KNOW YOUR RIGHTS
Protesters' Rights

The First Amendment protects your right to assemble and express your views through protest. However, police and other government officials are allowed to place certain narrow restrictions on the exercise of speech rights. Make sure you’re prepared by brushing up on your rights before heading out into the streets.

I'm attending a protest

Your rights

- Your rights are strongest in what are known as “traditional public forums,” such as streets, sidewalks, and parks. You also have the right to photograph anything in plain view, including federal buildings and the police officers.

What happens if the police issue an order to disperse the protest?

- Shutting down a protest through a dispersal order must be law enforcement’s last resort. Police may not break up a gathering unless there is a clear and present danger of riot, disorder, interference with traffic, or other immediate threat to public safety.
- If officers issue a dispersal order, they must provide a reasonable opportunity to comply, including sufficient time and a clear, unobstructed exit path.
- Individuals must receive clear and detailed notice of a dispersal order, including how much time they have to disperse, the consequences of failing to disperse, and what clear exit route they can follow, before they may be arrested or charged with any crime.

What to do if you believe your rights have been violated

- When you can, write down everything you remember, including the officers’ badge and patrol car numbers and the agency they work for.
- Get contact information for witnesses.
- Take photographs of any injuries.

Contact us