



THE FREEDOM CHEAT SHEET

Constitutional Principles · Landmark Court Cases · Key Legislation

Most Americans have never read the Constitution. Even fewer understand the court cases and laws that have shaped — and too often eroded — the liberties it was meant to protect. This guide changes that.

Inside you will find the eight constitutional principles every patriot must know, ten landmark Supreme Court rulings that define the boundaries of government power, and ten pivotal laws and amendments that have transformed American life — for better and for worse.

Knowledge is the first weapon of liberty. Use it.

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CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES

The eight foundational ideas every patriot must understand

1 Limited Government

The federal government may only exercise powers explicitly granted by the Constitution. All other powers belong to the states or the people (10th Amendment).

Why It Matters Today:

Washington has grown far beyond its constitutional boundaries. Every agency, mandate, and regulation that lacks clear constitutional authority is an act of usurpation — plain and simple.

2 Separation of Powers

Legislative, executive, and judicial branches each hold distinct authority. No single branch may accumulate unchecked power over the others.

Why It Matters Today:

Executive orders that bypass Congress, agencies that write their own laws, and courts that legislate from the bench all represent dangerous erosions of this foundational principle.

3 Federalism

Power is divided between the national government and the states. States serve as laboratories of democracy and a powerful check on federal overreach.

Why It Matters Today:

When Washington dictates education, healthcare, and energy policy to every state equally, it destroys the diversity and competition that makes federalism work. Local control is not optional — it's constitutional.

4 Individual Rights

Rights are inherent to the person — not granted by government. The Bill of Rights restricts government power; it does not define the limits of your liberty.

Why It Matters Today:

The moment you accept that rights come from government, you've accepted that government can take them away. The Founders understood this. Too many Americans today have forgotten it.

5 Due Process & Rule of Law

No person may be deprived of life, liberty, or property without lawful process. Government must follow its own rules — every single time, without exception.

Why It Matters Today:

Civil asset forfeiture, no-knock raids, and administrative law judges who act as prosecutor and jury simultaneously are all direct assaults on due process that conservatives and libertarians must oppose together.

6

Free Markets & Property Rights

Economic liberty is inseparable from political liberty. The right to own property and engage in voluntary exchange is constitutionally protected and morally essential.

Why It Matters Today:

Zoning laws that block housing, eminent domain abuse, crushing business regulations, and confiscatory taxation all attack the property rights that are the bedrock of a free society.

7

Free Speech & Press

Open debate is the lifeblood of self-governance. Government may not silence dissent, restrict political speech, or control the press — regardless of how offensive the speech may be.

Why It Matters Today:

Government-coordinated censorship of social media, 'misinformation' task forces, and campus speech codes are not edge cases. They are systematic attempts to control what Americans are allowed to think and say.

8

Right to Bear Arms

An armed citizenry is the final check on tyranny. The Second Amendment is an individual right — confirmed by the Supreme Court — and it shall not be infringed.

Why It Matters Today:

Every incremental gun restriction is a step toward disarmament. Red flag laws without due process, magazine bans, and registration schemes are not safety measures — they are control measures.

LANDMARK COURT CASES

Ten Supreme Court rulings that define the boundaries of government power

1803

Marbury v. Madison

Established judicial review — the Supreme Court's power to strike down laws that violate the Constitution. Every constitutional challenge in American history flows from this case.

Why It Matters Today:

The most powerful check on government overreach. Without it, Congress could pass any law it pleased with no recourse.

1819

McCulloch v. Maryland

Upheld implied federal powers under the Necessary & Proper Clause but ruled states cannot tax federal institutions. Defined the tension between federal and state authority that persists today.

Why It Matters Today:

A double-edged sword. It set limits on states but also opened the door to expanded federal power — a debate still raging 200 years later.

1905

Lochner v. New York

Struck down a state law limiting bakers' work hours as a violation of the freedom of contract. Landmark for economic liberty, though later overturned in the New Deal era.

Why It Matters Today:

The progressive left has never forgiven this ruling. It stands as proof that economic freedom is a constitutional right — and that courts can protect it.

1964

New York Times v. Sullivan

Set the 'actual malice' standard for defamation claims by public figures, making it very difficult to sue the press. Vital protection for political commentary and criticism of government.

Why It Matters Today:

Protects your right to criticize politicians and public officials without fear of ruinous lawsuits — the very cornerstone of a free press.

2008

D.C. v. Heller

Landmark ruling: the Second Amendment protects an individual right to keep a handgun at home for self-defense, entirely independent of service in a militia.

Why It Matters Today:

The most important gun rights ruling in American history. It settled the debate — the Second Amendment is an individual right, full stop.

2010

McDonald v. Chicago

Applied Heller to the states via the 14th Amendment. States and cities cannot ban handguns or circumvent the individual right to keep and bear arms.

Why It Matters Today:

Made clear that blue-state gun grabs are unconstitutional. Chicago, New York, and California cannot simply ignore the Second Amendment.

2012

NFIB v. Sebelius

The ACA was narrowly upheld as a tax, but the Court ruled Congress cannot use the Commerce Clause to compel citizens to purchase a product. A rare limit on federal power.

Why It Matters Today:

Roberts gave with one hand and took with the other. But the Commerce Clause limit was real — and conservatives still cite it to fight federal mandates.

2022

NYSRPA v. Bruen

Struck down New York's requirement that citizens show 'proper cause' to carry a firearm in public. The Second Amendment protects the right to carry outside the home.

Why It Matters Today:

A massive win. Carry permits cannot be arbitrarily denied by hostile bureaucrats. The right to self-defense does not end at your front door.

2023

303 Creative v. Elenis

The government cannot compel speech. A web designer cannot be forced by the state to create content that violates her sincerely held beliefs. Free speech includes the right to say no.

Why It Matters Today:

A landmark for religious liberty and free expression. Government cannot weaponize anti-discrimination law to silence your beliefs.

2024

Loper Bright v. Raimondo

Overtaken Chevron deference. Courts — not federal agencies — now have final authority to interpret ambiguous federal laws. Agencies can no longer write their own blank checks.

Why It Matters Today:

One of the biggest limited-government rulings in decades. The administrative state just lost its most powerful tool for self-expansion.

KEY LEGISLATION & AMENDMENTS

Ten pivotal laws that transformed American life — for better and for worse

1791

The Bill of Rights

The first 10 amendments to the Constitution. Guarantees freedom of speech, religion, the press, the right to bear arms, protection from unreasonable search, due process, and limits all power not granted to the federal government.

Why It Matters Today:

Not a list of privileges. A list of restrictions on government. Know every word.

1868

14th Amendment

Guaranteed equal protection and due process to all citizens, and applied those protections against state governments. Later used by courts to incorporate most of the Bill of Rights against the states.

Why It Matters Today:

The most litigated amendment in history. Both a shield for individual rights and a tool used to expand federal power over states — understand both sides.

1913

16th & 17th Amendments

The 16th authorized a federal income tax. The 17th established direct election of senators, removing them from appointment by state legislatures.

Why It Matters Today:

Many conservatives see these as pivotal mistakes — one unleashed the IRS, the other severed the Senate's connection to state governments and federalism.

1934

National Firearms Act

The first major federal gun control law. Imposed a tax and registration requirement on machine guns, silencers, and short-barreled firearms. Set the precedent for federal firearms regulation.

Why It Matters Today:

The foot in the door. Every subsequent gun control law traces its constitutional justification back to this 1934 statute.

1965

Voting Rights Act

Prohibited discriminatory voting practices, particularly in Southern states. One of the most significant civil rights laws ever passed. Key provisions were later limited in *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013).

Why It Matters Today:

A genuine civil rights achievement. Conservatives should own this history and distinguish legitimate voting integrity measures from discriminatory ones.

1973

War Powers Resolution

Required the president to notify Congress within 48 hours of committing military forces and limited unauthorized deployments to 60 days. Intended to reclaim congressional war powers.

Why It Matters Today:

Has been ignored by nearly every president since passage. A reminder that laws without enforcement are just suggestions.

1996

Welfare Reform Act

Replaced open-ended federal welfare entitlements with block grants to states and imposed work requirements. Led to dramatic drops in welfare dependency in the late 1990s.

Why It Matters Today:

The gold standard of conservative policy success. Returned power to states, required personal responsibility, and it worked.

2001

USA PATRIOT Act

Dramatically expanded government surveillance powers in the wake of 9/11. Authorized roving wiretaps, bulk data collection, and reduced judicial oversight of intelligence gathering.

Why It Matters Today:

A cautionary tale: emergency powers never go away. What was sold as temporary anti-terror authority became permanent infrastructure for mass surveillance.

2010

Affordable Care Act

Federalized health insurance markets, imposed individual and employer mandates, and massively expanded Medicaid. The central battleground for federalism and Commerce Clause limits.

Why It Matters Today:

The largest federal takeover of a private market in modern history. The fight is not over — healthcare freedom and market solutions remain the conservative answer.

2022

Inflation Reduction Act

Allocated nearly \$400 billion in climate and healthcare spending, dramatically expanded IRS funding and enforcement, and extended ACA subsidies. Passed via budget reconciliation.

Why It Matters Today:

Misnamed by design. It supercharged the IRS, locked in green energy mandates, and added hundreds of billions to the debt — with zero Republican votes.



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