# Bill of Rights [1688]

**1688 CHAPTER 2 1 Will and Mar Sess 2**

An Act declareing the Rights and Liberties of the Subject and Setleing the Succession of the Crowne.

[X1]Whereas the Lords Spirituall and Temporall and Comons assembled at Westminster lawfully fully and freely representing all the Estates of the People of this Realme did upon the thirteenth day of February in the yeare of our Lord one thousand six hundred eighty eight present unto their Majesties then called and known by the Names and Stile of William and Mary Prince and Princesse of Orange being present in their proper Persons a certaine Declaration in Writeing made by the said Lords and Comons in the Words following viz

**The Heads of Declaration of Lords and Commons, recited.**

Whereas the late King James the Second by the Assistance of diverse evill Councellors Judges and Ministers imployed by him did endeavour to subvert and extirpate the Protestant Religion and the Lawes and Liberties of this Kingdome.

**Dispensing and Suspending Power.**

By Assumeing and Exerciseing a Power of Dispensing with and Suspending of Lawes and the Execution of Lawes without Consent of Parlyament.

**Committing Prelates.**

By Committing and Prosecuting diverse Worthy Prelates for humbly Petitioning to be excused from Concurring to the said Assumed Power.

**Ecclesiastical Commission.**

By issueing and causeing to be executed a Commission under the Great Seale for Erecting a Court called The Court of Commissioners for Ecclesiasticall Causes.

**Levying Money.**

By Levying Money for and to the Use of the Crowne by pretence of Prerogative for other time and in other manner then the same was granted by Parlyament.

**Standing Army.**

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By raising and keeping a Standing Army within this Kingdome in time of Peace without Consent of Parlyament and Quartering Soldiers contrary to Law.

**Disarming Protestants, &c.**

By causing severall good Subjects being Protestants to be disarmed at the same time when Papists were both Armed and Imployed contrary to Law.

**Violating Elections.**

By Violating the Freedome of Election of Members to serve in Parlyament.

**Illegal Prosecutions.**

By Prosecutions in the Court of Kings Bench for Matters and Causes cognizable onely in Parlyament and by diverse other Arbitrary and Illegall Courses.

**Juries.**

And whereas of late yeares Partiall Corrupt and Unqualifyed Persons have beene returned and served on Juryes in Tryalls and particularly diverse Jurors in Tryalls for High Treason which were not Freeholders,

**Excessive Bail.**

And excessive Baile hath beene required of Persons committed in Criminall Cases to elude the Benefitt of the Lawes made for the Liberty of the Subjects.

**Fines.**

And excessive Fines have beene imposed.

**Punishments.**

And illegall and cruell Punishments inflicted.

**Grants of Fines, &c. before Conviction, &c.**

And severall Grants and Promises made of Fines and Forfeitures before any Conviction or Judgement against the Persons upon whome the same were to be levyed. All which are utterly directly contrary to the knowne Lawes and Statutes and Freedome of this Realme.

**Recital that the late King James II. had abdicated the Government, and that the Throne was vacant, and that the Prince of Orange had written Letters to the Lords and Commons for the choosing Representatives in Parliament.**

And whereas the said late King James the Second haveing Abdicated the Government and the Throne being thereby Vacant His [X2Hignesse] the Prince of Orange (whome it hath pleased Almighty God to make the glorious Instrument of Delivering this Kingdome from Popery and Arbitrary Power) did (by the Advice of the Lords Spirituall and Temporall and diverse principall Persons of the Commons) cause Letters to be written to the Lords Spirituall and Temporall being Protestants and other Letters to the severall Countyes Cityes Universities Burroughs and Cinque Ports for the Choosing of such Persons to represent them as were of right to be sent to Parlyament to meete and sitt at Westminster upon the two and twentyeth day of January in this Yeare one thousand six hundred eighty and eight in order to such an Establishment as that their Religion Lawes and Liberties might not againe be in danger of being Subverted, Upon which Letters Elections haveing beene accordingly made.

**The Subject's Rights.**

And thereupon the said Lords Spirituall and Temporall and Commons pursuant to their respective Letters and Elections being now assembled in a full and free Representative of this Nation takeing into their most serious Consideration the best meanes for attaining the Ends aforesaid Doe in the first place (as their Auncestors in like Case have usually done) for the Vindicating and Asserting their auntient Rights and Liberties, Declare

**Dispensing Power.**

That the pretended Power of Suspending of Laws or the Execution of Laws by Regall Authority without Consent of Parlyament is illegall.

**Late dispensing Power.**

That the pretended Power of Dispensing with Laws or the Execution of Laws by Regall Authoritie as it hath beene assumed and exercised of late is illegall.

**Ecclesiastical Courts illegal.**

That the Commission for erecting the late Court of Commissioners for Ecclesiasticall Causes and all other Commissions and Courts of like nature are Illegall and Pernicious.

**Levying Money.**

That levying Money for or to the Use of the Crowne by pretence of Prerogative without Grant of Parlyament for longer time or in other manner then the same is or shall be granted is Illegall.

**Right to petition.**

That it is the Right of the Subjects to petition the King and all Commitments and Prosecutions for such Petitioning are Illegall.

**Standing Army.**

That the raising or keeping a standing Army within the Kingdome in time of Peace unlesse it be with Consent of Parlyament is against Law.

**Subjects' Arms.**

That the Subjects which are Protestants may have Arms for their Defence suitable to their Conditions and as allowed by Law.

**Freedom of Election.**

That Election of Members of Parlyament ought to be free.

**Freedom of Speech.**

That the Freedome of Speech and Debates or Proceedings in Parlyament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any Court or Place out of Parlyament.

**Excessive Bail.**

That excessive Baile ought not to be required nor excessive Fines imposed nor cruell and unusuall Punishments inflicted.

**Juries.**

That Jurors ought to be duely impannelled and returned . . . [F1]

**Grants of Forfeitures.**

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That all Grants and Promises of Fines and Forfeitures of particular persons before Conviction are illegall and void.

**Frequent Parliaments.**

And that for Redresse of all Grievances and for the amending strengthening and preserveing of the Lawes Parlyaments ought to be held frequently.

**The said Rights claimed. Tender of the Crown. Regal Power exercised. Limitation of the Crown.**

And they doe Claime Demand and Insist upon all and singular the Premises as their undoubted Rights and Liberties and that noe Declarations Judgements Doeings or Proceedings to the Prejudice of the People in any of the said Premisses ought in any wise to be drawne hereafter into Consequence or Example. To which Demand of their Rights they are particularly encouraged by the Declaration of this Highnesse the Prince of Orange as being the onely meanes for obtaining a full Redresse and Remedy therein. Haveing therefore an intire Confidence That his said Highnesse the Prince of Orange will perfect the Deliverance soe farr advanced by him and will still preserve them from the Violation of their Rights which they have here asserted and from all other Attempts upon their Religion Rights and Liberties. The said Lords Spirituall and Temporall and Commons assembled at Westminster doe Resolve That William and Mary Prince and Princesse of Orange be and be declared King and Queene of England France and Ireland and the Dominions thereunto belonging to hold the Crowne and Royall Dignity of the said Kingdomes and Dominions to them the said Prince and Princesse dureing their Lives and the Life of the Survivour of them And that the sole and full Exercise of the Regall Power be onely in and executed by the said Prince of Orange in the Names of the said Prince and Princesse dureing their joynt Lives And after their Deceases the said Crowne and Royall Dignitie of the said Kingdoms and Dominions to be to the Heires of the Body of the said Princesse And for default of such Issue to the Princesse Anne of Denmarke and the Heires of her Body And for default of such Issue to the Heires of the Body of the said Prince of Orange. And the Lords Spirituall and Temporall and Commons doe pray the said Prince and ([X3]) Princesse to accept the same accordingly.

**New Oaths of Allegiance, &c.**

And that the Oathes hereafter mentioned be taken by all Persons of whome the Oathes of Allegiance and Supremacy might be required by Law instead of them And that the said Oathes of Allegiance and Supremacy be abrogated.

**Allegiance.**

I A B doe sincerely promise and sweare That I will be faithfull and beare true Allegiance to their Majestyes King William and Queene Mary Soe helpe me God.

**Supremacy.**

I A B doe sweare That I doe from my Heart Abhorr, Detest and Abjure as Impious and Hereticall this damnable Doctrine and Position That Princes Excommunicated or Deprived by the Pope or any Authority of the See of Rome may be deposed or murdered by their Subjects or any other whatsoever. And I doe declare That noe Forreigne Prince Person Prelate, State or Potentate hath or ought to have any Jurisdiction Power Superiority Preeminence or Authoritie Ecclesiasticall or Spirituall within this Realme Soe helpe me God.

**Acceptance of the Crown. The Two Houses to sit. Subjects' Liberties to be allowed, and Ministers hereafter to serve according to the same. William and Mary declared King and Queen. Limitation of the Crown. Papists debarred the Crown. Every King, &c. shall make**

**the Declaration of 30 Car. II. If under 12 Years old, to be done after Attainment thereof. King's and Queen's Assent**

Upon which their said Majestyes did accept the Crowne and Royall Dignitie of the Kingdoms of England France and Ireland and the Dominions thereunto belonging according to the Resolution and Desire of the said Lords and Commons contained in the said Declaration. And thereupon their Majestyes were pleased That the said Lords Spirituall and Temporall and Commons being the two Houses of Parlyament should continue to sitt and with their Majesties Royall Concurrence make effectuall Provision for the Setlement of the Religion Lawes and Liberties of this Kingdome soe that the same for the future might not be in danger againe of being subverted, To which the said Lords Spirituall and Temporall and Commons did agree and proceede to act accordingly. Now in pursuance of the Premisses the said Lords Spirituall and Temporall and Commons in Parlyament assembled for the ratifying confirming and establishing the said Declaration and the Articles Clauses Matters and Things therein contained by the Force of a Law made in due Forme by Authority of Parlyament doe pray that it may be declared and enacted That all and singular the Rights and Liberties asserted and claimed in the said Declaration are the true auntient and indubitable Rights and Liberties of the People of this Kingdome and soe shall be esteemed allowed adjudged deemed and taken to be and that all and every the particulars aforesaid shall be firmly and strictly holden and observed as they are expressed in the said Declaration And all Officers and Ministers whatsoever shall serve their Majestyes and their Successors according to the same in all times to come. And the said Lords Spirituall and Temporall and Commons seriously considering how it hath pleased Almighty God in his marvellous Providence and mercifull Goodness to this Nation to provide and preserve their said Majestyes Royall Persons most happily to Raigne over us upon the Throne of their Auncestors for which they render unto him from the bottome of their Hearts their humblest Thanks and Praises doe truely firmely assuredly and in the Sincerity of their Hearts thinke and doe hereby recognize acknowledge and declare That King James the Second haveing abdicated the Government and their Majestyes haveing accepted the Crowne and Royall Dignity **[**[X4]as**]** aforesaid Their said Majestyes did become were are and of right ought to be by the Lawes of this Realme our Soveraigne Liege Lord and Lady King and Queene of England France and Ireland and the Dominions thereunto belonging in and to whose Princely Persons the Royall State Crowne and Dignity of the said Realmes with all Honours Stiles Titles Regalities Prerogatives Powers Jurisdictions and Authorities to the same belonging and appertaining are most fully rightfully and intirely invested and incorporated united and annexed And for preventing all Questions and Divisions in this Realme by reason of any pretended Titles to the Crowne and for preserveing a Certainty in the Succession thereof in and upon which the Unity Peace Tranquillity and Safety of this Nation doth under God wholly consist and depend The said Lords Spirituall and Temporall and Commons doe beseech their Majestyes That it may be enacted established and declared That the Crowne and Regall Government of the said Kingdoms and Dominions with all and singular the Premisses thereunto belonging and appertaining shall bee and continue to their said Majestyes and the Survivour of them dureing their Lives and the Life of the Survivour of them And that the entire perfect and full Exercise of the Regall Power and Government be onely in and executed by his Majestie in the Names of both their Majestyes dureing their joynt Lives And after their deceases the said Crowne and Premisses shall be and remaine to the Heires of the Body of her Majestie and for default of such Issue to her Royall Highnesse the Princess Anne of Denmarke and the Heires of her Body and for default of such Issue to the Heires of the Body of his said Majestie And thereunto the said Lords Spirituall and Temporall and Commons doe in the Name of all the People aforesaid most humbly and faithfully submitt themselves their Heires and Posterities for ever and doe faithfully promise That they will stand to maintaine and defend their said Majesties and alsoe the Limitation and Succession of the Crowne herein specified and contained to the utmost of their Powers with their Lives and Estates against all Persons whatsoever that shall attempt any thing to the contrary. And whereas it hath beene found by Experience that it is inconsistent with the Safety and Welfaire of this

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Protestant Kingdome to be governed by a Popish Prince or by any King or Queene marrying a Papist the said Lords Spirituall and Temporall and Commons doe further pray that it may be enacted That all and every person and persons that is are or shall be reconciled to or shall hold Communion with the See or Church of Rome or shall professe the Popish Religion or shall marry a Papist shall be excluded and be for ever uncapeable to inherit possesse or enjoy the Crowne and Government of this Realme and Ireland and the Dominions thereunto belonging or any part of the same or to have use or exercise any Regall Power Authoritie or Jurisdiction within the same **[**[X5]And in all and every such Case or Cases the People of these Realmes shall be and are hereby absolved of their Allegiance**]** And the said Crowne and Government shall from time to time descend to and be enjoyed by such person or persons being Protestants as should have inherited and enjoyed the same in case the said person or persons soe reconciled holding Communion or Professing or Marrying as aforesaid were naturally dead **[**[X6]And that every King and Queene of this Realme who at any time hereafter shall come to and succeede in the Imperiall Crowne of this Kingdome shall on the first day of the meeting of the first Parlyament next after his or her comeing to the Crowne sitting in his or her Throne in the House of Peeres in the presence of the Lords and Commons therein assembled or at his or her Coronation before such person or persons who shall administer the Coronation Oath to him or her at the time of his or her takeing the said Oath (which shall first happen) make subscribe and audibly repeate the Declaration mentioned in the Statute made in the thirtyeth yeare of the Raigne of King Charles the Second Entituled An Act for the more effectuall Preserveing the Kings Person and Government by disableing Papists from sitting in either House of Parlyament But if it shall happen that such King or Queene upon his or her Succession to the Crowne of this Realme shall be under the Age of twelve yeares then every such King or Queene shall make subscribe and audibly repeate the said Declaration at his or her Coronation or the first day of the meeting of the first Parlyament as aforesaid which shall first happen after such King or Queene shall have attained the said Age of twelve yeares.**]** All which Their Majestyes are contented and pleased shall be declared enacted and established by authoritie of this present Parliament and shall stand remaine and be the Law of this Realme for ever And the same are by their said Majesties by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spirituall and Temporall and Commons in Parlyament assembled and by the authoritie of the same declared enacted and established accordingly

**Editorial Information**

**X1** The Bill of Rights is assigned to the year 1688 on legislation.gov.uk (as it was previously in successive official editions of the revised statutes from which the online version is derived) although the Act received Royal Assent on 16th December 1689. This follows the practice adopted in *The Statutes of the Realm*, Vol. VI (1819), in the Chronological Table in that volume and all subsequent Chronological Tables of the Statutes, which attach all the Acts in 1 Will and Mar sess 2 to the year 1688. The first Parliament of William and Mary (the Convention Parliament) convened on 13th February 1689 (1688 in the old style calendar - until 1st Jan 1752 the calendar year began on March 25th). It appears that all the Acts of that Parliament (both sessions) were treated as being Acts of 1688 using the old method of reckoning, according to which, until 1793, all Acts passed in a session of Parliament with no specified commencement date were deemed to be passed in the year in which that session began (see Acts of Parliament (Commencement) Act 1793 (c 13)). The Short Titles Act 1896 (c. 14) gave to chapter 2 of 1 Will and Mar sess 2 the title "The Bill of Rights", without attributing it to any calendar year. In the Republic of Ireland, the Short Titles Act 1896 (c 14) has been amended to add "1688" to the short title of The Bill of Rights as it continues to have effect there (see Statute Law Revision Act 2007, Act of the Oireachtas No 28 of 2007, s 5(a)).

**X2** Variant reading of the text noted in *The Statutes of the Realm* as follows: Highnesse *O.* [*O.* refers to a collection in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge]

**X3** Variant reading of the text noted in *The Statutes of the Realm* as follows: and *O.* [*O.* refers to a collection in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge]

**X4** interlined on the Roll.

**X5** annexed to the Original Act in a separate Schedule.

**X6** annexed to the Original Act in a separate Schedule.

### Textual Amendments

**F1** Words repealed by (E.W.) Juries Act 1825 (c. 50), **s. 62** and (N.I.) Statute Law Revision Act 1950 (c. 6), **Sch. 1**

### Modifications etc. (not altering text)

**C1** Short title "The Bill of Rights" given by Short Titles Act 1896 (c. 14), **Sch. 1**

**C2** Act declared to be a Statute by Crown and Parliament Recognition Act 1689 (c. 1)

**C3** S. 1 amended by Accession Declaration Act 1910 (c. 29), **s. 1**

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