

First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

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.

What It Does Mean

- You may peacefully assemble to share your public opinion
- You may have your opinions published in all forms of media (as long as they are not copyrighted or defamatory)
- You may voice your opinions (as long as they are not defamatory)

What It Doesn't Mean

- Use your speech to incite imminent lawless action (*Brandenburg v. Ohio 1969*)
- Use your press freedom to make and give out inappropriate materials (*Roth v. United States 1957*)
- Use your assembly freedom to harm people/places/things

Positive Ways for Citizens to be Involved in Monitoring and/or Influencing the Government

- Attend civic/public meetings (school board, county commission meetings, etc.)
- Peacefully protest
- Petition the government (write letters to representatives to seek help/reform or address an issue)
- Run for office
- Vote

Sources

<https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-1/>

<https://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/about-educational-outreach/activity-resources/what-does#:~:text=Among%20other%20cherished%20values%2C%20the%20First%20Amendment%20protects%20freedom%20of%20speech.>