

**8 Create your own free press.** Publish a newsletter, create a website, distribute flyers, or post to a blog. A press can be truly free only if it has a diverse set of voices; make sure yours is one of them. Fortunately, because of ready access to publishing technology, it has never been easier to self-publish.

**9 Submit a FOIA request.** If you're concerned with what the government is doing, the Freedom of Information Act empowers you to ask to see its records. It helps if you put the request in writing, and save a copy for your records, but you are not required to do so. For more information on making public records requests, read "Public Records and Open Meetings: Your Rights as a Citizen," available as a free download at [www.acluohio.org/publications](http://www.acluohio.org/publications).

**10 Join the ACLU and participate.** Your support helps the ACLU protect civil liberties through litigation, lobbying and public education. Your active participation can help even more. You can attend ACLU programs and bring your friends and family, work with a chapter or working group, or just distribute briefing papers and other materials. Join at [www.acluohio.org](http://www.acluohio.org).

### Where can I find out more?

The Ohio and national ACLU websites have an extensive amount of information on First Amendment issues and other recent developments in the ACLU's struggle to keep our country safe *and* free.

To become a member of the ACLU, or sign up for email alerts about free speech and other civil liberties issues, visit the ACLU of Ohio website, [www.acluohio.org](http://www.acluohio.org).

## 10 things you can do to protect the First Amendment



**Because freedom can't defend itself.**

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# The First Amendment

***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.***

The First Amendment is the foundation for many of America's most cherished values. Free speech, religious liberty, the freedom to read what we choose, and an open and responsive government are all rooted in this section of the Constitution. These rights have not always been respected, and are in constant need of defense. Here's what you can do to protect our most fundamental liberties.

## **1 Exercise your right to free speech.**

Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, post to an Internet forum, hold a demonstration, or just talk to a coworker. It doesn't necessarily have to be about a First Amendment issue; meaningful public dialogue about any issue helps keep the First Amendment strong.

## **2 Let Congress know that you want to protect the First Amendment.**

Congress often debates legislation that may protect or enhance the freedoms granted to Americans under the First Amendment.

Legislation that has recently been introduced includes a bill that would restore Net Neutrality and ensure that the Internet remains a safe haven for free speech. Also, Congress is considering legislation that would shield reporters from having to reveal sources unless there is an

immediate threat to national security, protecting their ability to write critical, substantive news on the government.

Please contact your legislator and tell them to support these and other bills that will support the First Amendment.

The Honorable Sherrod Brown  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-2315  
Fax: (202) 228-6321  
Email through his website at  
<http://brown.senate.gov>

The Honorable George Voinovich  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3353  
Fax: (202) 228-1382  
[senator\\_voinovich@voinovich.senate.gov](mailto:senator_voinovich@voinovich.senate.gov)

The Honorable (Representative)  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

If you aren't sure who your representative is, you can call your county board of elections or visit <http://scorecard.aclu.org>.

## **3 Read a banned book.**

Broadening your exposure to other ideas is at the heart of what makes the First Amendment great. Understanding several sides of an issue and other perspectives is crucial to a functioning democracy. For more information on banned books visit [www.aclu.org/bannedbooks/](http://www.aclu.org/bannedbooks/) or the American Library Association's website, [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org).

## **4 Peaceably assemble and have a house party in defense of civil liberties.**

Host a Constitution Cocktail Party to reform the PATRIOT Act or a Couch Party Against Censorship to tell the FCC to keep their hands off cable. For more ideas visit [www.acluohio.org](http://www.acluohio.org) and [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org).

## **5 Talk with someone whose religious beliefs are different from your own.**

America is a land of many faiths — try talking to your neighbors about theirs. Learning about others' beliefs helps to further understanding, strengthen communities, and broaden our experience.

## **6 Petition the government for a redress of grievances.**

We are constitutionally guaranteed the right to voice our concerns to the government. Attend a city council or school board meeting and become involved on the local level. A government for and by the people only works when the people actively participate.

## **7 Ensure that your local government has open meetings.**

A citizen can only participate in civic life if meetings are open. For this reason, an open, democratic process is protected by the Bill of Rights. If your local government is keeping the public out, demand access. Citizen activists can get results.