

## **First Amendment Revisited**

It's been some time since I've addressed the first amendment to the US Constitution, but feel the need to do it again, just to remind myself and others what it says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." No law shall be made establishing a religion means that each of us may worship any god we choose in any manner we choose or even worship no god. It does not allow our government, at any level, to establish a state religion as in other countries in the world. Congress can make no laws prohibiting our freedom of speech which means that an individual may call our former President 'Obummer' as some of my Veterans friends do or our current President 'Old Bone Spurs' as some of my other Veteran friends do. We are guaranteed a free press, which means MSNBC may report the news as they see it while Fox News may report the news as they see it. Of course, we often see a conflict which, in my opinion, means we should watch both or three or four news channels. Newspapers usually have opinion pages where we may express our thoughts/opinions on a variety of subjects. I've always appreciated the Daniel Patrick Moynihan's quote "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts." We have the right to peacefully assemble, this means groups can hold marches supporting or protesting issues. We can have gun violence and second amendment marches, we can hold religious meetings or KKK meetings. Finally, we may petition our government to redress our grievances which gives us the right to petition our government to make changes to laws. We see this action more in North Dakota than Minnesota because the required number of signers is lower; California also has used the petition many times, perhaps the most famous was proposition 13 which led to the changes in property tax laws.

Social media, Facebook, Twitter and others have created a new problem for us and one that concerns me greatly. How many times a day do you receive a Facebook post that seems to be unbelievable? I get several each day. I recommend a couple sites be searched before reposting a message that appears to be unbelievable. Factcheck.org provides information on mostly political-related stories and from my experience appears to be good. It is run by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. The one I've used for years, is snopes.com. A couple weeks ago, I commented on a post using snopes.com as my verification and someone shot back a post 'who snopes on snopes.com?' Apparently the 'fact' was not the same as her 'opinion'. Perhaps someone out there will fact check my first paragraph!