

71 — THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

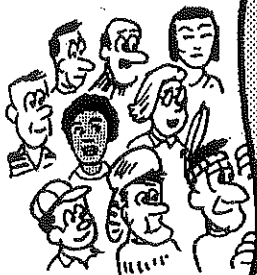
The national government is located in Washington, District of Columbia—a site chosen and surveyed by President George Washington in 1790.

1492

1789

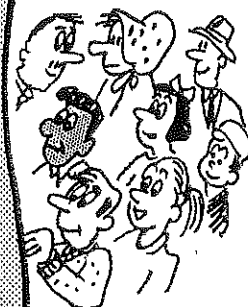
2000

CARTOON Constitution



THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (the Supreme Law of the Land)

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.



LEGISLATIVE

CONGRESS

Makes laws

(meets in the Capitol)



Senate

Two senators from each state, regardless of population, are elected for 6-year terms.



House of Representatives

House members are elected from states in proportion to population for 2-year terms.

Senate Committees

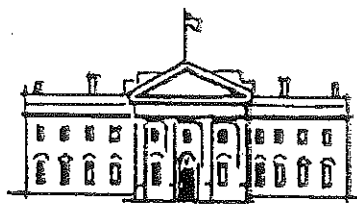
House Committees

EXECUTIVE

PRESIDENT

Executes laws

(Lives and works at the White House)



Each state elects presidential electors, based on the number of its congressmen. The electors then elect the president.

Cabinet Departments
(Created by Congress)

JUDICIAL

SUPREME COURT

Interprets and enforces laws

(meets in the Supreme Court Building)



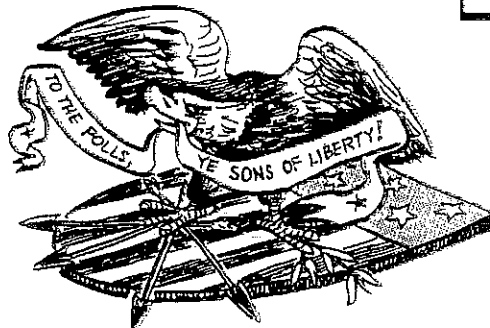
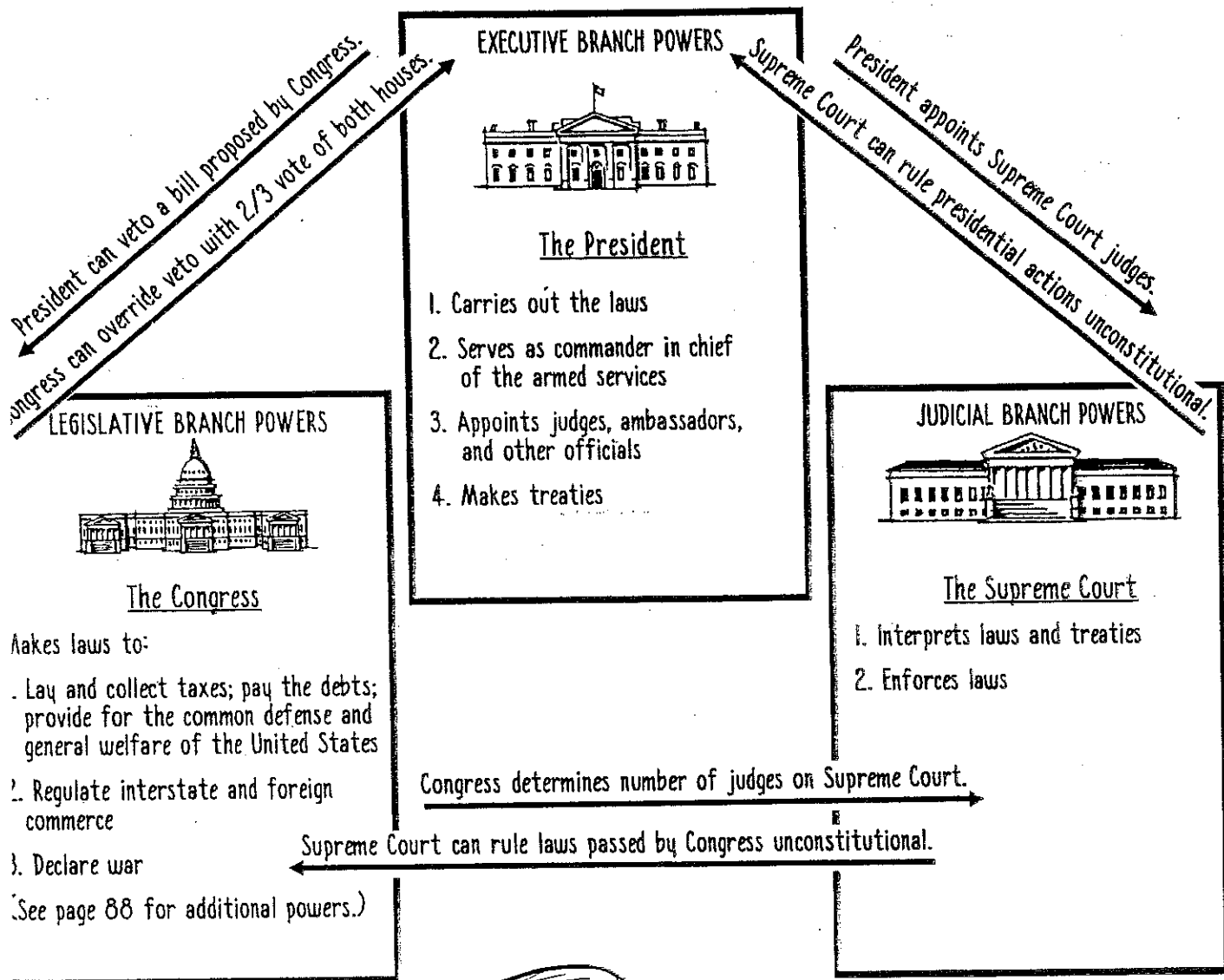
The president appoints judges, with advice and consent of the Senate. The term of office for the nine justices (originally there were only six) is for life—during good behavior.

Lower Federal Courts

Agriculture 1889	Commerce 1913	Defense 1949 (Dept. of War 1789)	Education 1979	Energy 1977	Health & Human Services 1953	Housing & Urban Development 1965	Interior 1849	Justice 1870	Labor 1913	State 1789	Transportation 1966	Treasury 1789	Veterans' Affairs 1988
---------------------	------------------	--	-------------------	----------------	---------------------------------	-------------------------------------	------------------	-----------------	---------------	---------------	------------------------	------------------	---------------------------

SEPARATION OF POWERS AND A SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES

In addition to its own separate powers, each of the three branches of government is empowered to check the other two, in order to keep any branch from assuming too much power. This balance of national power allows for a strong central government, with safeguards to prevent its becoming tyrannical.

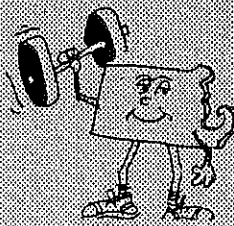


THE PEOPLE'S POWER

THE FEDERAL SYSTEM: DIVISION OF POWERS BETWEEN THE NATIONAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS

POWERS OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

- * Regulate interstate and foreign commerce
- * Coin money and regulate its value; fix standard of weights and measurements
- * Punish counterfeiting of securities and current coin of the United States
- * Set uniform rules of naturalization (process of becoming a U.S. citizen) and of bankruptcy (process of relieving debtors of debts they cannot pay)
- * Establish post offices
- * Promote science and useful arts with patents and copyrights
- * Punish piracies and felonies on the high seas
- * Declare war
- * Raise and support an army
- * Provide and maintain a navy
- * Make rules for governing armed forces
- * Call out state militias to execute U.S. laws, end rebellions, and repel invasions
- * Share governance of militias with states
- * Govern the national seat of government, a district separate from the states, not to exceed ten square miles (Washington D. C.)
- * Govern territories and admit new states
- * Make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers



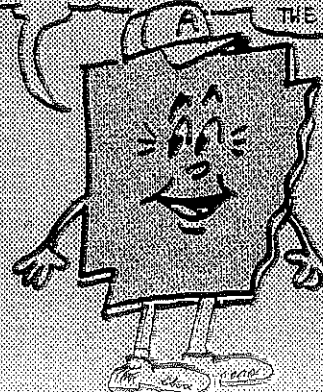
POWERS RESERVED FOR THE STATES

- * Establish local governments
- * Conduct elections
- * Regulate commerce within a state
- * Establish and maintain schools
- * Make marriage and divorce laws
- * Provide for public safety
- * Make laws regarding contracts, corporations, wills
- * Raise and support a militia

CONCURRENT POWERS OF NATIONAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS

- * Lay and collect taxes; pay debts
- * Borrow money
- * Provide for the general welfare
- * Establish courts
- * Enforce laws
- * Punish lawbreakers
- * Charter banks
- * Make bankruptcy laws
- * Build roads

OH YES — ONE THING MORE: THE 10TH AMENDMENT GAVE TO THE STATES "RESERVE POWER." THAT MEANS THE STATES OR THE PEOPLE HAVE ALL POWERS NOT GIVEN TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OR PROHIBITED TO THE STATES.

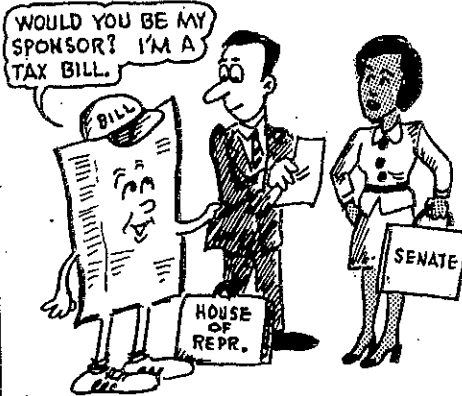


A bill is a proposal for a new law.

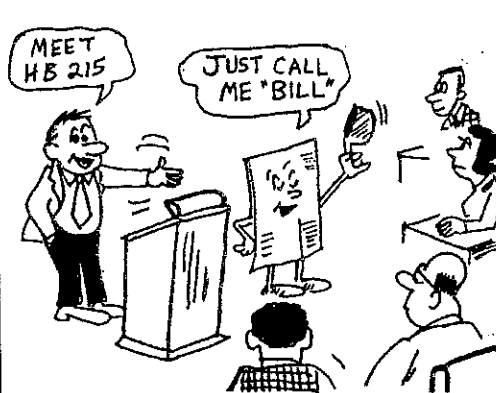
To become a law, a bill must pass both houses of Congress (the House of Representatives and the Senate) and be signed by the president.

The idea for a law can come from anyone—individuals, interest groups, the president of the United States—but only a member of the House of Representatives or Senate can sponsor a bill and guide it through the required steps.

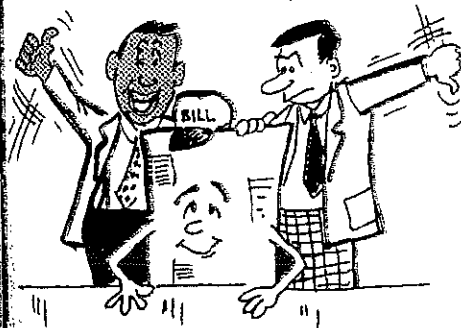
ORIGIN—Most bills may originate (be introduced) in either house of Congress or in both houses at the same time. But money bills must originate in the House of Representatives.



COMMITTEES—About 10,000 bills per year are introduced. Each is given a number and assigned to a standing, or permanent, committee—such as agriculture, energy or labor. There are 22 committees in the House of Representatives and 15 in the Senate; each has several subcommittees. A bill might be 1,000 pages long and involve 200 people on 15 subcommittees.



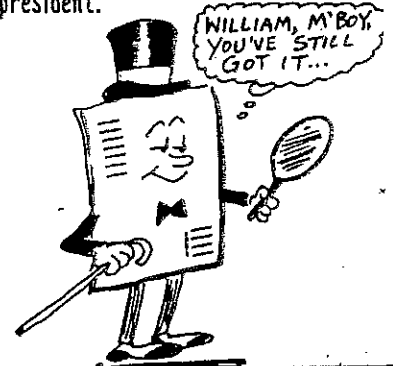
HEARINGS—Subcommittees hold hearings at which experts and interested parties speak for or against the bill. The subcommittee then makes recommendations about the bill to the full committee.



COMMITTEE ACTION—The full committee may: 1) approve, 2) rewrite and approve, 3) amend (change) and approve, 4) reject the bill. (Only about 1,000 of 10,000 bills considered per year become laws; most die in committee.) If approved, the bill goes to the house of origin for debate.

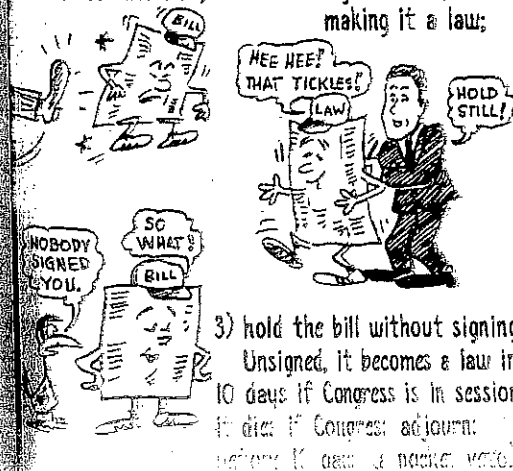


CONGRESSIONAL ACTION—Back in its house of origin the bill is debated, perhaps amended, and voted on. If passed, it goes to the other house for the same action. If both houses approve the final bill, it goes to the president.

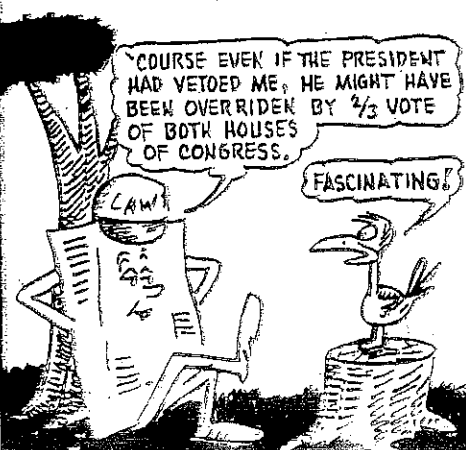


EXECUTIVE ACTION—The president may:

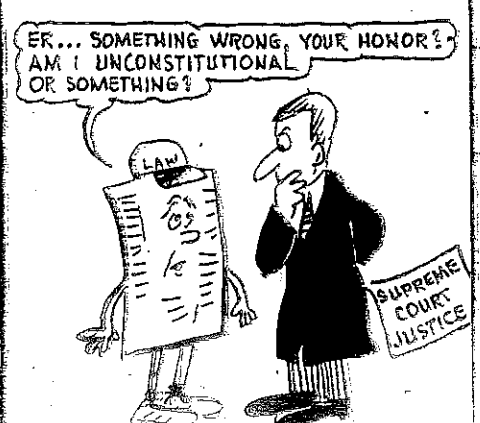
- 1) veto the bill;
- 2) sign the bill, making it a law;



If the president vetoes a bill, Congress may override the veto, and the bill becomes a law without the president's approval.



JUDICIAL ACTION—If a law does not conform to the United States Constitution, the Supreme Court has the power to declare the law unconstitutional.



72 — THE BILL OF RIGHTS, 1791 —

To make sure the new national government could not violate individual rights of the people—some dating back to the Magna Carta—Americans insisted that the U.S. Constitution be amended to include a bill (or listing) of these rights, thus guaranteeing them. Several states made this a condition for ratification. So in 1789 Congressman James Madison led the House of Representatives in recommending such amendments to the states for ratification. In 1791 the states ratified the first ten amendments to the Constitution—the Bill of Rights.

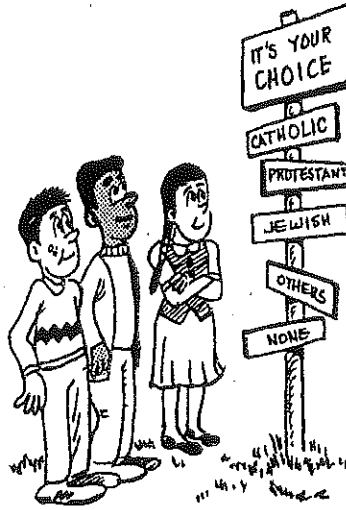
1st AMENDMENT:

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 OF THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.

THIS IS THE LONGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT AMENDMENT. NOW LOOK AT WHAT EACH OF ITS 5 PARTS MEANS.



Freedom of Religion



THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT ESTABLISH AN OFFICIAL RELIGION. THIS MEANS YOU CAN'T BE FORCED TO ATTEND, OR SUPPORT WITH TAXES, ANY RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION.



Freedom of Speech

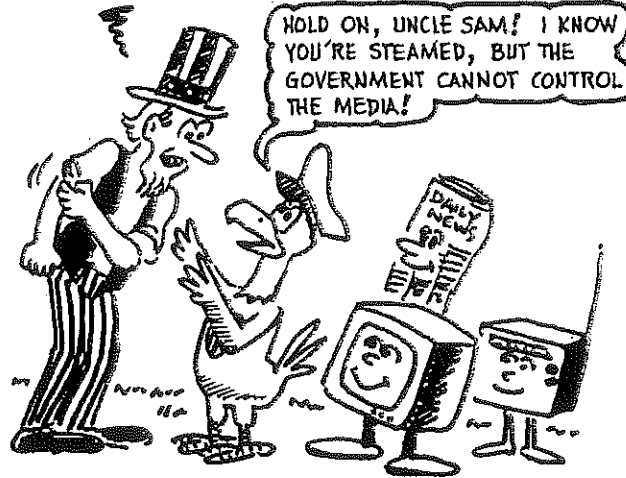


AND FURTHERMORE...

WHAT A LOT OF BUNK! I TOTALLY DISAGREE WITH HIM!

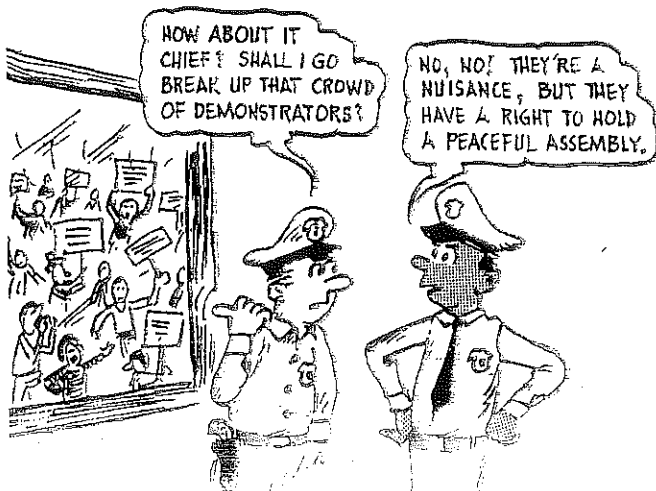
YES, BUT REMEMBER HE HAS A RIGHT TO SAY WHAT HE THINKS!

Freedom of the Press



HOLD ON, UNCLE SAM! I KNOW YOU'RE STEAMED, BUT THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT CONTROL THE MEDIA!

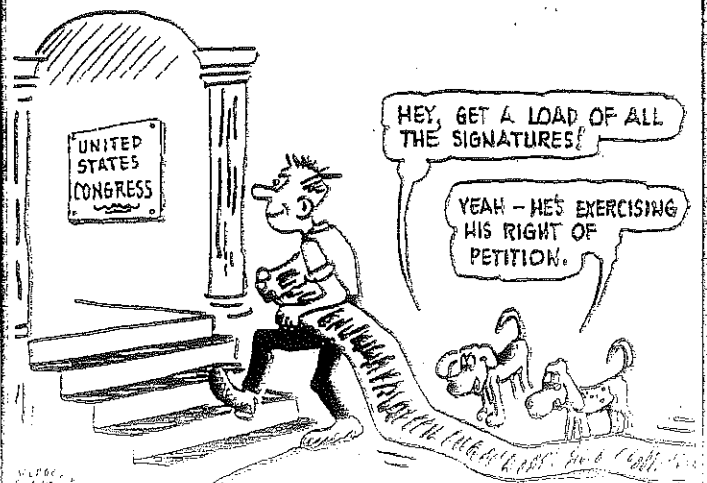
Freedom of Assembly



NOW ABOUT IT CHIEF! SHALL I GO BREAK UP THAT CROWD OF DEMONSTRATORS?

NO, NO! THEY'RE A NUISANCE, BUT THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO HOLD A PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY.

Freedom of Petition

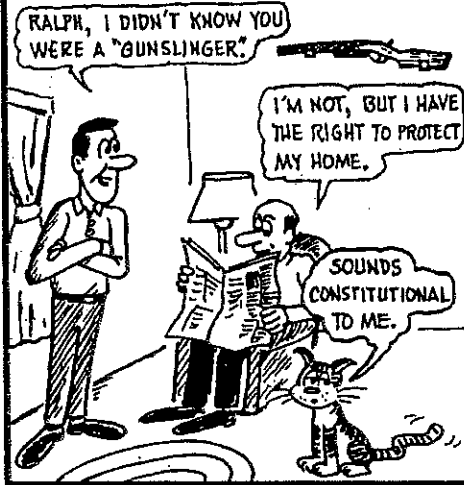


HEY, GET A LOAD OF ALL THE SIGNATURES!

YEAH - HE'S EXERCISING HIS RIGHT OF PETITION.

2nd AMENDMENT

Right to bear arms



3rd AMENDMENT

Right not to quarter soldiers



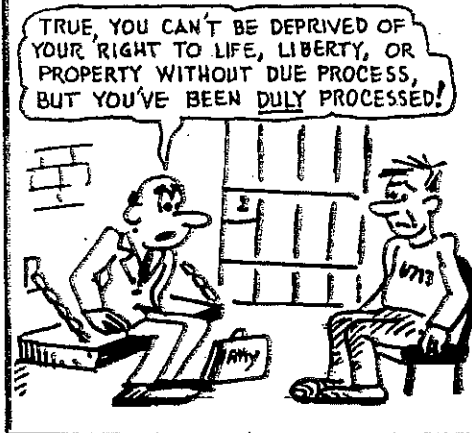
4th AMENDMENT

Freedom from unreasonable search and seizure



5th AMENDMENT

Due process of law



6th AMENDMENT

Right to a speedy trial



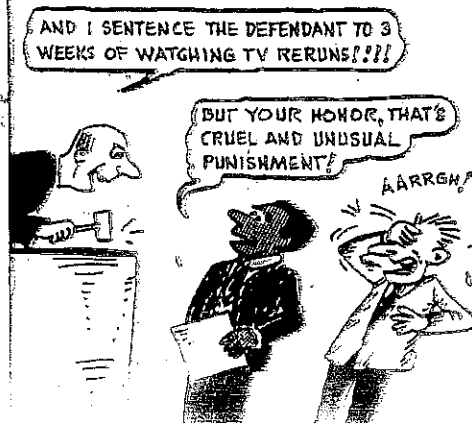
7th AMENDMENT

Right to a trial by jury



8th AMENDMENT

No cruel or unusual punishment



9th AMENDMENT

Constitutional rights do not deny other rights.



10th AMENDMENT

States' rights

