

Timeline: Rights of Englishmen

1215 Magna Carta

- Law of the land
- Due process
- Trial by jury
- No taxation without representation
- Property rights
- Rights of the church

1297 Confirmatio Cartarum

- Confirmation by Edward I that Magna Carta would be kept

1606 First Charter of Virginia

- rights of Englishmen, developed over 400 years, came to the New World
- included the right of representation in the levy of taxes

1618 Ordinances for Virginia

- created the General Assembly—representative government

1620 Mayflower Compact

- background principle of religious freedom
- assumption that men may covenant together to determine how they will be governed

1628 Petition of Right

- Charles 1 to throne in 1625
- Dissolved Parliament 1626
- Troops had been quartered in private homes
- Citizens had been imprisoned for failure to pay forced loans to the crown
- Sir Edward Coke led the parliamentary battle for ancient rights
- Demanded that cause be shown for imprisonment
- Quartering soldiers in homes stopped
- Habeas corpus strengthened
- Trials of civilians by courts-martial declared illegal
- Principles of due process & trial by jury affirmed
- No taxation without action by Parliament

1629 Charter of Massachusetts Bay

- Representative government for Massachusetts Bay

1632 Charter of Maryland

- Proprietor had the power to enact laws, but only with advice & assent of an elected representative body
- Rights of Englishmen
- Act of Toleration
- Local self-government
- Individual freedoms

1639 Fundamental Orders of Connecticut

- Popular election of General Court to make laws
- Freedom of speech in General Court
- Representative government
- Only General Court could levy taxes

1641 Abolition of the Court of Star Chamber

- Charles 1 had ruled since 1625—liberties in England were in danger—encouraged many to move to North America
- Long Parliament called into session 1640—abolished Star Chamber
- Law abolishing Star Chamber repeats ideas from Magna Carta

1641 Massachusetts Body of Liberties

- The first real bill of rights
- Charles 1 was ruling in England without a parliament, but this document codifies for Massachusetts: trial by jury, freedom of speech in courts & public assemblies, compensation for goods taken

1663 Charter of Rhode Island

- First fundamental law applicable to a colony, in which religious freedom was guaranteed.

1677 Concessions and Agreements of West New Jersey

- Repeats principles of Magna Carta

1679 Habeas Corpus Act

- Bears fruit in Article 1 Section 9 of U.S. Constitution—protection from arbitrary imprisonment

1682 Frame of Government of Pennsylvania

- William Penn: Discussing the choice between monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, he said, “but I chuse to solve the controversy with this small distinction...any government is free to the people under it... where the laws rule, and the people are a party to those laws, and more than this is tyranny, oligarchy, or confusion....”

1689 English Bill of Rights

- Settled sovereignty of Parliament over King

1690 John Locke’s Two Treatises on Government published; written 1679 and following

1701 Pennsylvania Charter of Privileges

1765 Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress

Rights of Englishmen asserted in

Charter of New England 1620

Charter of Massachusetts Bay 1629

Charter of Maryland 1632

Charter of Maine 1639

Charter of Connecticut 1662

Charter of Rhode Island 1663

Charter of Carolina 1663

Charter of Georgia 1732