

LAW DAY ★ 2019



The right to peaceably assemble is an important right that supports many of the other rights protected by the First Amendment. For example, the First Amendment protects the people's right to petition the government. Some people believe the best way to exercise this right is to stage peaceful public protests. Without the right to peacefully assemble, the government could enact laws that could restrict the ability to protest. Instead, courts enforce the right to peacefully assemble to protect individuals exercising their other First Amendment rights.

Although free association is not mentioned in the First Amendment, the United States Supreme Court has recognized that free association is necessary to exercise other First Amendment rights. After all, a group of voices is stronger than one voice. In order to effectively exercise the right to free speech, or the right to peaceably assemble, people need to be able to find others who share similar views. Free association protects these other rights.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Ask students to identify a demonstration, rally or protest, and gather news coverage of the event. The students should identify the central purpose of the demonstration, rally or protest, and identify statements by participants in the event that support that central position. (Statements could be quotes in the news or from posters at the event.) Based on these statements, have the students identify *who* the participants are, *why* they are demonstrating and how they want the problem addressed. Discuss how freedom of association and assembly allowed the group to convey its message.
2. Discuss the landmark United States Supreme Court case *NAACP v. Alabama* (1958), in which the Supreme Court prevented Alabama from requiring the NAACP to disclose its membership lists, since that could hinder members' right to free association. Compare that to privacy in groups of friends on the internet. Discuss the privacy choices students make about what to share on the internet. Have the students consider whether they would change their behavior on the internet if the government could find out what groups they talk to.