

# *The People's Rights*

*An Accompany Publishing Musical Play*

## **CHARACTERS**

### The FRAMERS:

James Madison  
George Mason  
Elbridge Gerry  
Edmund Randolph  
Bill O. Rights

### The STATES:

Jersey Girl  
New Hampshire  
Maine Man  
Penny Sylvania  
New York  
Connie Tiggut

### SUPREME COURT JUSTICES:

Supreme Court Justice #1  
Supreme Court Justice #2  
Supreme Court Justice #3

### The READERS:

Reader #1  
Reader #2  
Reader #3

### GEE QUIZ SHOW:

I.M. Smarterthanyou  
Contestant #1  
Contestant #2  
Contestant #3  
Sportscaster #1  
Sportscaster #2

### POINT-COUNTERPOINT:

Moderator  
Deuce  
Auntie

### THE GOLFERS:

Golfer  
Detective #1  
Detective #2

### OTHER PLAYERS:

Tom Foolery  
Referee  
Running Gag  
Announcer

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<b><u>SCENES</u></b>	<b><u>SONGS</u></b>	<b><u>AMENDMENTS COVERED</u></b>
Introduction	<i>"Amend The Constitution"</i>	
<u>Scene One:</u> Madison & Mason		
<u>Scene Two:</u> States Are Talking		
<u>Scene Three:</u> Framers Of The Constitution		
<u>Scene Four:</u> The Constitutional Convention	<i>"Then You're Ratified"</i>	
<u>Scene Five:</u> Gee Quiz	<i>"Right To Speak Our Mind"</i>	Amendment I
<u>Scene Six:</u> Point, Counterpoint		Amendment II
<u>Scene Seven:</u> The Forgotten Amendment		Amendment III
<u>Scene Eight:</u> The Golfer	<i>"Doing Due Process"</i>	Amendment IV
<u>Scene Nine:</u> The Real World		Amendments V, VI, VII, VIII
<u>Scene Ten:</u> Unenumerated Rights	<i>"Thanks Be To You Ten And Nine"</i>	Amendments IX & X
<u>Scene Eleven:</u> The Big Conclusion		Amendment III

**INTRODUCTION**

The stage is starkly lit, barely illuminating the nightclub Constitutional Convention in the background. Select characters, such as BILL O. RIGHTS and CONNIE TIGGUT, in full costume, scurry around in the background. They are putting the finishing touches on the nightclub, making final adjustments to the set.

The READERS enter and address the audience.

READER #1

Hello, and welcome to the \_\_\_\_\_ School production of "The People's Rights." We'll start the show in just a moment, but first, a note to the parents and other adults in attendance.

READER #2

This particular play focuses on The Bill of Rights and the Constitutional amendment process.

READER #3

We realize a great deal of it will be over your heads.

*[Suddenly, RUNNING GAG runs on, clutching at the throat and gasping a few times, then quickly runs offstage.]*

READER #1

For instance, that was a "Running Gag."

READER #2

Also, according to a recent survey, less than 10% of American adults can name the ten amendments that comprise The Bill of Rights...

*[READER #1 elbows READER #2 in the ribs and gives a look that says, "come on, keep it simple."]*

READER #2

Oh, sorry, "comprise" means "to contain." I forgot you're not middle school students.

READER #3

Did you know that 75% of American adults can only name 2 or 3 amendments?

READER #1

And just think: you're the ones running this country.

READER #2

So, we'll try to take things slowly, stop to review the facts often, and avoid big words like "comprise."

READER #3

We realize you'll have lots and lots of questions. But don't worry, your students have been studying The Constitution and Bill of Rights for quite some time. They can teach you everything you need to know.

READER #1

However, please save your more complicated questions for after the show. Your student will gladly explain the intricacies of the constitutional process on the way home.

READER #2

Perhaps for a small increase in weekly allowance or extended weekend privileges.

READER #3

But for now...

READER #1, READER #2 AND READER #3 [TOGETHER]

On with the show!

*[The ENTIRE CAST files onto stage in full wardrobe. The audience will see the various zany costumes during this first song.]*

 **SONG: "AMEND THE CONSTITUTION"**

Amend the Constitution  
Amend means making changes  
Since there's a bit of debate  
Let's go back and reframe it  
The people want some justice  
The spirit not the letter  
Protecting all the free men  
We can make it better

Bill of Rights is ready  
Time to make a change

Amend the Constitution  
Amend means making changes  
The system isn't perfect  
Let's go back and reframe it  
The people want some justice  
The spirit not the letter  
Protecting all the free men  
We can make it better

Bill of Rights is ready  
Time to make a change

Amend the Constitution  
Amend the Constitution  
Amend the Constitution  
Amend the Constitution  
Amend

*[After the song, the entire CAST files offstage, except for JAMES MADISON and GEORGE MASON.]*

*[The scene quickly shifts.]*

**SCENE ONE: MADISON & MASON**

JAMES MADISON and GEORGE MASON meet downstage center.

JAMES MADISON holds a large, impressive document, unframed.  
GEORGE MASON admires it with him.

JAMES MADISON

Hey, look what I've got.

GEORGE MASON

Cool. Where did you get it?

JAMES MADISON

Philadelphia.

GEORGE MASON

What are you going to do with it?

JAMES MADISON

I don't know. Thought maybe I'd frame it.

GEORGE MASON

Great idea. Can I help?

JAMES MADISON

Sure. Where should we start?

GEORGE MASON

Umm...here. *[Pointing]* Right at the top. Where it says, "We the People."

JAMES MADISON

Always a good place to start.

*[JAMES MADISON hands the document over to GEORGE MASON.]*

GEORGE MASON

Hey, this thing's kind of heavy.

JAMES MADISON

Tell me about it.

[GEORGE MASON hands it back.]

GEORGE MASON

I think if we're going to frame it correctly, we're going to need some help.

JAMES MADISON

OK. Like who?

GEORGE MASON

Everybody and anybody. Then again, I'd be happy with — say — fifty-five delegates from twelve of the original thirteen states.

JAMES MADISON

Cool. We can make it a party.

GEORGE MASON

A Continental Congress!

JAMES MADISON

A Constitutional Convention!

[Slight pause. They admire the document a moment more.]

GEORGE MASON

I love the way it's worded.

JAMES MADISON

Me, too.

GEORGE MASON

"In order to form a more perfect Union."

JAMES MADISON

It's beautiful. So poetic. So...

GEORGE MASON

Un-conventional?

JAMES MADISON

Ironic, don't you think?

*[Blackout as scene ends.]*

**SCENE TWO: STATES ARE TALKING**

Lights up. JERSEY GIRL enters from one side, while NEW HAMPSHIRE and MAINE MAN enter from the other. The STATES are back in plain clothes at this point, not in their nightclub outfits.

JERSEY GIRL

Hey, guys, how's it going?

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Good.

MAINE MAN

What's up?

JERSEY GIRL

Nothing much. [Asking MAINE MAN] Who's your friend?

MAINE MAN

Hampshire.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

I'm new.

JERSEY GIRL

Me too!

MAINE MAN

Aren't we all.

JERSEY GIRL

So what are you guys doing tonight?

MAINE MAN

Going to that new club.

JERSEY GIRL

Which one?

NEW HAMPSHIRE

The Constitutional Convention. Everyone's going to be there.

JERSEY GIRL

Really? Like who?

MAINE MAN

Are you kidding? Everybody!

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Connie, Penny, Mary...

MAINE MAN

...Georgia, Del, Virginia, Carolina...

JERSEY GIRL

What about her sister?

NEW HAMPSHIRE

The short one?

JERSEY GIRL

South Carolina.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Yep. She'll be there, too.

JERSEY GIRL

Wow! Those guys are my idols.

MAINE MAN

I know, I know — mine too!

JERSEY GIRL

They're all so...

ALL

*[Together]* Original!

MAINE MAN

Oh, and that other new guy.

JERSEY GIRL

York?

MAINE MAN

Yep.

JERSEY GIRL

Awesome! I love New York!

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Hey, what about Rhode?

MAINE MAN

*[Looks down, disappointed]* No. I'm afraid not.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Why?

MAINE MAN

I don't know. It's like Rhode is an island or something.

JERSEY GIRL

Oh, well. Too bad. *[Keeping things upbeat]* Still, sounds like it's going to be great!

MAINE MAN

I'm telling you, don't miss it.

JERSEY GIRL

I won't. You're my Maine Man.

MAINE MAN

Oh, so what are you wearing?

JERSEY GIRL

Gosh, I don't know. I'll probably just throw something on.

MAINE MAN

No — please — don't tell me you're going to wear those old Articles of Confederation.

JERSEY GIRL

Why not?

MAINE MAN

Seriously, they're so...1781.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

I need to look sharp.

MAINE MAN

I want to look good tonight.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

I think I'll get a new sweater.

JERSEY GIRL

I could use a New Jersey.

MAINE MAN

OK. So where should we go shopping?

JERSEY GIRL

How about that new store out west.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Which one?

MAINE MAN

The Cumberland Gap.

JERSEY GIRL

Word has it they're expanding.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

I think that's a different play.

*[They laugh. Blackout. There is a quick transition to the next scene.]*

**SCENE THREE: FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION**

Lights up. JAMES MADISON, standing alone, holds the newly framed Constitution, admiring it at arm's length.

GEORGE MASON, ELBRIDGE GERRY, EDMUND RANDOLPH and BILL O. RIGHTS enter. BILL O. RIGHTS carries a large stack of papers — the ten Amendments.

GEORGE MASON

Wow! That looks great!

JAMES MADISON

[Not yet noticing the others] Yeah, I think it really turned out well.

ELBRIDGE GERRY

It sure did.

BILL O. RIGHTS

Too bad we have to change it.

JAMES MADISON

What? [Finally noticing the others] Uh...George? Who are these guys?

GEORGE MASON

Oh. This is Elbridge Gerry.

ELBRIDGE GERRY

Hello.

GEORGE MASON

This is Edmund Randolph.

EDMUND RANDOLPH

Pleased to meet you.

GEORGE MASON

[Introducing BILL] And this is—

BILL O. RIGHTS

[Sticks out hand to shake] Rights, William O. But you can call me Bill.

JAMES MADISON

Right.

BILL O. RIGHTS

Right—sss. With an 'S'. Plural. There's more than one.

JAMES MADISON

No, I mean, "right", I get it.

BILL O. RIGHTS

Oh.

JAMES MADISON

But what's all this talk about change? I mean, I thought we all agreed this is how we'd frame The Constitution.

GEORGE MASON

We did. But, well, some of us have been talking.

JAMES MADISON

And...?

GEORGE MASON

James, we know you've worked hard for that frame, but this is Bill O. Rights. He's got some great new ideas. We really think you should listen.

ELBRIDGE GERRY

He's going to revolutionize the way people are governed.

JAMES MADISON

Ummm, excuse me. Revolution? New government? Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't we already do that? I mean, with the tea party and everything?

[GEORGE MASON, ELBRIDGE GERRY and EDMUND  
RANDOLPH laugh.]

GEORGE MASON

Oh, James, if it were only that simple.

ELBRIDGE GERRY

We may have won the war, but the battle's just begun.

EDMUND RANDOLPH

Some people wanted to appoint George Washington king. Where would that have gotten us?

*[JAMES MADISON gestures, "I don't know."]*

EDMUND RANDOLPH

Right back where we started!

JAMES MADISON

Right. Which is why we framed a new Constitution.

GEORGE MASON

Exactly. And now we need to change it.

JAMES MADISON

Why?

GEORGE MASON

In order to make it more perfect.

JAMES MADISON

But the nightclub opens in an hour. And I just finished this frame. I mean, this is the Constitution we're talking about. Once it's framed, that's it.

GEORGE MASON

Well, not exactly.

JAMES MADISON

What do you mean "not exactly?"

ELBRIDGE GERRY

Read the document.

JAMES MADISON

I did! I helped write it.

BILL O. RIGHTS

Well, then you of all people must know that if a proposed amendment to the Constitution passes both houses of the legislature — The Senate and The House of Representatives — by a two-thirds majority vote and is later approved by three quarters of the states, the amendment is ratified and becomes a permanent part of The Constitution.

JAMES MADISON

Wow! That's quite a mouthful.

BILL O. RIGHTS

Don't worry, it's printed on the program. You can review it after the show.

JAMES MADISON

Ha! There are thirteen states.

GEORGE MASON

So?

JAMES MADISON

So, I'm no mathematician, but three-quarters of thirteen is...*[thinks for a moment]*...well, it's a really weird number.

ELBRIDGE GERRY

It's ten. You round it up.

JAMES MADISON

Round it up? What the heck does that mean?

ELBRIDGE GERRY

When the first digit after the decimal place is greater than—

JAMES MADISON

*[Interrupting]* Whoa! Digit? Decimal place? I thought this was civics, not math.

ELBRIDGE GERRY

It is. What's your point?

JAMES MADISON

Three-quarters of thirteen isn't even a number! Can't we just keep it simple?

GEORGE MASON

Actually, no, we can't.

BILL O. RIGHTS

A simple majority is fine for passing simple laws...

ELBRIDGE GERRY

Like speed limits and stuff.

BILL O. RIGHTS

But an Amendment to the Constitution requires a super-majority vote.

GEORGE MASON

Which is two-thirds of both houses and three-quarters of the states.

JAMES MADISON

Yeah, you already said that. Sounds like a hassle to me. What's so super about it?

EDMUND RANDOLPH

It's bigger.

ELBRIDGE GERRY

And better.

GEORGE MASON

And almost everyone has to agree.

EDMUND RANDOLPH

Well, three quarters of them anyway.

BILL O. RIGHTS

Besides, we can't just go around reframing the Constitution every time a simple majority demands it.

GEORGE MASON

That would be too complicated.

*[JAMES MADISON waves his arms in the air, trying to sort out the confusion.]*

JAMES MADISON

OK, OK, OK. Let me get this straight. We can't just keep things simple because that would be too complicated. The Constitution is nearly perfect but we still need to make it more perfect. And even though we won the war, the battle's just begun?

GEORGE MASON

Exactly!

JAMES MADISON

But when will it ever end? There will always be new amendments, new ideas, new laws. Things we've never even thought of. The Constitution will keep changing forever. They'll still be arguing about it five hundred years from now.

GEORGE MASON

If we're lucky.

JAMES MADISON

Lucky? How can you say that?

ELBRIDGE GERRY

Because disagreement is good. In fact, some say it's even healthy.

BILL O. RIGHTS

Not everyone can be happy with every single law.

GEORGE MASON

No system is ever perfect, but most of the laws protect all of the people some of the time...

ELBRIDGE GERRY

Some of the laws protect most of the people all of the time...

EDMUND RANDOLPH

And all of the laws protect some of the people most of the time.

JAMES MADISON

But what about the nightclub? Everybody who's coming is expecting a new Constitution, fully framed. Ready to go.

GEORGE MASON

One step at a time.

ELBRIDGE GERRY

You bring The Constitution.

EDMUND RANDOLPH

We'll bring Bill O. Rights, here.

BILL O. RIGHTS

*[Holding up the stack of paper]* I'll bring these handy amendments.

GEORGE MASON

We'll reframe it on the spot.

JAMES MADISON

What? Right there at the party? In front of everyone?

GEORGE MASON

Why not? "Of the People, By the People, For the People."

EDMUND RANDOLPH

*[Patting BILL on the back]* Bill, we'll get you ratified yet.

*[End of Scene.]*

*[Cue song: "Then You're Ratified". While the music intro plays, the stage transitions into the nightclub Constitutional Convention.]*