

To legislators considering HB 30 Constitutional History Curriculum:

I, Stuart Thompson, telephonically attended the initial hearing on HB 30—where support and opposition to it were well articulated by Rep Keller and Rep Seaton. I testified in the bill's support. My prepared testimony has been faxed in. As committee debate will ensue that I cannot directly participate in, I wish to have my responses to opposition points be viewed.

1) The difference between civics indoctrination and civics education must be more clearly understood in the context of the bill. Civics indoctrination gives a comprehension of a citizen's place in the political scheme of things—highly simplified. However, it instills a mental dependence on accredited authorities for the rightness or wrongness of political activity and the use of delegated power. Naturally, individual judgment isn't developed, thus lack of civic participation is encouraged. On the other hand, civics education gives a comprehension of the practical “doing ness” of citizenship, creating ability to make government do its job right. However, it tasks people with understanding the grounds for the compromises—based on principles being used to resolve problems perceived—that are reflected in constitutions and subordinate law. This enables competent judgment in wielding ultimate political power, or successfully supervising it when delegated.

2) Rep. Keller errs in depending on the use of the word “values” in communicating what he's aiming at with his bill. As demonstrated by Rep. Seaton, a lot of people define “values” only as “moral or political prejudices”. This leaves out “successful problem-solving principles arising from verified reality”—what Rep. Keller really does want taught our youth.

3) The moral or political prejudices of US founders that Rep. Seaton decried — constitutional support of slavery, law-enforced political prejudices against women, lack of enforcement of constitutionally-admitted sovereignty of Indian tribes, etc. — all need to be viewed in the context of the realities and circumstances of the times. This is one of the compelling reasons to study history. Rep. Seaton is apparently not aware of what got edited out of the Declaration of Independence, founding father familiarity with the Iroquois Confederacy that influenced development of our form of government, or the direct influence Abigail Adams had on John Adams and his son's politics. This is not to mention careful construction of a constitutional amendment process— reflecting how the Founders knew that some problems they weren't solving could be solved later, if provided for.

4) To deny our youth access to the problem-solving principles and awareness of realities used by our founders is a hideous attack on posterity. US Supreme Court decisions are flooded with judicial attention to the Federalist Papers and other sources of Constitutionalism (including the Mayflower compact!). Example: if our youth were made aware of the problems surrounding the institution of slavery and the political compromises it enforced, they would have guidance to act on current repetitions of them. Like politically handling US energy dependence on oil. Like dealing with the US Supreme Court's Citizens United decision—that rules that virtual public slavery to corporate and special interests is constitutional. And what about government problems we now suffer from that have ready-made solutions available in the Anti-Federalist papers and Madison's notes on the US Constitutional Convention?

5) The greatest enabler of political corruption is ignorance. Why should we citizens suffer from general ignorance of the riches of our political heritage? Why should citizens called to public service—like you—have your honor compromised by fellow citizen ignorance? Haven't we citizens been tortured enough with betrayals of the dreams that founded our state and country? Why can't you legislators ride a tidal wave of People Power to glory and renown? This triumphant effort awaits public access to Constitutionalism.

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