

The Magna Carta

The Magna Carta was a document granted by the English King in 1215 - he was forced to agree to it by the Barons of England who he had oppressed. The document is important because it is the foundation of the rule of law, due process, and many other legal principles that we take for granted today. The idea that those who have power must follow the rules has developed over 800 years and has come to represent equality and liberty before and through the law.

Access to Justice - Clause 17

Communia placita non sequantur curiam nostram, set teneantur in aliquo loco certo.

Common pleas shall not follow our court, but shall be held in some fixed place.

Punishment Should Fit the Crime - Clause 21

Liber homo non amercietur pro parvo delicto, nisi secundum modum delicti; et pro magno delicto amercietur secundum magnitudinem delicti...

A free man is not to be amerced for a small offence except in proportion to the nature of the offence, and for a great offence he is to be amerced in accordance with its magnitude....

Due Process - Clause 40

Nulli vendemus, nulli negabimus, aut differemus rectum aut justiam.

To no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse or delay, right or justice.

A Qualified and Independent Judiciary - Clause 45

Nos non faciemus justiciarios, constabularios, vicecomites, vel ballivos, nisi de talibus qui sciant legem regni et eam bene velint observare.

We will appoint as justices, constables, sheriffs, or bailiffs only such as know the law of the realm and mean to observe it well.