THE BILL OF RIGHTS: BULWARK OF OUR DEMOCRACY

J. JAMES EXON, UNITED STATES SENATOR FOR THE STATE OF NEBRASKA

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It is an honor to be asked to contribute a brief comment about the Bill of Rights to this review, especially since this opportunity follows within a year my acceptance of an honorary degree from the Creighton University School of Law.

In April of 1991, the Dalai Lama, spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet, was received in the Rotunda of our nation's Capitol. The Dalai Lama, who had earlier met with President Bush, honored the members of Congress with his presence.

Shortly after his visit, the United States Senate passed a resolution indicating that all Americans are united on the goals of freedom and human rights for the people of Tibet. The preamble to that resolution expressed our concern over "the use of excessive force on peaceful demonstrations, arbitrary arrest and detention, unfair trials, torture and death from torture, the restriction of religious practices, and a systematic pattern of discrimination among other violations" in Tibet.

Not long before this visit, the world witnessed the collapse of Communism in much of Eastern Europe and recognized the simple truth that the United States' democratic form of government has inspired people in all corners of the globe. Since then, much progress has been made by the people of Eastern Europe. Yet there remain many obstacles to be overcome, both politically and economically, for the people of those nations to realize their dreams. The situation in Tibet starkly reveals that in some parts of the world the struggle for freedom has barely begun.

The statement I quoted earlier caught my eye as it is no less than a grocery list of the freedoms guaranteed in our country by the Bill of Rights. The first ten amendments to our Constitution have become synonymous with freedom throughout the world. It is remarkable that this magnificent document, which has been the bulwark of the American justice system for two centuries, remains to this day the benchmark against which free societies are judged.

It is indeed appropriate to reflect on the importance of the Bill of
Rights, not only as it has shaped and influenced our lives, but also as it has inspired and provoked people everywhere.

Please accept my most sincere wishes for a successful and noteworthy Law Review.