

Alison White:

Thomas Paine's wise words have proven to be true again and again since his influential time of shaping the beginnings of America. His ideas have been so fundamental to many citizens' understanding of their duties to their peers. Unfortunately, it seems that in recent years the "Common Sense" of the government has been lacking, making their credibility questionable at best.

The first issue that comes to my mind when I think of basic freedoms is the right to freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, and petition. However, we are seeing increasing censorship of speech that does not align with current "politically correct" views. Social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube have been censoring conservative voices and opinions. To cut an entire group of people off from speaking their truth in the most effective and accessible way possible is a clear violation of our First Amendment rights. Historically speaking, censorship has been used to push socialism and communism in the Soviet Union, China, North Korea, and even Nazi Germany. Repressing voices over time puts power into the hands of individuals who will not do the right thing and will eventually lead to the collapse of nations.

One of the most prevalent arguments happening now, especially at school, surrounds the Second Amendment. As a young woman just on the brink of legal adulthood, the fear for my safety keeps me up at night. The Second Amendment was written for a reason, and it frightens me to think that one of my most fundamental rights that it guarantees might be taken away. For law-abiding citizens, especially women that are often preyed upon, being able to protect ourselves is crucial to our survival. While I feel safe and protected right now in the neighborhood I grew up in, I will be moving away to pursue my higher education in just a few months. Having the most effective form of protection on me while I am alone in the world seems to be something that I can only dream about for now.

In addition to the dangers that come from our loss of basic freedoms, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) policies regarding coal and gas power plants will have major effects on our economy. It would, of course, make sense to cut down on pollution as much as possible, but at some point the realization that American businesses must always be put first must be made by the EPA. Our country is held up by our strong and dedicated physical laborers. For our very own government to push them out of the jobs they deserve is a disservice to them and our country. In conclusion, Thomas Paine's words remind us of the importance of protecting each other from the government and sticking up for our values. As Americans, it is important to remind ourselves that we should be holding our government accountable to ensure that we are protected.