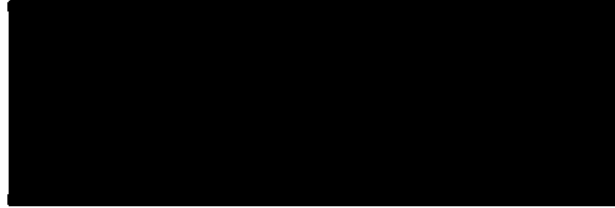


Trevor C. Johnson

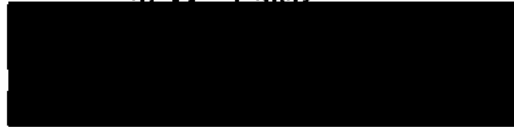
Key West High School

12th Grade



J. Rolison

26 March 2021



Teacher Email: jodi.rolison@keysschools.com

How the Amendments keep the Government in check

The American Dream depends on a stable legal system that treats everyone fairly and protects individual rights. The Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution plays a role in keeping the rule of law by ensuring due process, protecting citizens from self-incrimination, and preventing double jeopardy. These protections help create a fair legal system where people can pursue success and security without fear of unjustifiable treatment by the government.

One of the most important protections provided by the Fifth Amendment is the guarantee of due process of law, which is a constitutional guarantee that prohibits all levels of the U.S. government from depriving individuals of a fair, legal procedure. The amendment states that no person shall be deprived of “life, liberty, or property, without due process of law” (Cornell Law School). This means the government must follow fair legal procedures before punishing someone or taking away their rights. Due process includes rights such as a fair trial, the ability to present evidence, and the opportunity to defend oneself in court, whether by themselves or with a lawyer. These protections prevent the government from acting unfairly toward citizens. The legal system is based on fairness and establishes rules to help maintain the rule of law. When people know their rights will be protected and that the law applies equally to everyone, they can pursue opportunities such as education, careers, and property ownership without fear of unjust treatment.

Another example of protection in the Fifth Amendment is the right against self-incrimination, often referred to as “pleading the Fifth.” This protection means that individuals cannot be forced to testify against themselves or others in criminal cases. According to legal scholars, this right protects people from being pressured into giving a false confession or a statement that could be manipulated against them (Encyclopaedia Britannica). In the American

legal system, a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty. By preventing forced confessions, the Fifth Amendment keeps the fairness and reliability of the justice system. This protection supports the American Dream because it ensures that individuals cannot be unjustly punished due to coercion or abuse of power.

The Fifth Amendment also protects individuals from double jeopardy, which means a person cannot be tried twice for the same crime after being acquitted or convicted. This prevents the government from repeatedly prosecuting someone until it obtains a guilty verdict. Legal experts explain that double jeopardy protects individuals from harassment, emotional stress, and financial hardship caused by multiple trials for the same offense (Cornell Law School). By limiting the power of the government, the amendment keeps the rule of law in place and prevents abuse within the legal system. This protection allows citizens to feel secure in their rights and the idea that the legal system will not unfairly target them.

The Fifth Amendment is essential to maintaining the rule of law in the United States and the American Dream. By guaranteeing due process, protecting individuals from self-incrimination, and preventing double jeopardy, the amendment ensures fairness and justice in the legal system. These protections create a society where citizens can pursue opportunities and success without fear of unfair treatment by the government. Ultimately, the Fifth Amendment helps preserve the freedom and equality that make the American Dream possible.

Works Sited

Works Cited

- “Fifth Amendment | U.S. Constitution | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute.” *LII*,
https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/fifth_amendment. Accessed 5 March 2026.
- FindLawStaff. “The Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.”
<https://constitution.findlaw.com/amendment5.html/>. Accessed 5 3 2026.
- Smentkowski, Brian P. “Fifth Amendment | Summary, Rights, & Facts.” *Britannica*, 27 February
2026, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fifth-Amendment>. Accessed 5 March 2026.