

Most Americans Don't Understand Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights protects many freedoms—but do you know what they are? An alarming number of American adults can't tell you what those rights are, according to a Bill of Rights Institute study conducted by Harris Interactive.

When asked questions about the nation's founding documents, American adults selected the correct answer 32 percent of the time, on average, on questions about the Bill of Rights and the freedoms it protects and American government.

Perhaps most shocking is the finding that 42 percent of American adults incorrectly chose one of America's founding documents as the source of Karl Marx's exposition of Communism, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Of these incorrect answers, the most commonly chosen was the Bill of Rights.

"It is imperative that Americans understand how vital the Bill of Rights is to the future of our country," says Jason Ross, vice president of Education Programs at the Bill of Rights Institute. "With a better understanding of our founding

documents, Americans can see how much our experiment in self-government depends on the ideas of the founders and why America has been an example of freedom up to this point.”

Other noteworthy findings from the poll include the following:

- 60 percent of American adults did not correctly identify the principle that the U.S. government’s powers are derived from the people as an attribute that makes America unique.
- 55 percent of American adults did not recognize that “education” is not a First Amendment right.
- Nearly one in 10 American adults do not realize that the right to petition our government is a freedom guaranteed in the First Amendment.
- Only 20 percent of American adults correctly selected the 10th Amendment as the amendment that reserves powers to the states and the people.

The results of this survey are serving as the impetus for the Bill of Rights Institute’s launch of a new initiative to educate Americans about the freedoms embodied in the first 10 amendments. Included in the new educational initiative is the

launch of a new website, , which focuses on the text of the first 10 amendments, landmark Supreme Court cases and decisions based on those amendments, and various games and resources for students and educators.