

# ADVOCATING FOR ISSUES YOU CARE ABOUT

## BASIC CIVIL LIBERTIES FRAMEWORK

1. The Constitution has provided us with perhaps the best democratic form of government in history.
2. “Checks and balances” are a key to ensuring one branch of our government doesn’t become dominant
3. Bill of Rights restrains the government from intimidating and controlling persons in the U.S.
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup> amendment protects dissent, freedom of belief; also helps provide transparency through a free press
  - b. 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment enables the people to have physical power to counter the government’s power
  - c. 4<sup>th</sup> amendment provides controls on government intruding into our private lives without good cause
  - d. 5<sup>th</sup> amendment ensures government has to use a reasonable, fair and impartial system if it wants to bring charges against us
4. The Founding Fathers and history show how important it is to uphold these features of our Constitution even when we disagree about someone’s beliefs; we can’t allow abuses of these rights to occur even when it is inconvenient for us.
  - a. We don’t advocate for a person’s stand on an issue, we advocate for their right to have that stand.
  - b. We don’t try to protect criminals; we try to protect the rights of all accused to a fair procedure. It’s important to develop within law enforcement a culture of following the Constitution or else enforcement officials will be tempted to cut corners when they think they have a clear case of guilt—they are sometimes wrong.
5. “Precedent” is important because later governments use it to justify new abuses.
6. Slippery slope argument—once the government abuses civil liberties, where does it stop? Government started wiretapping suspected terrorists, then wiretapped persons in the Middle East without probable cause, then started wiretapping U.S. persons in mass volume. The Patriot Act was intended for use against terrorists, now it is applied to suspected drug dealers, suspected money launderers, people suspected of bribing local officials.