



Is the Constitution on Life Support?

Mark Twain, upon hearing that his obituary had been erroneously published, told a reporter, "Reports of my death are exaggerated." Lately, there has been a similarly premature concert of requiems sung over the admittedly emaciated body of our founding charter. Although the enemies of liberty, foreign and domestic, have enjoyed some success in extracting the vitals from our body politic and the Constitution that is its lifeblood, there remains a noticeable, pulse and it is not time to pull the plug.



Evidence of the vitality of the Constitution is found in the people and their veneration of it. While it is true that [many Americans](#), even a shocking number of our elected political leaders, are unforgivably ignorant of the particular provisions contained in the Constitution, recent indicators give hope to those intent on reviving our beloved Constitution and restoring it to its former place of glory.

Results of a [survey](#) of 1,000 adults conducted by the Rasmussen Report in June reveals that when asked if the Constitution should be altered, 62 percent of respondents said that the document should be left alone.

What's more, 84 percent of those participating in the survey gave the Constitution a vote of confidence and said they believed that it should continue to be used as the law of the land. Five percent would vote against the perpetuation of the Constitution as the supreme law of the United States.

A ubiquitous aspect of any modern political opinion poll is the "approval rating." How many respondents approve of the job the Constitution is doing? The Rasmussen Reports findings indicate that 69 percent of Americans give the Constitution a "good" or "excellent" rating. That's about 20 points higher than give President Obama the same endorsement.

Another promising finding published by the conductors of the study is that 39 percent of those polled stated that the Constitution does not put enough restraint on the power of government. While that attitude seems to indicate an encouraging belief among a significant minority of Americans that our government needs to be restrained, there is another way to interpret the results.

Something the report of the findings doesn't explain is whether the 39 percent of respondents that told pollsters that the Constitution doesn't go far enough in the shackling of government believed that the Constitution should be altered in order to more effectively reduced the power of government. Also, is that 39 percent familiar enough with the enumeration of very limited powers that are granted to the federal government by the Constitution? Would they change their opinion if they realized just how narrowly the Constitution defines the boundaries of governmental power? Perhaps the answers to those questions will require a follow-up survey.

Finally, according to the findings published by Rasmussen, "nearly half of American adults see the government today as a threat to individual rights rather than a protector of those rights." In a [similar](#)



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[study](#) conducted earlier in the year the New Jersey-based polling organization found that just 21 percent of voters nationwide believe that the federal government enjoys the consent of the governed. This is illustrative given that the document that gave legal life to the United States of America as an independent nation clearly states that governments derive “their just powers from the consent of the governed.” Again, a follow-up question regarding the appropriate remedy for a government that has exceeded its legitimate mandate was not asked by Rasmussen.

There is hope, however. Innumerable organizations are offering to teach Americans about the immutable principles of federalism, limited government, and personal liberty that are given extraordinary expression in our Constitution. Some of those groups, such as The John Birch Society, have been carrying out their program of patriotism for decades in an effort to awaken Americans to the content of our noble charter and to our responsibility to preserve, protect, and defend it from those intent on displacing it.

Despite the preponderance of nonsensical and purposefully misleading information available on the Internet, there is still a staggering cache of useful and enlightening information about the Constitution on offer. The bookstore at [The John Birch Society](#) is chock full of books, videos, and ephemera produced specifically to educate Americans about our Constitution and how to recognize and repel the attacks made against it.

Liberty Fund is another invaluable online repository of books and articles that can quicken the mind of any would-be Constitutional scholar. One particularly noteworthy publication offered gratis by the Liberty Fund is the “Founding Fathers’ Library.” As stated in the introduction to the catalog:

The Founding Fathers of the American Constitution made it clear what authors and texts had influenced their own thinking on the idea of liberty. Donald S. Lutz has examined the speeches, letters, journalism, and theoretical works of the founding generation in order to draw up a composite ‘library catalog’ of that generation.

In addition to the wealth of source material generously published online by Liberty Fund, another avenue that leads to other bookshelves in the “Library of the Founders” is the lists of recommended books they compiled. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson penned such a list, and the contents thereof are available online, as well.

So, while there is a cadre of self-licensed physicians that are ready to sign the death certificate of the Constitution, there is time (though it is irretrievably slipping away) to make a determined study of the foundational principles upon which our Republic was built and the manifestations of those principles in the Constitution. As James Madison said regarding the obligations of Americans regarding the preservation of the Constitution and our Republic:

Is there no virtue among us? If there be not, we are in a wretched situation. No theoretical checks-no form of government can render us secure. To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people, is a chimerical idea, if there be sufficient virtue and intelligence in the community, it will be exercised in the selection of these men. So that we do not depend on their virtue, or put confidence in our rulers, but in the people who are to choose them.

May we wisely demonstrate the “sufficient virtue and intelligence” needed to instruct ourselves in all the tenets of good government that inspired our Founding Fathers and thus breathe new life into our beloved Constitution.



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