

DEMOCRACY IS...

Expressing Ourselves Freely

The first 10 Amendments to the Constitution, which were added to protect the rights of individuals, are known as the Bill of Rights. Many of the rights most precious to Americans are listed in the First Amendment. These include freedom of religion; freedom of speech; a free press; the freedom to assemble, or gather, peacefully in public; and the freedom to petition the government, or ask for change.

In other words, the First Amendment guarantees that we are free to express our beliefs and opinions, and to tell the government what we want and need. We are also free to express ourselves in ways that go beyond words—through the way we dress, the books we read, and the interests we pursue. Our individual rights allow us to foster our own individuality, and to respect and appreciate the individuality of others.

In our democracy, the First Amendment protects these freedoms for everyone—the minority as well as the majority, the weak as well as the strong.

THINK ABOUT IT

What would life be like if we were not free to express our beliefs and opinions?

YOUR TURN

Write a letter to the next President! We will send your letters to the White House after the Inauguration in January.