

English Bill of Rights of 1689

History of the 13 Colonies and the laws & taxes that sparked rebellion against the British combines all of the items we've borrowed from history! Wrapped up in this combination of ideas is the English Bill of Rights of 1689. This document shows inspiration from Greece, Rome, religion, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment.

In turn, it influenced the American colonies and the Constitution of the United States.



Definition of the English Bill of Rights of 1689

The Meaning and Definition of the English Bill of Rights: The 1689 English Bill of Rights was a British Law, passed by the Parliament of Great Britain in 1689 that declared the rights and liberties of the people and settling the succession in **William and Mary** following the **Glorious Revolution of 1688** when James II was overthrown.

Summary of the English Bill of Rights

The 1689 English Bill of Rights had a massive influence on the colonies in North America and the Constitution of the United States. The most important Articles of the 1689 English Bill of Rights are as follows:

- A frequently summoned Parliament and free elections
- Members should have freedom of speech in Parliament
- No armies should be raised in peacetime
- No taxes could be levied, without the authority of parliament
- Laws should not be dispensed with, or suspended, without the consent of parliament
- No excessive fines should imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted

→ Are the Articles of the English Bill of Rights sounding familiar?

The English Bill of Rights

The English Bill of Rights established a **limited constitutional monarchy** in Great Britain. In a constitutional monarchy the King or Queen has a largely ceremonial position. It is a form of government in which a monarch acts as head of state but their powers are defined and limited by law. Constitutional monarchies employ a parliamentary system with a Prime Minister as head the government. The English Bill of Rights denounced King James II for abusing his power. The English Bill of Rights clearly established that the monarchy **could not rule without consent of Parliament**. The English Bill put in place a constitutional form of government in which the **rights and liberties of the individual were protected under English law**. The English Bill of Rights had a great influence on the colonies in North America and on the Constitution of the United States.

The Provisions of the English Bill of Rights

The English Bill of Rights followed the **Glorious Revolution of 1688** when King James II was replaced by William and Mary. The provisions of this important English Bill incorporated the Declaration of Rights and consisted of:

- A list of the misdeeds of King James II
- Thirteen Articles confirming the rights of Parliament and the people and defining the limitations
- Confirmation of the accession of William and Mary to the throne of England

Important Articles in the English Bill of Rights

The important articles in the English Bill of Rights are detailed in the following chart:

Important Articles in the English Bill of Rights	
Articles 1 and 2 of the English Bill of Rights	Laws should not be dispensed with, or suspended, without the consent of parliament
Articles 4 and 6 of the English Bill of Rights	No armies should be raised in peace time and no taxes levied, without the authority of parliament
Articles 13 and 8 of the English Bill of Rights	Parliament should be frequently summoned and that there should be free elections
Article 9 of the English Bill of Rights	Members and Peers should be able to speak and act freely in Parliament
Articles 10 of the English Bill of Rights	Excessive bail ought not to be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted

The Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights

The 1689 English Bill of Rights is one of the two great historic documents which regulate the relations between the Crown and the people, the other document being the 1215 *Magna Carta* of England. The *Magna Carta* started the process of establishing the democratic basis of the English Monarchy by:

- Limiting the powers of the king (No one is above the law!)
- Laying the basis for due process of law that should be known and orderly (which led to Trial by Jury)
- Prohibiting the king from taking property or taxes without consent of the Great Council



The 1689 English Bill of Rights enhanced the democratic process by:

- Guaranteeing free elections and frequent meetings of Parliament
- Giving English people the right to complain to the king or queen in Parliament (Free Speech)
- Forbidding excessive fines and cruel punishment
- Establishing representative government with laws made by a group that acts for the people

*** → American colonists expected to have the same rights granted in England by the *Magna Carta* and the 1689 English Bill of Rights. When the American colonists were denied these rights tensions grew in the colonies and led to the American Revolutionary War. Many of the themes and principles contained in the *Magna Carta* and the English Bill of Rights are continued in the American Declaration of Independence of 1776, the First State Constitutions, the Articles of Confederation, the U.S. Constitution, and in the US Bill of Rights.

The English Bill of Rights and the American Declaration of Independence

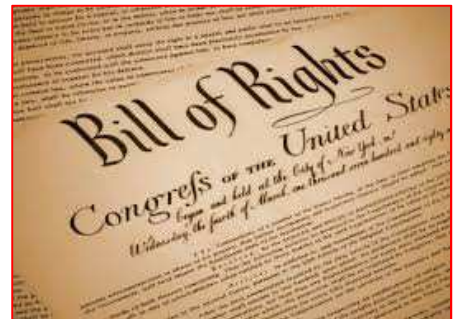
The 1776 American Declaration of Independence states that:

- All men are created equal and have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; these are **unalienable rights** - rights that government cannot take away
- Governments obtained their power from the consent of the people

The U.S. Bill of Rights

The 1791 U.S. Bill of Rights guarantees:

- Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of the press
- Due process of law, including protection from unfair imprisonment
- Trial by jury protecting people from “cruel and unusual punishment”



The English Bill of Rights was followed by the 1689 Mutiny Act

The English Bill of Rights were passed as British law in December 1689. The English Bill of Rights was quickly followed by the **Mutiny Act of 1689** which **sought to limit the maintenance of a standing army during peacetime to one year**. The British went against this act when they established Quartering Acts in the American colonies after the French & Indian War – one in 1765 and another in 1774. These acts were just a couple denials of “natural rights” that played a major part in the Boston Massacre and the protests of the American colonists in the Boston Tea Party which led to the American Revolutionary War.