

# US Government

## Second Amendment

The Second Amendment was part of the Bill of Rights that was added to the Constitution on December 15, 1791. This amendment protects the rights of citizens to "bear arms" or own weapons such as guns.

The Second Amendment has become a controversial amendment in recent years. Many people want more laws to prevent people from owning guns. They think this will help prevent shootings and keep criminals and mentally ill people from getting guns. Other people want to keep this right and not have it limited. They think that having guns will allow them to protect themselves from criminals and the rise of a tyrannical government.

### [From the Constitution](#)

Here is the text of the Second Amendment from the Constitution: "A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."

### [Why was the Second Amendment so important?](#)

You may think at first that the people of revolutionary times added this amendment so they could have guns to go hunting for food. While many people back then did use guns for hunting, this was not why the amendment was added. The Second Amendment was meant to help the people protect themselves from a tyrannical government. Just like the revolutionaries who fought against the King of England, they wanted to maintain their right to "bear arms" in case the new government began to take away their rights. At the time, owning guns by citizens was also important for other reasons including organizing a local militia, fighting off invasions from foreign powers, self-defense against Indian raids, and to help with law enforcement.

### [What is a "well-regulated militia"?](#)

The militia was a group of local men who could act as a military force in times of emergency. Most all of the men at the time were part of a local militia. The militia could be called upon to help to fight off Indian raids, invasions, or even act as the local police force. A "well regulated" militia was one that was trained, organized, and disciplined. In other words, not just a bunch of guys with guns.

### [What does "bear arms" mean?](#)

The term "bear arms" means to "carry a weapon." Although there is no description of what kind of "arms", the writers of the amendment at the time certainly included guns within the definition of "arms."

### [Does it protect individuals' rights or just militias?](#)

Many people question whether the amendment protects the rights of individuals to have guns or just militias. This is something people still argue about today. In 2008, the Supreme Court ruled that the Second Amendment allowed individuals to own guns.

### [Gun Laws](#)

Although the Second Amendment does allow for people to own guns, it does not prevent government regulation of firearms. Gun laws help to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill. They also help to keep track of guns and determine what type of weapons people are allowed to own. There are certainly some weapons, like a nuclear bomb, that the public should not own. The tough thing is deciding where to draw the line. This is currently of great debate in American politics.

## Interesting Facts about the Second Amendment

- It is sometimes referred to as Amendment II.
- There are actually two versions of the Second Amendment.
- The words are the same, but the punctuation is different.
- The British attempted to disarm the Patriots prior to the Revolutionary War.
- They also placed an embargo on firearms to the American colonies.
- Handguns are banned in some countries including Great Britain and Japan.

