

Why Jury Trials are Important to a Democratic Society

1. The American jury trial is **a constitutional right**. The founding fathers believed that the right to be tried by a jury of your peers was so important that it merited inclusion in the highest law of the land. Amendments 6 and 7 of the Bill of Rights contain this right:

Amendment VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.

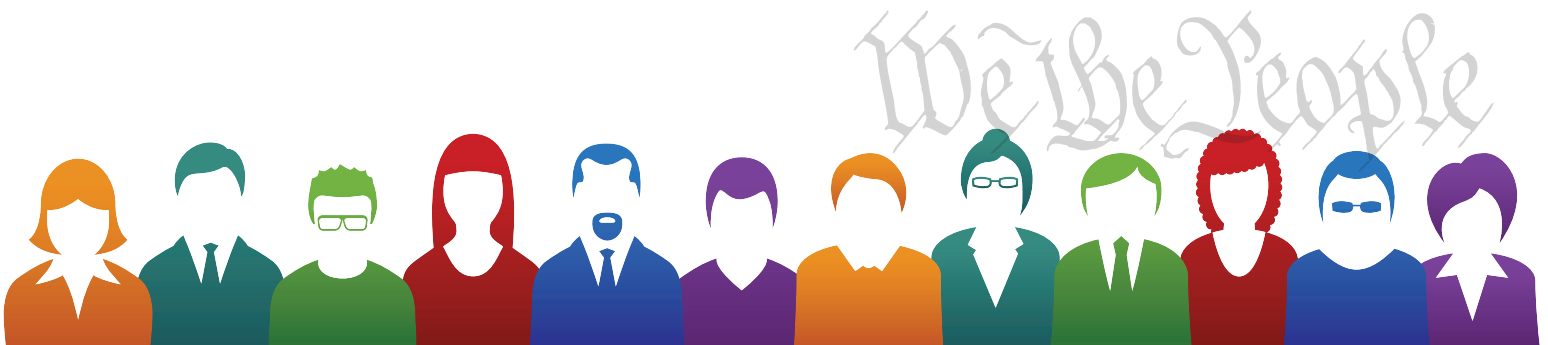
Amendment VII

In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

2. The jury trial is a vital part of America's system of **checks and balances**.

“Checks and balances” means that the judicial branch of government is equal to the other two branches (executive and legislative) and the courts can overturn laws or acts of government that violate constitutional rights. Our system of checks and balances requires a strong judicial branch. A strong judicial branch requires a healthy jury trial option. Jury service is your chance to have a voice in the judicial branch of government.

3. The founding fathers included jury trials in the constitution because **jury trials prevent tyranny**. The definition of tyranny is oppressive power exerted by the government. Tyranny also exists when absolute power is vested in a single ruler. Jury trials are the opposite of tyranny because the citizens on the jury are given the absolute power to make the final decision.



4. Trial by jury is a **unique part of America's democracy**. Most countries do not have jury trials. It is one of the things that make us unique as a country, and something we should be proud of.
5. Jury trials provide an opportunity for citizens to **participate in the process of governing**. Serving on a jury is the most direct and impactful way for citizens to connect to the constitution. It is more active and participatory than voting. Citizens can help perpetuate our system of laws, and stabilize our democracy.
6. Jury trials **educate jurors about the justice system**. People who serve on juries have a greater respect for the system when they leave. Serving on a jury gives people insight into the justice system and their own communities, and corrects misapprehensions about what takes place in a courtroom.
7. Jury trials provide a method of **peaceful dispute resolution**. Most citizens will be impacted at some point in their life by a conflict, such as a divorce, a personal injury due to negligence, a contractual dispute, an employment dispute, etc. There are many ways to resolve such disagreements, but if other methods fail, a jury trial is one way to have final resolution in a peaceful manner.
8. Jury trials offer the **voice of the people** to the civil and criminal justice systems. If you are accused of a crime, you have the right to ask for a jury of your peers to judge your guilt or innocence. In a civil case, a jury of citizens will determine community standards and expectations in accordance with the law. We do not want judges and lawyers making every important decision; they are not representative of the people of the United States. Juries provide the voice of common sense and the perspective of the citizen to our developing body of law.

