



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on February 8, 2015

Alaska Considers Bill Requiring Study of Constitution, Key Founding Documents in Schools

The Alaska state legislature is considering a bill that would mandate the study of the Constitution in public schools.

A committee hearing held last week was attended by “members of the public who supported the bill, including some educators,” the Associated Press reported on February 6.

The AP told the story of one educator who sees the measure as an opportunity to deliver timely instruction to kids who are woefully uneducated about the Constitution:



Bob Bird, who teaches constitutional law to 12th-graders at Nikiski High School, said students need more constitutional instruction. “Only when you actually parse through the documents, and the *Federalist* and *Anti-federalist Papers*, can you really understand what’s going wrong” in the U.S., he said via teleconference.

Once students read the documents, Bird said, many understand “we are in a terrible constitutional mess.”

Bird’s diagnosis is spot on and the remedy seems sound, as well.

As Thomas Jefferson once said, “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.”

It is certainly critical if we are to keep the Republic created by the Constitution that the rising generation be educated as to the timeless principles of liberty upon which our Constitution is constructed.

As *The New American* has chronicled, this endeavor will end with the [implementation of the Common Core standards](#).

As for the specific reading required under the proposed bill, the AP reports, “The Republican-led bill would require Alaska high school students to study the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, the U.S. Constitution, the Articles of Confederation, the *Federalist Papers* and the first state constitutions.”

An understanding and appreciation of these documents and the principles they expound could spark fires of freedom throughout the states, fires that would consume the marbled structures of cronyism and statism that are the blight of freedom and are built upon the ruins of personal liberty that has long since been destroyed.

Of course, while these educational efforts are laudable, one wonders whether a similar measure shouldn’t be introduced requiring state legislators to study those same documents and pass test on their contents prior to taking their seats.



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If these state lawmakers were as committed to federalism, states' rights, and forcing the federal beast back inside its constitutional cage as they say, wouldn't they be on record opposing the acceptance of even a single cent of federal grant-in-aid money? Wouldn't they be on record offering and voting in favor of bills to declare state economic independence from the federal government?

[Check the data.](#) Most states receive at least one-third of their budget funds from the federal government (in Alaska, for example, 20 percent of the state budget comes from federal funds). It hardly seems consistent with a commitment to state sovereignty to shake one's fist at Washington with one hand while cashing its checks with the other.

The facts don't lie.

Furthermore, it would seem that resisting federal trampling of the Constitution is not only a right of state lawmakers, it is a constitutional obligation.

Article VI, Clause 3 reads:

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several state legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several states, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.

Simply put, this clause puts all state legislators under a legally binding obligation (assuming they've taken their oath of office) to "support the Constitution." There is no better way, it would seem, for these elected state representatives of the people to show support for the Constitution than by demanding that the officers of the federal government adhere to constitutional limits on their power.

Refusing federal graft would also seem to be another aspect of state lawmakers' legally binding obligation as set forth in Article VI.

Perhaps more of these state legislators, attorneys general, and judges would be more inclined to perform their Article VI duty if the people that put them in office would sue them and hold them legally accountable for any failures to carry this burden.

Imagine the uproar in state assemblies across the country if every day the legislators were in session process servers showed up at their offices armed with lawsuits charging them with dereliction of their constitutional duty!

Taken together, the Alaska bill (similar measures have been enacted or are under consideration in five other states according to the AP) and a resurgence of representatives committed to independence and federalism would go a long way toward cleaning up the "constitutional mess" in which we find ourselves.

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