



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 31, 2023

## Live by the Sword, Die by the Sword: COS Criticizes Paper for Publishing “Hit Piece” on Its Co-founder

The Convention of States (COS) organization is [calling out](#) *The Washington Post* for publishing a “hit piece” on COS co-founder Michael Farris.

In their response to the [Post’s article](#), COS describes the article’s message as “a simple one: Michael Farris ... is a terrifying threat to American society.” To be fair, the *Post’s* piece makes no such claim, and a dispassionate reading reveals that the message was that *The Washington Post* disagrees with Farris’ work on behalf of homeschool families and his belief that public schools are harmful.



AP Images  
COS co-founder Michael Farris

Let’s get this straight from the very beginning: The *Post’s* position on homeschooling and its mockery of “the divinely endowed rights of parents” are reprehensible, wrong, and ridiculous. Frankly, Farris is to be admired for his advocacy of homeschooling, and his warnings about the harm posed by public education are accurate and should be heeded.

In other words, the intent of this *TNA* article is neither to pile on Michael Farris nor to defend him. The purpose of this article is to call out COS for publishing their own hit pieces on others, but crying foul when others do the same to one of their own.

We’ve all heard the proverb “Live by the sword, die by the sword,” but few know its provenance. The Gospel of Matthew records the following words spoken by Jesus:

“Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

By the time the Lord spoke this warning to Peter, it was already an oft-repeated legal maxim. It has a parallel structure that aids memorization, but was known to be a restatement of the law set forth in Genesis 9:6, wherein God declared to mankind that “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”

When it comes to a more universal application of this axiom, John Gill wrote in his *Exposition on the New Testament*:

This is not to be understood of magistrates who bear not the sword in vain, are ministers of God for good, and revengers of evil works; but of private persons that use the sword, and that not in self-defence, [sic] but for private revenge; or engage in a quarrel, to which they are not called; and such generally perish, as Peter must have done, had it not been for the interposition of almighty power.

Therefore, in the spirit of being my brother’s keeper, I encourage COS to obey the Lord’s



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commandment: “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.”

Under regular circumstances, COS would be well within their rights to respond to *The Washington Post*’s unfair, unnecessary, and unbalanced report on the character and work of Michael Farris. But, unfortunately for COS, they have no moral standing to criticize an organization for using, as they describe the *Post* article, a “sensationalized piece,” because COS has used that same tactic against those with whom they disagree.

Without giving undue publicity to the attacks on men who gained a reputation for successfully opposing the COS call for a constitutional convention, suffice it to say that COS printed insulting ad hominem attacks on a couple of gentlemen who did not deserve such treatment. It is clear from the hit piece COS published against two of their political adversaries that the group’s message was a simple one: These two men are a menace to the COS agenda, therefore they are worthy of being humiliated and harassed publicly by COS.

Defense of the men mocked by COS is unnecessary, and, as gentlemen, they would probably consider any attempt to do so unseemly. I respect them for their strength of character and their commitment to carrying on the work of protecting the Constitution from the evisceration of rights and reason that would result from a convention of states to amend the Constitution.

In the wake of the *Washington Post* hit piece, then, it would seem appropriate for the leadership of COS, including the maligned Michael Farris, to publish an apology to the two men they treated so disrespectfully in their own article. That would be the act of gentlemen, particularly of Christian gentlemen dedicated to being hearers as well as doers of the word.

As of the time of writing this article, COS had neither retracted their attacks on the aforementioned gentlemen, nor removed the article from their blog. In that singular fact is found, if only philosophically, the reason why one of COS’s own leaders was smeared by *The Washington Post*.

Finally, let it be noted that there isn’t a single syllable of this article that exposes — or even aims at exposing — any personal misdeeds or mistakes of anyone inside the Convention of States organization or those who speak out in support of their side of the Article V issue. This article’s message is, as I stated above, no more nor less than a reminder of the Lord’s admonition to His apostle that those who unfairly malign the characters of others are themselves often unfairly maligned.



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