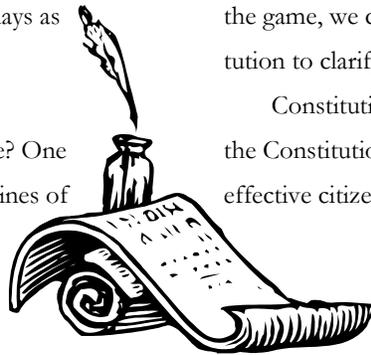


BECOMING “AN ENLIGHTENED PEOPLE”

Being a responsible citizen means knowing not just how the government works today, but how it ought to work. The better we understand the vision that the Founding Fathers had for our nation, the better we will understand the important role that each one of us plays as a voter, member of the community, and possibly even elected official.

How do we develop that knowledge? One way is to study the Constitution. In the lines of



this great document, we find the Founders' original plan for how the states could operate together as one nation.

Much as sports players and referees consult a rule book when misunderstandings arise about how to play the game, we can consult the “rule book” of the Constitution to clarify how our government should be run.

Constitutional law is the study of how to interpret the Constitution, and it is the basis of responsible and effective citizenship.

Read an excerpt from Mike Farris' revised and updated textbook! CONSTITUTIONAL LAW FOR ENLIGHTENED CITIZENS

Introduction, by Michael P. Farris

Conservative Christians are among the growing number of citizens who believe that the United States Supreme Court is both misguided and too powerful. The phrase “judicial tyranny” is not uncommon in political debates in the early twenty-first century.

Why has the Supreme Court—as well as the judiciary in general—acquired this reputation? There is little doubt that a number of key rulings and issues are at the heart of these public reactions:

- ◆ **Roe v. Wade:** the 1973 decision that legalized abortion.
- ◆ **Lawrence v. Texas:** a decision in 2003 that not only protected homosexual activity, but also opened the door for a constitutional right to same-sex marriage.
- ◆ **Employment Division v. Smith:** a 1990 decision that labeled a strong view of the free exercise of religion a “luxury” that our nation cannot afford.
- ◆ **Wallace v. Jaffree:** a ruling in 1985 that banned a moment of silence which could be used—at a public school student’s option—for silent prayer.

There are two dominant emotions that are wrapped up in the public reaction. First, there is a sense of outrage because such decisions seem to embrace immorality while disrespecting our religious traditions. Second, there

is a sense of helplessness. No matter which candidate gets elected—even when promising to appoint good justices—the Supreme Court seems unstoppable.

The purpose of this course can be explained in light of these two lines of thought. First, we will discover that the Supreme Court has caused much more harm to our nation than is generally understood. Accordingly, the sense of public outrage is, if anything, understated. Second, our sense of helplessness is overrated. As citizens, we have the ability to effectively demand and secure a change in the Supreme Court. In fact, when the full truth is known, the “fault” for the current state of affairs lies not with the members of the Court, the liberal law schools, the “spineless” U.S. Senate, or any other relevant body. It is true that these institutions have clearly contributed to the problem. But the ultimate “blame” lies elsewhere.

We can discover the true “culprit” by revisiting an

earlier stage of constitutional controversy.

The year was 1788. It was a hot June in Richmond, Virginia. The elected delegates from all over this commonwealth had gathered to determine whether Virginia, then America’s largest state, would ratify the proposed new Constitution. The list of delegates contained names that are now legendary: Patrick Henry, James Madison, John Marshall, George Mason, James Monroe, Edmund Pendleton, and Edmund Randolph—just to name a few. And these men were sharply divided in their views on ratification.

An interesting example of the various viewpoints can be gained by looking at just one man—Edmund Randolph.

Randolph had been a leading member of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. In fact, his written framework for the debate at the convention had played a key role in the deliberations. But at the end of the convention, he was one of only three delegates (along with

“An enlightened people will never suffer what was established for their security to be perverted to an act of tyranny.”
George Nicholas

Revised & updated—Michael Farris’ CONSTITUTIONAL LAW TEXTBOOK

The Constitution is the official foundation for our national life—the key to freedom and the answer to tyranny. It is not something that is just helpful to know. Correct constitutional theory is the one thing as citizens that we *must* know.

In this beautiful new edition of *Constitutional Law*, Michael Farris has completely revised and expanded his textbook from 282 to 592 pages. In his clear, conversational style, he takes readers from the Constitutional Convention and the meaning of original intent to an in-depth analysis of pivotal Supreme Court decisions—and explains how judicial tyranny is eroding our liberties.

Perfect for any homeschool high school government course, this book is also a must-read for adults concerned about the future of our country. *Constitutional Law for Enlightened Citizens* will equip you to reclaim this nation in the spirit of the American founding. (Hardback, 592 pages, HSLDA, 2006)

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George Mason and Elbridge Gerry) who refused to sign the Constitution. He wrote a widely circulated public letter explaining his opposition to ratification. Yet, a year later we find him in Richmond, a delegate to the Virginia ratification convention, now *favoring* ratification of the Constitution.

Patrick Henry, an opponent of ratification, challenged Randolph early in the state convention on his inconsistent views on the matter. Randolph took the challenge very personally, and although the words he used were eloquent, there was little doubt that he was demanding that Henry withdraw the line of argument or settle the matter on the field of honor. Henry calmed the personal offense, but the philosophical dispute between the two sides grew only stronger during the course of the deliberations.

The controversy over ratification swirled around several key issues—most importantly the lack of a bill of rights and fear that the federal power of taxation would prove to be too dangerous. But even these two particular

issues were only a part of a more fundamental dispute. *Would the Constitution give us a national government that was so powerful that it would undermine our liberties?* Patrick Henry and George Mason said “Yes.” James Madison and John Marshall said “No.”

In the earliest stages of the Virginia convention, a great hero of the Revolutionary War took the floor. George Nicholas was much beloved as the man who fired the first shot on the British when they invaded Virginia during the late war. He was committed to the ratification of the Constitution, and his speech was designed to answer the question of whether the Constitution would prove to be too dangerous to our liberties.

His comment was simple, but contains a profound message for us today. “An enlightened people will never suffer what was established for their security to be perverted to an act of tyranny.”¹

Let’s dig deep to understand the significance of his comment.

First, it is clear that he believed that the Constitution

was intended for our liberty. Even Patrick Henry, if you got him alone and not in the heat of debate, would probably agree that the Constitution was *intended* to protect liberty. His argument was that the long-range *effect* of the Constitution would be contrary to this good intention.

Second, Nicholas believed that it was unlikely that the Constitution would ever be perverted from this good intention. Why not? The

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Slated for 18 sessions, this high school–level course is offered twice during the school year—a fall class and a spring class.

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people would not allow it—that is what the term “suffer” means. The people would not permit tyranny to arise. If some tried to subvert our liberties, the people would rise up and stop them.

But Nicholas’s faith in the people was based on a very important assumption—that the people would be “enlightened.” What does this mean? An “enlightened people” are citizens who know what they believe *and* know what is going on in our nation.

If we are honest about our situation, we have to conclude that George Nicholas’s optimism has not been fulfilled. The Constitution was intended for our liberty. The Supreme Court was especially intended to protect our liberties. Instead, the Court has twisted the Constitution and made it an instrument of tyranny.

Who is to blame? The logic of Nicholas’s declaration forces us to conclude that we, the citizens, are to blame. We have failed to be enlightened. We do not know what we believe. We do not know what is going on. We have let tyranny prevail and we have done little to stop it.

Students will be exposed to the principles of freedom that were articulated by the Founders and were refined by the later heroes of the nation—the principal refinement being the abolition of slavery. I teach the principles of freedom in the hope that you will remem-

ber and embrace them for life. This course will also give you a good basic understanding of what the Supreme Court has done to our liberties. You should know what is going on after reading a few dozen Supreme Court decisions.

In short, after this course you will be an enlightened citizen. And I firmly believe that a determined group of enlightened citizens can work through the political processes given to us by the Founders, challenging and modifying the Supreme Court to return this nation to the intentions and spirit of our founding. We can win this battle, but not without the right principles and not without the required knowledge.

Originally this course was designed for high school students in homeschooling. But it has become obvious in the intervening years that every citizen of this nation needs to become an enlightened citizen. It is my goal to have tens of thousands of teens and adults take this course. A small army of those who believe in freedom, are instructed in the truth, and are willing to work hard can reclaim this nation in the spirit of the American founding.

¹ Jonathan Elliot, *Elliot’s Debates: The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Washington: Taylor &



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