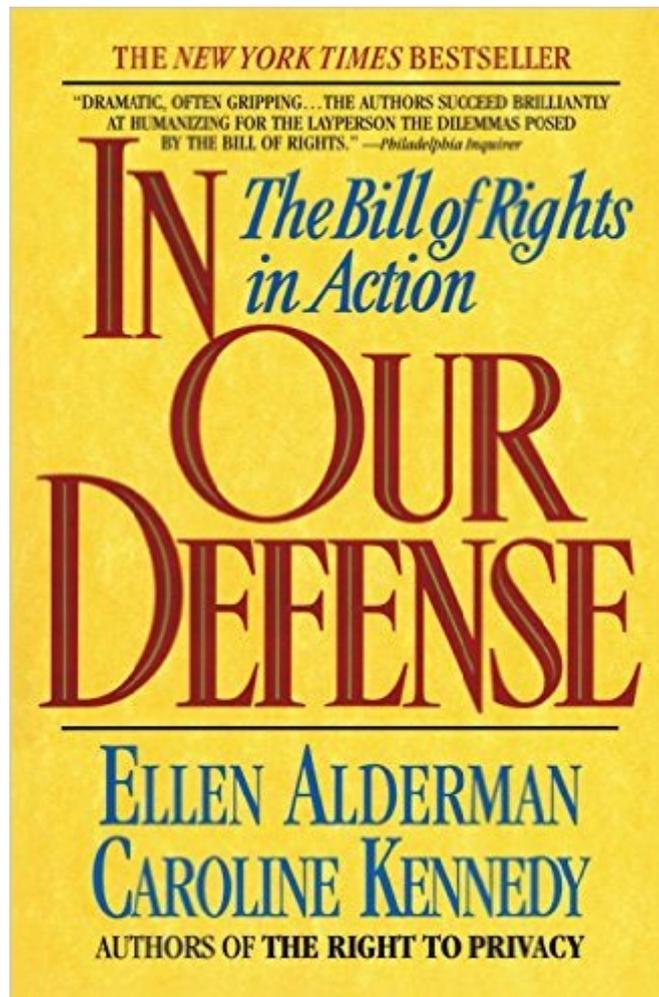


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# In Our Defense: The Bill Of Rights In Action



## Synopsis

We The People The Bill of Rights defines and defends the freedoms we enjoy as Americans -- from the right to bear arms to the right to a civil jury. Using the dramatic true stories of people whose lives have been deeply affected by such issues as the death penalty and the right to privacy, attorneys Ellen Alderman and Caroline Kennedy reveal how the majestic principles of the Bill of Rights have taken shape in the lives of ordinary people, as well as the historic and legal significance of each amendment. In doing so, they shed brilliant new light on this visionary document, which remains as vital and as controversial today as it was when a great nation was newly born.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I was assigned this book as supplementary reading for my AP government class, and while some of my friends didn't like it, I loved and am now re-reading it. The authors admit that their intent was 1) to make people see the Bill of Rights as more than a legal document, but a guideline created by framers who had no idea how different the nation would be centuries later, and 2) to make people think. For each of the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution, the authors pick a case, usually criminal, and discuss it in relation to the amendment. They choose their cases carefully, and all are thought-provoking. The Bill of Rights was created to protect the people from the government, and includes several rights delegated to those accused of crimes. However, in one poignant case, the right to confront the witness is used to declare an accused child molester's trial invalid. However, the book also lists many instances in which the Bill of Rights served as the final defense in a couple accused of Communism during the McCarthy era. While some may find the book boring, because

they're not interested in hearing about politics, many would find this book enjoyable to read, especially if they are interested in law.

Alderman and Kennedy have put together useful explanations of the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution. They have purposely simplified the concepts and eliminated elements that might provide richer historical detail but would also serve to confuse a reader without a legal background. "In Our Defense" succeeds as an introduction to the Bill of Rights. It does not go into great detail about the framers' intent, although there is some background in several of the cases. It does not explain how appellate courts or the Supreme Court operate, how precedents accumulate, or define legal concepts (concurring, dissenting, etc.). It does, however, detail each of the ten amendments, and provide a case study for each, demonstrating how the rights are interpreted, how they are limited, and how the law evolves over time. A good book, particularly with issues such as abortion, handgun control, and flag burning on the front pages of the newspapers. Readers can obtain a basic grounding in constitutional principles.

This is a nicely readable look at the U.S. Bill of Rights in action. Authors Ellen Alderman and Caroline Kennedy provide 20 concise real-life stories that define our rights and freedoms. These case studies deal with such issues as free speech, gun control, government powers, the rights of the accused, the death penalty, etc. Does the First Amendment give the Ku Klux Klan the right to broadcast on local cable television? Can the City of Detroit tear down an existing neighborhood to build an auto plant? Must two terrified young girls testify against their accused molester from the witness stand, or does the sixth amendment permit them to do so via closed circuit TV? The authors present these and several other equally interesting cases. Readers learn the facts, the competing legal arguments, and the eventual decisions of the courts - decisions that sometimes left the judges bitterly divided. Since their adoption in 1791, the Bill of Rights have endured over two centuries of societal and technological change. This is a readable, thought-provoking, and informative look at those ten amendments and their application to life in the USA.

If you've ever been surprised by the ruling of a court or a judge in regards to matters whose resolution would seem obvious to the casual legal observer, then perhaps you should read this book. Kennedy and Alderman walk through each of the "rights" we are guaranteed by the Constitution and give examples of court cases and decisions that often might seem counter-intuitive. Reading and understanding this book can help one become a more responsible

and informed U.S. citizen. I'm always finding myself referring back to this book, my most beat up, the most well used in my modest collection. Review every book you read- authors deserve your input and consideration.

This is one of my all-time favorite books and have read it many times. As a baby boomer I really like that the cases Carolyn Kennedy uses were incidents that I remember. This book is truly a must read for anyone who isn't sure what our Bill of Rights are all about.

This book gave a good illustration of the Bill of Rights in Action. It gave a court case to outline each of the principles in each amendment. For example the first amendment has a case for freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly. These cases demonstrate how our laws are interpreted, how they have changed since the framers wrote the constitution, and exactly how our rights are limited. Each case also helps to define parts of each amendment that are in question. In other words, the cases are good examples of judicial decisions that help to define our laws. I think that this book is amazing if you are in school, because it gives a very nice alternative to a textbook approach. Rather than just another boring textbook, this can be a helpful tool to teach the Bill of Rights with examples of the judicial process. Though this is a good book, I think that the Authors left out an important part of the book. It is lacking a historical background of the Bill of Rights. This book never illustrates what the framers intent was, nor does it try and communicate legal concepts. Though it may have been a good decision to leave out the legal concepts so the book would appeal to those without any legal experience, it would have been nice to at least get some information.

This is a well-written explanation of the Bill of Rights which is primarily for the layman. The authors take each amendment separately and present an actual case from start to finish. They even include a picture of the people involved. I would like to see this book used in high school social studies classes. In Our Defense is informative, very readable and an important addition to the average citizen's understanding of our Constitution.

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