, or do not care enough to stay informed, discuss issues facing the community, vote thoughtfully and keep an eye on what their representatives are doing; then the government designed by the framers will not function in the interests of the citizens.
- After the Constitution was finished, and as he was leaving Independence Hall, Benjamin Franklin is reported to have been asked, “Well, Doctor, what have we got—a Republic or a Monarchy?” His reply, “A Republic, if you can keep it.”

# So, Can We Keep It?

- Do Americans lack basic knowledge about the Constitution?

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# So, Can We Keep It?

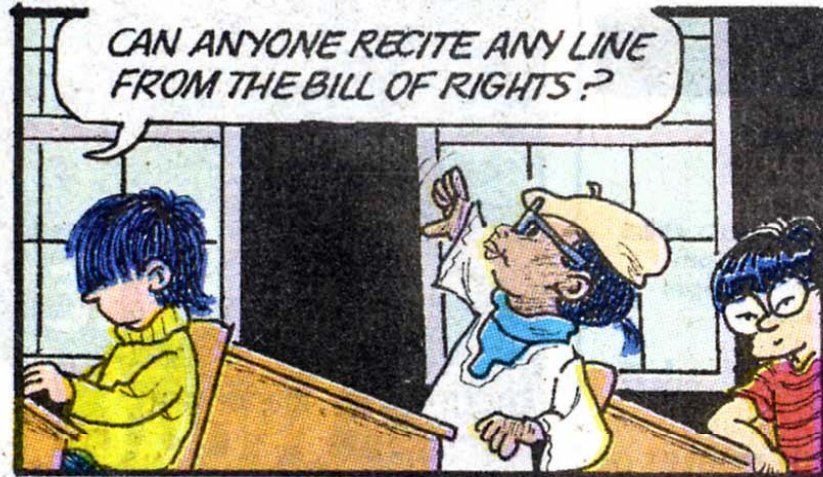
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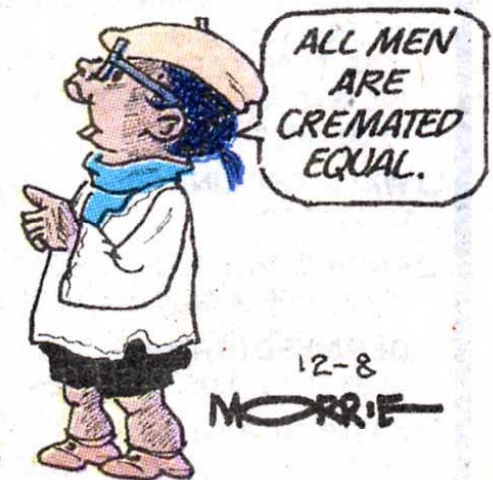
- Do Americans lack basic knowledge about the Constitution?
- Do students at your school?
- Do you?
- We will spend the next few minutes in an attempt to find out.

# What is wrong with this?

Wee Pals/Morrie Turner



© 2005 CREATORS SYND. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED



12-8

MORRIE

# What is wrong with this?

Wee Pals/Morrie Turner



1. Thomas Jefferson wrote, "All men are created equal", not "All men are cremated equal."



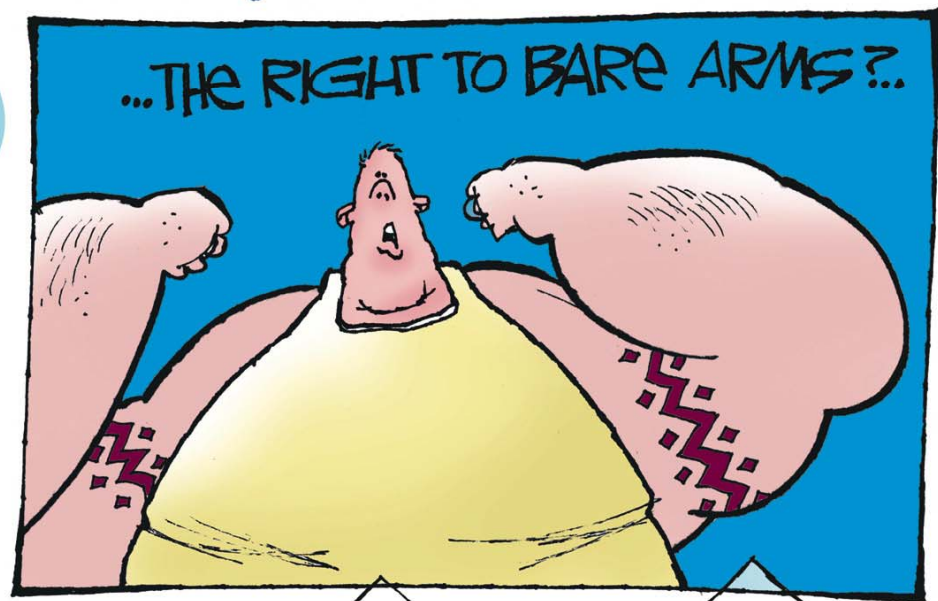
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1. Thomas Jefferson wrote, "All men are created equal", not "All men are cremated equal."
2. Jefferson wrote, "All men are created equal" as part of the Declaration of Independence (1776). That phrase does not appear in the Bill of Rights.

# HEY, KIDS...WHAT'S THE FIRST AMENDMENT?..



## EDITORS NOTE:

We tried to stop this cartoonist from making you look uninformed... But that's his **First Amendment** right.

WALT HANDLISMAN ©2004

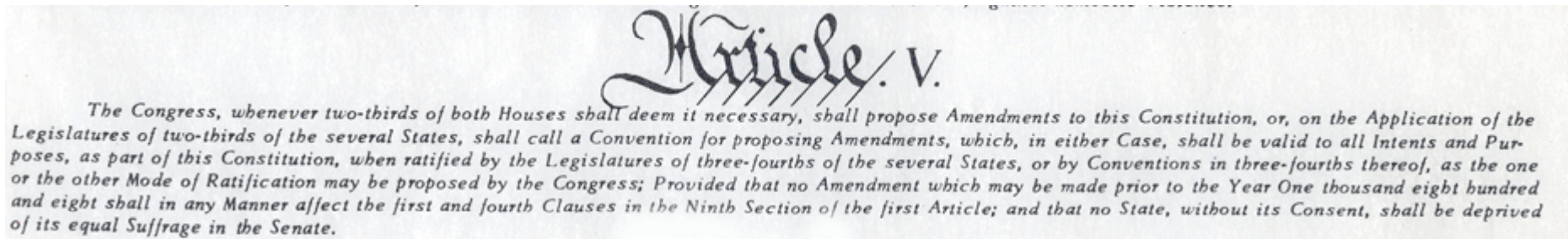
Let's start with

Hey kids ... what's an amendment?



# Let's start with **Hey kids ... what's an amendment?**

In Article V, the framers provided for two ways to change (amend) the Constitution



They had the foresight to know that for the system of government they were creating to survive, it had to be able to adapt as the nation grew and changed. But they didn't make it easy for that to happen.

The Constitution has been amended 27 times during the 219 years since it went into effect.

**2 concerned the production and sale of alcoholic beverages:**

- The 18<sup>th</sup> amendment (1919) prohibited the production and sale of most alcoholic beverages in the U.S.
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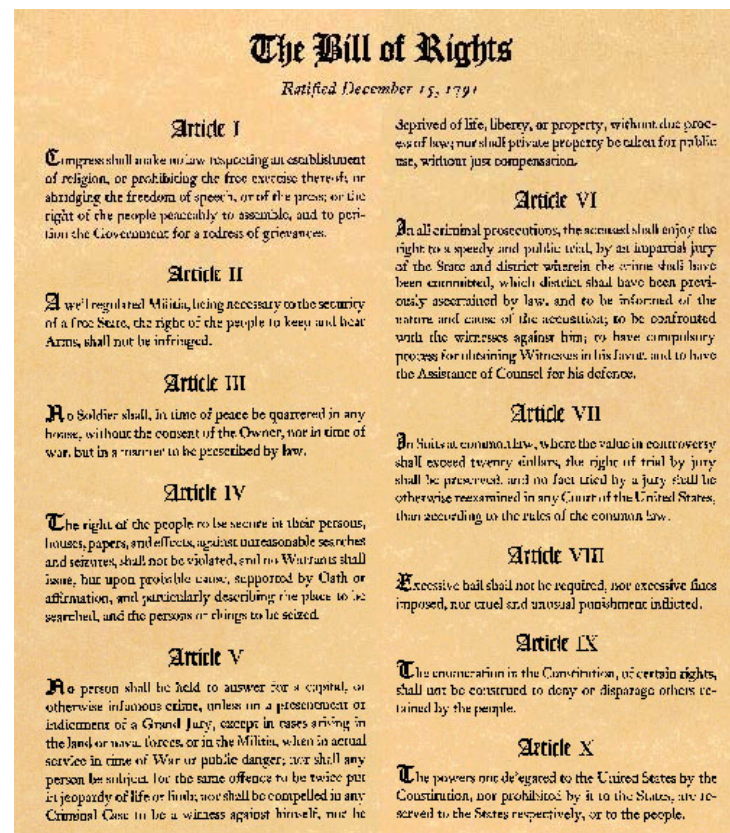
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## **8 made changes to the mechanics of government and Constitutional procedures.**

The Constitution has been amended 27 times during the 219 years since it went into effect.

That leaves 10. They are the most famous. Amendments 1-10 (**The Bill of Rights**) were submitted to the states by the first Congress, ratified quickly, and became effective in 1791.





The 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment, considered by many to be the most important of all, has been the source of endless controversy; the basis of lawsuit after lawsuit after lawsuit. In many ways, it touches each of our lives everyday. So, ...



# HEY, KIDS...WHAT'S The FIRST AMENDMENT?

- It protects several fundamental rights.
- How many of them can you name?



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## 1. Freedom of Speech



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4. Freedom to Petition for Redress of Grievances



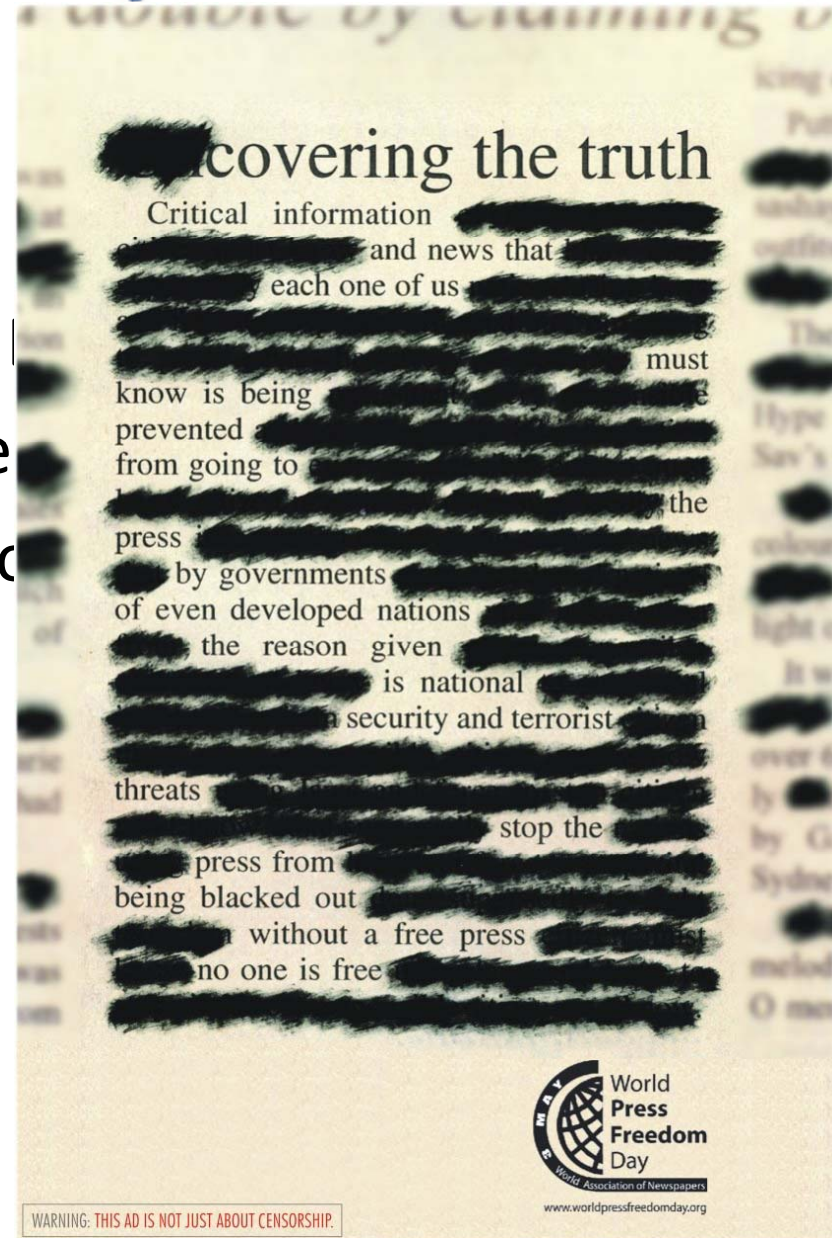


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2. Freedom of Religious
3. Freedom to Assemble
4. Freedom to Petition for
5. Freedom of the Press



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3. Freedom to Assemble Peacefully
4. Freedom to Petition for Redress of Grievances
5. Freedom of the Press

## **Amendment I**

**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.**

Each year the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment Center polls to find out what Americans think about issues relating to the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment. Let's see how your answers compare to some results from the 2007 poll.

- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

Musicians should be allowed to sing songs with lyrics that some people might find offensive.

Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_ Don't Know \_\_\_\_\_



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Agree 47% Disagree 51% Don't Know 3%

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The nation's Founders intended the United States to be a Christian nation.

Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_ Don't Know \_\_\_\_\_

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Agree 65% Disagree 31% Don't Know 4%

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- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

School officials should be allowed to discipline students who, while off-campus, post entries on social networking sites like "MySpace.com" that may be disruptive to school classes.

Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_ Don't Know \_\_\_\_\_

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Agree 50% Disagree 46% Don't Know 5%

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- If an amendment prohibiting burning or desecrating the American flag were approved, it would be the first time any of the freedoms in the First Amendment have been amended in over 200 years. Knowing this, would you still support an amendment to prohibit burning or desecrating the flag?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't Know \_\_\_\_\_

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Yes 83% No 15% Don't Know 2%



# Finally, News Headlines Show Teen Lives Touched by Constitutional Government

- YOU'RE 16, YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL AND YOU'RE A VOTER

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- YOU'RE 16, YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL AND YOU'RE A VOTER
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- DOWNLOAD A SONG--LOSE YOUR LOAN

# Happy Constitution Day!

## Why not celebrate everyday?

