



Eric Deaton, U.S. Senate Candidate
1387 Crawford-Tom's Run Road
New Lebanon, OH 45345
www.deatonforsenate.com
937-751-6670

Rights and Responsibilities

I'm glad my fellow citizens are once again studying the Constitution and questioning the federal government's authority to legislate on the vast number of issues they are currently involved in. The U.S. government's power over us, our finances and our states rights are all encompassing and have overwhelmed about every aspect of our lives. In order to combat these infringements upon our lives we must band together as Americans and exercise our remaining individual rights to save our nation. These very rights, which promise to be our salvation, could be lost in the next few years through the ratification of international treaties that our current regime supports.

So let's take a look at the rights we have to work with in this political battle to save the very foundations of our country. But more importantly, let's review the responsibilities we each have to exercise these rights responsibly.

We have the right to vote and elect our representatives at the Federal level inherently embedded within the Democratic process built into the Constitution. Through this process we can band together as Americans with the common goal of preserving our fundamental liberties. As voters, we control the very make-up of our Federal Government. If we work together and send representatives and senators to Washington that we know respect these rights, then we will always have the ability to rein in our government. The right to vote comes with several responsibilities too. Our civic duty as U.S. citizens requires us to vote, so if you are not registered to do so, go register now. When we vote it is our responsibility to vote wisely, understand the issues and know the stances and differences in the candidates on the ballot. To vote responsibly, we must all be willing to take some time in our daily lives to stay abreast of current events, our government's performance and the focus of all levels of government that represent us. As election times near, we all need to learn about the ballot initiatives and candidates and then vote wisely in order to keep our liberties, yet allow for a more perfect union to be carried out.

The first amendment to the U.S. Constitution gives us several rights such as the right to free speech, the right to practice our religion of choice, the right to peaceably assemble and the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances. With our right to free speech we have the responsibility to not slander or libel others. With this right we also have the responsibility to give testimony to others about evil and treasonous measures we have witnessed and have knowledge of. With our right to practice a religion of our choice in our own way we are still responsible to respect the rights of others who practice other or no religions. With our right to assemble peaceably comes the responsibility to not be destructive or cause harm to other citizens, private property or public property. And our right to petition our government is certainly under utilized, so let us work together in a responsible manner to make our voices heard in the halls of congress by all those who have been elected to represent us.

We have the right to keep and bear arms as outlined in the second amendment and our supreme court has upheld this as an individual right. But with this right comes the responsibility to use your firearms wisely. We are all responsible for keeping them away from untrained children, criminals and the mentally unstable. Gun owners are expected to know how to safely operate



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and store their firearms. Gun ownership also implies the responsibility and right to protect oneself and others from physical harm and home invasion. Most importantly is the responsibility to answer a call to arms to protect our nation from foreign invasion and tyranny in our own government. It is for this very reason that the founding fathers put the militia clause in the second amendment. This clause was not there to imply that this was not an individual right, but instead to point each of us to our responsibility that we are to be that militia in times of need. When viewing our gun ownership responsibilities it becomes clear why the second amendment was worded in the way that it was.

The third amendment ensures that soldiers will not be quartered in our homes or that our private property shall not be confiscated in times of peace for use by our military. Even in times of war, such use of private property is to be compensated as prescribed by the laws of the land. We as citizens do have the responsibility to show our troops support through positive reinforcement, ongoing communications and through the use of public funds to support them. We also should show them our respect and gratitude for serving us and our nation as they put their lives on the line for the American cause.

With the fourth amendment we all gain the right to privacy in our homes and protection from unwarranted search and seizure. Our responsibility is to not hide illegal contraband and to behave in a manner consistent with the laws of the society we live in. Additionally we are responsible for reporting others who are harboring fugitives, illegal weapons and contraband that endanger our communities and nation. In this way, the proper warrants can be issued to protect us from terrorists and the criminal elements of society.

The sixth amendment guarantees us all a trial by a jury of our peers and legal council to defend ourselves. In order for us to have these rights each of us is responsible to fulfill our calls to jury duty and to support the use of public funds to defend the accused in our courts.

Each of these rights is important in their own ways, but all come with corresponding responsibilities that are expected of each of us to carry out our civic duty as citizens. When one looks at each right as carrying corresponding responsibilities, it becomes clear why some of the amendments were worded in the way that they are. As citizens, we all need to strive to protect these rights in a peaceful way through constant vigilance. Only when these fundamental rights are taken away are more aggressive measures justifiable and required to be taken. I hope that if ever such a time faces our nation, that we once again band together in that common spirit of liberty to take swift and sure action to ensure our posterity to future generations of Americans.

Eric Deaton