



Volokh authors First Amendment article for Britannica

UCLA scholar explains history and significance of Bill of Rights headliner

CHICAGO, October 4, 2010—The history, meaning and changing interpretations of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution are the subjects of [a new article](#) in the Encyclopaedia Britannica by the eminent constitutional scholar Eugene Volokh.

Volokh, who is the Gary T. Schwartz professor of law at the University of California, Los Angeles, has written a 3,200-word primer on the most famous constitutional amendment and that brief statement of law that serves as the cornerstone of several of Americans' most cherished rights: the freedoms of speech, religion, the press, assembly and the redress of grievances.

For all its fame and mythic stature, however, the First Amendment has also been subject to endlessly changing cultural and legal interpretations and been the flashpoint of conflicts over church-state relations, the limits of free speech and the responsibilities of the mass media.

To help readers make sense of it all, Volokh's article surveys the changing historical arguments and legal findings surrounding the First Amendment. It seeks to clarify several aspects of the constitutional freedoms set forth in the amendment around which confusion often arises, such as whether there is in fact a "wall of separation between church and state," in Thomas Jefferson's words, and what the nature and thickness of that wall really is. In an interview with Britannica executive editor Michael Levy that appears today [on the Britannica blog](#), Volokh explores these issues further.

"The history, the conflicts, and the legal and social thought surrounding those few words in the First Amendment are vast," said Levy. "We turned to Professor Volokh because he

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was the ideal writer to explain it all in a way that's both scholarly and accessible. He's succeeded at that, and we're proud to have his article in the encyclopedia."

Volokh is the author of several books, including "The First Amendment and Related Statutes," and "The Religion Clauses and Related Statutes." He blogs at [The Volokh Conspiracy](#).

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