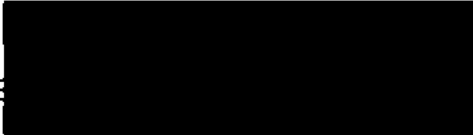


Student Details: Jeremy Sharp (Grade12)

E 

Professor Details: Jodi Rolison



Email Address: [jodi.rolison@keysschools.com](mailto:jodi.rolison@keysschools.com)

### Fourth Amendment...Our Last Line of Defense...?

Rewind 239 years to America's First Constitutional Convention. Perhaps John Adams and James Madison were debating about how the future U.S government should be structured. Ultimately, they would have no idea about the development of technology in today's society. During the early stages of the "American Experiment," our founding fathers held the ideals of the rule of law, Natural Rights, and separation of powers incredibly close. The Fourth Amendment to our Constitution is a constitutional pillar in the idea of the rule of law, and deeply impacts people's ability to adhere to the American Dream by limiting excessive government power, establishing accountability, and providing freedom to build "property" securely, giving citizens freedom from fear of a tyrannical government.

During British colonial rule, "general warrants or "Writs of Assistance" allowed officers to break into colonists' homes and arrest them without probable cause." (Freidman) The colonists saw this as tyranny and believed instead in the rule of law: that no individual or government official is above it. This led the founding fathers to draft the Fourth Amendment, establishing that every search and seizure must be authorized by a judge. However, when and how searches should be conducted is now more relevant than ever in our new digital age. The government now has access to resources that can monitor your every move, indoors and out. Yet, Supreme Court cases like "Carpenter v. The United States" (Property or Expectations) have shown the utilization of the Fourth Amendment to protect our rights in this new era, proving it remains a vital legal shield against government overreach.

One of the greatest things about the United States is embedded in the American Dream: the ability to own a home, establish a livelihood for you and your family, and build personal

wealth, without government intervention. John Locke's "Natural Rights" helped pave the framework for Thomas Jefferson's life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. "The freedom to make decisions that result in the best possible life for a human being." (Pursuit of Happiness). The founding fathers viewed the British Illegal searches and seizures as intended to instill fear in the colonists, meaning they were concerned about an abusive government that could roam society, seizing individuals' property. This fear helped establish the Fourth Amendment. Furthermore, if the government can take away your property, does that mean it's entitled to take away your livelihood? Ultimately, the Fourth Amendment grants us the right to make our lives the best possible without fear of unjust seizures.

So no, our founding fathers had no idea how the Fourth Amendment would protect the rights of U.S citizens 250 years later. Yet it remains clear that their wisdom has shielded us from excessive government outreach, establishing accountability, and allowing us Americans to pursue and build a better life without fear of an abusive government reaching into our private property. It has given us a pillar of freedom we enjoy every day, which we probably take for granted, and has helped America's vision stand strong.

Works Cited

“Constitutional Amendments – Amendment 4 – ‘the Right to Privacy.’” *Ronald Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum , [www.reaganlibrary.gov/education/lesson-plans/high-school/constitutional-amendments/constitutional-amendments-amendment-4](http://www.reaganlibrary.gov/education/lesson-plans/high-school/constitutional-amendments/constitutional-amendments-amendment-4). Accessed 23 Mar. 2026.

Friedman, Barry, and Orin Kerr. “The Fourth Amendment.” *National Constitution Center Constitutioncenter.Org*, National Constitution Center , [constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/amendments/amendment-iv/interpretations/121](http://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/amendments/amendment-iv/interpretations/121). Accessed 22 Mar. 2026.

“Property or Expectations: A Struggle for the Soul of the Fourth Amendment.” *Pacific Legal Foundation*, Pacific Legal Foundation , [pacificlegal.org/call-for-papers/property-or-expectations-a-struggle-for-the-soul-of-the-fourth-amendment/](http://pacificlegal.org/call-for-papers/property-or-expectations-a-struggle-for-the-soul-of-the-fourth-amendment/). Accessed 23 Mar. 2026.

Pursuit of Happiness. “John Locke.” *Pursuit of Happiness*, 10 Apr. 2023, [www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/john-locke/](http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/john-locke/).

United States Courts. “What Does the Fourth Amendment Mean?” *United States Courts*, Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, [www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/about-educational-outreach/activity-resources/what-does-fourth-amendment-mean](http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/about-educational-outreach/activity-resources/what-does-fourth-amendment-mean). Accessed 22 Mar. 2026.