

# Magna Carta

or

## The Great Charter of King John Granted June 15th, A.D. 1215, In the Seventeenth Year of His Reign

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John, by the Grace of God, King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and Earl of Anjou, to his Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Earls, Barons, Justiciaries, Foresters, Sheriffs, Governors, Officers, and to all Bailiffs, and his faithful subjects, - Greeting.

Know ye, that We, in the presence of God, and for the salvation of our own soul... have in the First place granted to God, and by this our present Charter, have confirmed, for us and our heirs for ever:

(1) That the English Church shall be free, and shall have her whole rights and her liberties inviolable; and we will this to be observed in such a manner, that it may appear from thence, that the freedom of elections, which was reputed most requisite to the English Church, which we granted, and by our Charter confirmed, and obtained the Confirmation of the same, from our Lord Pope Innocent the Third, before the rupture between us and our Barons, was of our own free will: which Charter we shall observe, and we will it to be observed with good faith, by our heirs for ever.

We have also granted to all the Freemen of our Kingdom, for us and our heirs for ever, all the underwritten Liberties, to be enjoyed and held by them and by their heirs, from us and from our heirs.

(7) A widow, after the death of her husband, shall immediately, and without difficulty have her inheritance;

(8) No widow shall be compelled to marry herself, while she is willing to live without a husband; but yet she shall give security that she will not marry herself without our consent, if she hold of us, or without the consent of the lord of whom she does hold, if she hold of another.

(10) If any one hath borrowed any thing from the Jews, more or less, and die before that debt be paid, the debt shall pay no interest...

(17) Common Pleas shall not follow our court, but shall be held in any certain place.

(18) We, or our Chief Justiciary, if we are out of the kingdom, will send two Justiciaries into each county, four times in the year, who, with four knights of each county, chosen by the county, shall hold the aforesaid assizes, within the county on the day, and at the place appointed.

(21) Earls and Barons shall not be fined but by their Peers, and that only according to the degree of their delinquency.

- (23) Neither a town nor any person shall be compelled to build bridges or embankments, excepting those which anciently, and of right, are bound to do it.**
- (30) No Sheriff nor Bailiff of ours, nor any other person shall take the horses or carts of any free-man, for the purpose of carriage, without the consent of the said free-man.**
- (31) Neither we, nor our Bailiffs, will take another man's wood, for our castles or other uses, unless by the consent of him to whom the wood belongs.**
- (35) There shall be one measure of wine throughout all our kingdom, and one measure of ale, and one measure of corn, namely the quarter of London; and one breadth of dyed cloth, and of russets, and of halberjects, namely, two ells within the lists. Also it shall be the same with weights as with measures.**
- (38) No Bailiff, for the future, shall put any man to his law, upon his own simple affirmation, without credible witnesses produced for the purpose.**
- (39) No freeman shall be seized, or imprisoned, or dispossessed, or outlawed, or in any way destroyed; nor will we condemn him, nor will we commit him to prison, excepting by the legal judgement of his peers, or by the laws of the land.**
- (40) To none will we sell, to none will we deny, to none will we delay right or justice.**
- (54) No man shall be apprehended or imprisoned on the appeal of a woman, for the death of any other man than her husband.**
- (63) Wherefore, our will is and we firmly command that the Church of England be free, and that the men in our kingdom have and hold the aforesaid liberties, rights, and concessions, well and in peace, freely and quietly, fully and entirely, to them and their heirs, of us and our heirs, in all things and places, for ever as is aforesaid.**

**It is also sworn, both on our part, and on that of the Barons, that all the aforesaid shall be observed in good faith, and without any evil intention. Witnessed by the above, and many others.**

**Given by our hand in the Meadow which is called Runningmead, between Windsor and Staines, this 15th day of June, in the 17th year of our reign.**

# PETITION OF RIGHT

(1) The petition exhibited to his majesty by the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons in this present parliament assembled, concerning divers rights and liberties of the subjects...

(2) To the king's most excellent majesty: in the five-and-twentieth year of the reign of King Edward III, it is declared and enacted that from thenceforth no person should be compelled to make any loans to the king against his will, because such loans were against reason and the franchise of the land; and by other laws of this realm it is provided that none should be charged by any charge or imposition, called a benevolence, or by such like charge; by which the statutes before mentioned, and other the good laws and statutes of this realm, your subjects have inherited this freedom, that they should not be compelled to contribute to any tax, tallage, aid, or other like charge not set by common consent in parliament:

(3) And where also, by the statute called the Great Charter of the Liberties of England, it is declared and enacted that no freeman may be taken or imprisoned, or be disseised of his freehold or liberties or his free customs, or be outlawed or exiled or in any manner destroyed, but by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land;

(4) and in the eight-and-twentieth year of the reign of King Edward III it was declared and enacted by authority of parliament that no man, of what estate or condition that he be, should be put out of his land or tenements, nor taken, nor imprisoned, nor disinherited, nor put to death, without being brought to answer by due process of law: nevertheless, against the tenor of the said statutes and other the good laws and statutes of your realm to that end provided, divers of your subjects have of late been imprisoned without any cause showed; and when for their deliverance they were brought before your justices by your majesty's writs of habeas corpus, there to undergo and receive as the court should order, and their keepers commanded to certify the causes of their detainer, no cause was certified, but that they were detained by your majesty's special command, signified by the lords of your privy council; and yet were returned back to several prisons without being charged with anything to which they might make answer according to the law.

(5) And whereas of late great companies of soldiers and mariners have been dispersed into counties of the realm, and the inhabitants against their wills have been compelled to receive them into their houses, and there to suffer them to sojourn, against the laws and customs of this realm, and to the great grievance and vexation of the people:

(6) They do therefore humbly pray your most excellent majesty that no man hereafter be compelled to make or yield any gift, loan, benevolence, tax, or such like charge without common consent by act of parliament; and

that none be called to make answer, or take such oath, or to give attendance, or be confined, or otherwise molested or disquieted concerning the same, or for refusal thereof; and that no freeman, in any such manner as is before mentioned, be imprisoned or detained; and that your majesty would be pleased to remove the said soldiers and mariners; and that your people may not be so burdened in time to come; and that the foresaid commissions for proceeding by martial law may be revoked and annulled; and that hereafter no commissions of like nature may issue forth to any person or persons whatsoever, to be executed as aforesaid, lest by colour of them any of your majesty's subjects be destroyed or put to death, contrary to the laws and franchise of the land (all of which they most humbly pray of your most excellent majesty as their rights and liberties according to the laws and statutes of this realm); and that your majesty would also vouchsafe and declare that the awards, doings, and proceedings to the prejudice of your people in any of the premises shall not be drawn hereafter into consequence or example; and that your majesty would be also graciously pleased, for the further comfort and safety of your people, to declare your royal will and pleasure that in the things aforesaid all your officers and ministers shall serve you according to the laws and statutes of this realm, as they tender the honour of your majesty and the prosperity of this kingdom.

# **ENGLISH BILL OF RIGHTS**

**(1) Whereas the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons assembled at Westminster, lawfully, fully and freely representing all the estates of the people of this realm, did upon the thirteenth day of February in the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred eighty-eight [old style date] present unto their Majesties, then called and known by the names and style of William and Mary, prince and princess of Orange, being present in their proper persons, a certain declaration in writing made by the said Lords and Commons in the words following:**

**(2) Whereas the late King James the Second, by the assistance of divers evil counsellors, judges and ministers employed by him, did endeavour to subvert and extirpate the Protestant religion and the laws and liberties of this kingdom;**

**(3) By assuming and exercising a power of dispensing with and suspending of laws and the execution of laws without consent of Parliament;**

**(4) By levying money for and to the use of the Crown by pretence of prerogative for other time and in other manner than the same was granted by Parliament;**

**(5) By raising and keeping a standing army within this kingdom in time of peace without consent of Parliament, and quartering soldiers contrary to law;**

**(6) By causing several good subjects being Protestants to be disarmed at the same time when papists were both armed and employed contrary to law;**

**(7) By violating the freedom of election of members to serve in Parliament;**

**(8) By prosecutions in the Court of King's Bench for matters and causes cognizable only in Parliament, and by divers other arbitrary and illegal courses;**

**(9) And whereas of late years partial corrupt and unqualified persons have been returned and served on juries in trials,**

**(10) And excessive bail hath been required of persons committed in criminal cases to elude the benefit of the laws made for the liberty of the subjects;**

**(11) And illegal and cruel punishments inflicted;**

**(12) And thereupon the said Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons, pursuant to their respective letters and elections, being now assembled in a full and free representative of this nation, taking into their most serious consideration the best means for attaining the ends aforesaid, do in the first place (as their ancestors in like case have usually done) for the vindicating and asserting their ancient rights and liberties declare:**

- **(13) That the pretended power of suspending the laws or the execution of laws by regal authority without consent of Parliament is illegal;**
- **(14) That the pretended power of dispensing with laws or the execution of laws by regal authority, as it hath been assumed and exercised of late, is illegal;**
- **(15) That levying money for or to the use of the Crown by pretence of prerogative, without grant of Parliament, for longer time, or in other manner than the same is or shall be granted, is illegal;**
- **(16) That it is the right of the subjects to petition the king, and all commitments and prosecutions for such petitioning are illegal;**
- **(17) That the raising or keeping a standing army within the kingdom in time of peace, unless it be with consent of Parliament, is against law;**
- **(18) That the subjects which are Protestants may have arms for their defence suitable to their conditions and as allowed by law;**
- **(19) That election of members of Parliament ought to be free;**
- **(20) That the freedom of speech and debates or proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of Parliament;**
- **(21) That excessive bail ought not to be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted;**
- **(22) That all grants and promises of fines and forfeitures of particular persons before conviction are illegal and void;**
- **(23) And that for redress of all grievances, and for the amending, strengthening and preserving of the laws, Parliaments ought to be held frequently.**

**(24) And whereas it hath been found by experience that it is inconsistent with the safety and welfare of this Protestant kingdom to be governed by a popish prince, or by any king or queen marrying a papist, the said Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons do further pray that it may be enacted, that all and every person and persons that is, are or shall be reconciled to or shall hold communion with the see or Church of Rome, or shall profess the popish religion, or shall marry a papist, shall be excluded and be for ever incapable to inherit, possess or enjoy the crown and government of this realm and Ireland and the dominions thereunto...**