was causing them to hold onto their native languages and cultures. The critics considered this undesirable. Studies showed that some bilingual programs were allowing students to remain in bilingual classes longer than three years and were not teaching them sufficient English to function in mainstream classrooms. In the early 1980s, the federal government quietly withdrew its support for native-language instruction programs.

In 1984, the government began providing funding for English immersion programs—programs that placed non-English-speaking students in all-English classes, forcing them to learn English in a hurry or be left behind. Several studies in the mid-1980s showed that the performance of the limited-English students in the English immersion programs declined. Meanwhile, public attitudes in California, with its rapidly growing foreign-born population, became increasingly hostile to bilingual programs. In 1998, California adopted an English-only requirement for instruction in all its schools. Arizona and several other states followed.

Bilingual education remained controversial in the 2000s. Advocates contended that non-English-speaking children will receive little or no education unless they are taught in their own language during the years when they are first learning English. With a poor start due to language difference, students are much more likely to drop out of school and consequently face low-paying jobs and poverty in the future. Opponents argue that students in bilingual programs may not be motivated to learn English as well as they should and will therefore not be able to secure good jobs later in life. They argue that the government should not use its funds to help non-native people preserve their cultures in the United States.

Bill of Rights

The Constitution of the United States of America is the document that created the federal government. The first ten amendments, or changes, to the Constitution are known as the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights was inspired by suggestions from members of the state legislatures that approved the Constitution in 1788.
Concerns about the Constitution

The Constitution was written by the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1787. The Convention contained delegates from twelve of the original thirteen colonies, later states. The delegates gathered at the Convention to improve the national government that existed under an agreement called the Articles of Confederation, which had been adopted in 1781.

After writing the Constitution through the summer of 1787, the Convention delegates sent it to the thirteen states for ratification, or approval. The Constitution stated that it would become effective upon ratification by at least nine states. The Constitution had strong support from influential politicians who wanted the United States to have a powerful central government. These people were known as Federalists; they were members of the Federalist Party.
Many Americans had great concerns about creating a strong federal government. Called Anti-Federalists, these people preferred that state governments have more power than the national government. While the Anti-Federalists objected to several parts of the Constitution, they focused their opposition on the absence of a bill of rights. In doing so, they hoped to gather enough popular opposition to prevent the Constitution from being ratified by the states.

A bill of rights is a document that specifies the rights of citizens that cannot be violated by a government. A bill of rights was not a new idea in 1787. Several states had a bill of rights in their state constitutions, including the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the Massachusetts Bill of Rights. There were older examples from English history: the Magna Carta (1215), the Petition of Right (1628), and the Bill of Rights (1689). Supporters of the idea found inspiration in the writings of philosophers John Locke (1632–1704), John Milton (1608–1674), and Thomas Paine (1737–1809).

Most Federalists either did not believe or were not too concerned that basic rights could be violated by the government set forth in the Constitution. They pursued the ratification of the Constitution as written by the Constitutional Convention, without a bill of rights. As the state conventions met to discuss ratification after the summer of 1787, however, it became apparent that the Anti-Federalists had mustered support for the notion of a bill of rights.

To convince the Anti-Federalist delegates to vote for ratification, the Federalists agreed to seek a federal bill of rights. As the state conventions began to approve the Constitution, they proposed more than one hundred amendments for the protection of individual liberties. By the time the Constitution was ratified by the required nine states in 1788, it was obvious that a bill of rights would have to be adopted.

**Writing a bill of rights**
The first U.S. House of Representatives assembled early in April 1789 with the Federalists in control of the government. (See Legislative Branch.) James Madison (1751–1836), a Federalist and the primary author of the Constitution, assumed leadership for creating a bill of rights. His personal plan was to write a bill of rights that would appease the Anti-Federalists without detracting from the powers of the federal government.
On June 8, 1789, Madison proposed that the House begin consideration of eight resolutions on amendments to the Constitution. The amendments were sent to a committee of ten members, including Madison, on July 21. Eventually the committee recommended a total of fourteen amendments to be considered by the full House of Representatives. After lengthy debate, the House voted that the amendments should not be written into the existing Constitution but should be added as a supplement. On August 24, the House proposed seventeen amendments to be sent to the Senate for its consideration.

The Senate began its debate the following week. Senate concerns prevented the passage of the amendments, so a committee of three U.S. senators and three U.S. congressmen gathered in September. They worked out a compromise agreement consisting of twelve amendments. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives passed the amendments and forwarded them to President George Washington (1732–1799; served 1789–97) to be sent to the states for ratification.

The original Constitution provides that amendments do not become effective unless ratified by at least three-fourths of the states. Two of the twelve amendments proposed by Congress in 1789 failed to be ratified, but the required number of states approved the other ten amendments by December 15, 1791.

**The Bill of Rights**

The Bill of Rights contains rights and freedoms that the government of the United States is not supposed to violate. The freedoms of religion, speech, the press, and assembly (the right to gather in a group) are set forth in the First Amendment. The Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms. The Third Amendment prevents the government from forcing a homeowner to house a soldier during peacetime against the owner’s consent. The Fourth Amendment prohibits the government from conducting unreasonable searches and seizures of people and their property. The protection of life, liberty, and property also appears in the Fifth Amendment.

The right to fair treatment in legal cases against a citizen appears in the Fifth Amendment, Sixth Amendment, Seventh Amendment, and Eighth Amendment. The Ninth Amendment says the provision of specific rights in the Constitution does not imply the denial of other rights. Finally, the Tenth Amendment says governmental power not given to
the federal government by the Constitution is retained by the states and the people.

The Bill of Rights is a popular and controversial part of the Constitution. Many citizens celebrate it as the bedrock of freedom in America. Other citizens believe federal power has grown stronger than the rights and freedoms that the Bill of Rights is supposed to protect. Important Supreme Court decisions often depend on the interpretation of the Bill of Rights. More than two centuries after its adoption, the Bill of Rights retains an important role in drawing the line between fair and unfair government actions and between the rights of citizens as individuals and as collective members of a society.

Birmingham Baptist Church Bombing

During the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, served as an organizing center for rallies and marches for racial desegregation, the process of ending the enforced separation of blacks and whites in public places. Many renowned civil rights leaders, such as Fred L. Shuttlesworth (1922–), Dick Gregory (1932–), Ralph Abernathy (1926–1990), and Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968), used the church as their headquarters at one time or another.

Birmingham was a seat of white resistance to desegregation. The city’s public safety commissioner, T. Eugene “Bull” Connor (1897–1973), was extremely hostile to the civil rights movement and scorned federal orders to integrate his city. Governor George Wallace (1919–1998) of Alabama was a strong segregationist as well and had vowed to disobey federal court orders to desegregate the schools. The Ku Klux Klan, a national white supremacy organization known for its use of violence, intimidation, and terrorism, was very strong in Birmingham.

Birmingham Sunday

On September 15, 1963, four hundred African Americans gathered to worship at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Just a few days earlier, the courts had ordered the Birmingham schools to be desegregated, and tensions between white segregationists and blacks were high. (See