

CIVIL LIBERTIES and CIVIL RIGHTS **in CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**

1st AMENDMENT (Bill of Rights)- establishes the freedoms of speech, press, religion, assembly and petition. Its “preferred position” as the first amendment indicates this as the most important amendment to the Constitution.

2nd AMENDMENT (Bill of Rights)- grants private citizens the right to keep and bear arms. Seen by some people as a guarantee against government tyranny.

4th AMENDMENT (Bill of Rights)- prohibits unreasonable or unwarranted searches & seizures, unless the police have “probable cause” to believe a crime has been committed. Evidence seized illegally is “tainted” and may not be introduced into a trial. However, recent court cases have allowed “good faith exceptions” to this “exclusionary rule.”

5th AMENDMENT (Bill of Rights)- outlaws self-incrimination or confessions forced by police or courtroom interrogations. Also prohibits “double jeopardy” trials.

6th AMENDMENT (Bill of Rights)- guarantees legal counsel (a lawyer) and speedy trials for people accused of a crime. Also provides for a jury trial by one’s peers, if requested by the defendant.

8th AMENDMENT (Bill of Rights)- prohibits unreasonably high bail amounts. Also outlaws “cruel & unusual punishment.”

13th AMENDMENT (1865)- abolished slavery or any other form of “involuntary servitude.”

14th AMENDMENT (1868)- granted citizenship to former slaves. More importantly today, it guarantees many “due process” trial rights to criminal defendants, and it grants “equal protection” rights that prevent discrimination to a number of groups.

15th AMENDMENT (1870)- guaranteed (men only) the right to vote no matter what race, color, or status as a former slave.

19th AMENDMENT (1920)- grants “suffrage” (the right to vote) to women.

24th AMENDMENT (1964)- prevents the establishment of “poll taxes” where voters must pay money to cast a ballot in an election.

26th AMENDMENT (1971)- lowered the minimum voting age from 21 to 18 years old. Passed in reaction to the drafting of 18 year-olds during the Vietnam War.