

The Bill of Rights

The Charters of England Complete; also Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights. Luffman, ed., pp. 412-417. Language simplified.

William and Mary gained the throne of England early in 1689, an event that became known as the Glorious Revolution.

An act for declaring the rights and liberties of the subjects and for settling the succession of the crown. The House of Lords and the House of Commons, assembled at Westminster, lawfully, fully, and freely representing all the people of this realm, did upon the thirteenth day of February, 1689, present to their majesties, William and Mary, the following declaration.

Whereas the late King James II, with the assistance of several evil counselors, judges, and ministers, did attempt to undermine the Protestant religion and the laws and liberties of this kingdom.

And whereas King James II abdicated [renounced] the government and made the throne vacant, his highness the prince of Orange took over the government and called a Parliament to establish laws which will prevent another attempt to destroy our religion, laws, and liberties.

Therefore, the Parliament declares:

1. That the king's supposed power of suspending laws without the consent of Parliament is illegal.
4. That levying taxes for the use of the king without the consent of Parliament is illegal.
5. That it is the right of the subjects to petition the king. Prosecuting anyone for petitioning the king is illegal.
6. That raising and keeping a standing army within the kingdom during times of peace without the consent of Parliament is illegal.
7. That those subjects who are Protestants may keep arms for their own defense as allowed by law.
8. That the king should not interfere with election of members of Parliament.
9. That the freedom of speech and debate in Parliament should not be taken away by any court outside of Parliament itself.
10. That excessive bail should not be required, excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.
13. And that to correct grievances and amend, strengthen, and preserve the laws, Parliament ought to be held frequently.