

After the ratification of the Constitution, James Madison proposed amendments to create a Bill of Rights. He was carrying out the Federalist promises made at the ratifying conventions.

The following reading is Madison's speech before the House of Representatives in the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress supporting a Bill of Rights and recommending its contents.

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## 18

### SPEECH BEFORE THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN 1789 PROPOSING AMENDMENTS TO ADD A BILL OF RIGHTS TO THE CONSTITUTION



*James Madison*

It appears to me that this house is bound by every motive of prudence, not to let the first session pass over without proposing to the state legislatures some things to be incorporated into the constitution, as will render it as acceptable to the whole people of the United States, as it has been found acceptable to a majority of them. I wish, among other reasons why something should be done, that those who have been friendly to the adoption of this constitution, may have the opportunity of proving to those who were opposed to it, that they were as sincerely devoted to liberty and a republican government, as those who charged them with wishing the adoption of this constitution in order to lay the foundation of an aristocracy or despotism. . . .

It cannot be a secret to the gentlemen in this house, that, notwithstanding the ratification of this system of government by eleven of the thirteen United States, in some cases unanimously, in others by large majorities; yet still there is a great number of our constituents who are dissatisfied with it; among whom are many respectable for their talents, their patriotism, and respectable for the jealousy they have for their liberty, which, though mistaken in its object, is laudable in its motive. There is a great body of the people falling under this description, who as present feel

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