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TucsonSentinel.com Free Press

Have you ever wondered how journalists today are able to discover and spread so much useful information about the government here in the U.S., as well as around the world? Well, then you have come to the right place to learn about how we came to have a free press and why it is such an important part of our democracy. The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights gives journalists and news reporters use the right to freely speak out their own discoveries and opinions on the information they have found by investigating and discovering new things about our democracy. This amendment was highly influenced by James Madison. This part of the Bill of Rights is so important to our society, that it is sometimes known as the fourth estate of the checks and balances that keep our government in line. Journalists have discovered and reported important information about scandals and events pertaining to our government that we would not have known if the freedom of press didn't

exist. For example, journalists exposed the Watergate scandal and the Panama Papers scandal.

In 1791, James Madison, who was a major leader in making the free press portion of the Bill of Rights, worked to try and pass the law to allow journalists and researchers to publicly release any and all information they had found or received about the government. Madison is another reason we have a free press. He was very influential, and he persuaded three-fourths of the states to sign and agree with his additional amendment, though not everyone agreed with him. He understood that a free press was a vital part of a healthy democracy and he pushed to include freedom of the press in the Bill of Rights. Having free press gives Americans information and evidence of what their government has done and allows citizens to hold politicians accountable. For example, the Watergate Scandal occurred during the 1972 presidential election cycle. Democrats were having a meeting and they found spies listening to them. President Nixon was accused of sending these spies and journalists investigated him. The information discovered by journalists led to the impeachment of Nixon for obstruction of justice and abuse of power. Nixon ultimately resigned over the scandal. Another example in which journalists

used their First Amendment right to report important information to the public was the publishing of the Panama Papers. In 2016, journalists from over 80 countries worked together to report on over 11.5 million leaked documents showing billions of dollars in untaxed cash being transported from place to place. This illegal transport of money was happening because Panama and other places they transferred money to, had very few regulations about how much money went in and out of each of the trading areas. An anonymous whistleblower reached out to journalists operating in countries with a free press in order to expose this secret illegal transportation of money. In 2020 the United States filed their first criminal charge over information revealed through the Panama Papers.

Although the right to free press may seem like a small part of the Bill of Rights, it is one of the primary foundations of our democracy. Our free press ensures accountability on the part of our government and allows us to have trust in our government and elected officials. Journalists now have the right to report accurate information about our government without fear of retaliation or interference, allowing the power of our democracy to remain in the hands of its citizens.