

From: Ann and Ron Keffer [<mailto:annronkeffer@gmail.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, February 03, 2015 6:03 PM

To: Rep. Wes Keller

Cc: Rep. Paul Seaton

Subject: HB 30

Representative Keller,

Recently I submitted the e-mail below to Representative Seaton, and now I submit it as public testimony to both you as Chair and the entire House Education Committee. I wish I could be in Juneau to speak personally to this matter; nonetheless, I have kept my comments as brief as possible. All my contact information is in my signature at the bottom of this e-mail.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Ronald L. Keffer, Ed.D.

Hi, Paul!

I just read over House Bill 30. While I'm not particularly concerned about the bill in some of its aspects, I do wonder about the motivations of those who wrote the bill, and I fear it could be implemented in such a way as to present a false impression of the nature of the early history of our nation.

We live in a great democracy, and our freedoms are founded on our Constitution, but let's remember that a great deal of what we think of as Americanism got off to a rather shaky start. Please remember these portions of the *original* Constitution:

Article I, Section 2, includes the infamous sentence regarding determining representation by counting 3/5 of "all other Persons." Of course, those *persons* were black slaves. One of our founding values was slavery. That should not be glossed over; instead, the long struggle to realize the full measure of equality under the law should be taught. Civil rights, in other words! That struggle did not begin in the 1960's, and it has yet to end.

Article I, Section 3, originally provided for senators to be selected by state legislatures. That was hardly a democratic process, and students should understand that. The notion that the riffraff had to be kept from power was very strong among many of the writers of the Constitution. Since many of us, or our ancestors, would have been considered riffraff during that era, this is an important concept to teach.

Article II, Section 1, discusses the Electoral College. I won't write much about that here, but it deserves a lengthy study in any realistic account of the basis of our freedoms.

Article III, Section 1, established only one court, the "supreme Court." That section did permit Congress to establish other courts, but the nature of our court system to this day is handled on

almost an *ad hoc* basis by elected officials. The notion that our court system is flawless and that it is a timeless institution established for the ages in the Constitution should not be taught.

Article V takes us back to the issue of slavery. It says, “. . . that no Amendment which may be made prior to the Year One thousand eight hundred and eight shall in any Manner affect the first and fourth Clauses in the Ninth section of the first Article” In other words, this Article prohibited any effort to eliminate slavery by amending Section 9 of Article I. (The largely humanitarian and hugely expensive efforts of the British navy to squelch the slave trade to the United States would be a good addition to the curriculum in relation to this portion of the Constitution.)

I taught history for over a decade before beginning my career in school administration, and during two of those years I taught as a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Georgia. It is supremely important that requirements such as those envisioned by HB 30 be tempered by the simple expedient of insisting that *all* history be taught. To teach the Constitution only as it now reads, and to represent our form of government as one that has not evolved to become more free and more accommodating to the needs of its citizens would be wrong, and smacks of political propaganda.

Paul, I would love to hear your thoughts on this subject.

Thanks for hearing me!

Ron

Ann and Ron Keffer
189 Island View Court
Homer, Alaska 99603
H: 907-235-8293, Ann's Cell: 907-299-0812
Ron's Cell: 907-299-0821
annronkeffer@gmail.com