

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF THE AMERICAN HERITAGE IN MINNESOTA PUBLIC SCHOOL ACT

HF0867; SF1137

Michael J. Chapman; March 29, 2005

My name is Michael J. Chapman. I am a resident of Eden Prairie, father of two children, a full time technical writer, and an author and education researcher. I am also a collector of rare books and the founder of American Heritage Research. For many years, I have conducted curriculum reviews and given in-service training on teaching accurate, balanced history to educators throughout the nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of House File 0867 (Senate File 1137).

I'd like to begin by reading just a few lines from Concurrent Resolution 129 presented by Senator Lieberman and passed unanimously in the US House and Senate during the 106th congress:

“Whereas basic knowledge of United States history is essential to full and informed participation in civic life...; and citizens who lack knowledge of United States history will also lack an understanding and appreciation of the democratic principles that define and sustain the Nation as a free people...;

Now therefore, be it Resolved that...State officials responsible for higher education...should promote requirements in United States history; and history teachers and educators at all levels should redouble their efforts to bolster the knowledge of US history among students of all ages and to restore the vitality of America's civic memory.”
[Congressional Record; June 30,2000, p.S6260-S6261]

The American Heritage in Minnesota Public Schools Act previously passed the Minnesota House twice and is the answer to congress's concurrent resolution. As you have seen from David Barton's testimony, there is an entire segment of our history that is little known or understood. Over the years, I've also found that textbook publishers often omit certain facts of our heritage.

For example, this popular Minnesota textbook is typical of the censorship of religious references in the Mayflower Compact. Notice the ellipses:

“We...do, by these presents [this document] combine ourselves into a civil body politic [group]...to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws...for the general good of the colony...”¹ [as appears in text]

Below is just a portion of what was omitted from the textbook. (The underlined words were those included in the textbook and separated by ellipses):

¹ Smith, United States Government, Teachers Edition, American Guidance Service, Inc., Circle Pines, MN, 2001, p. 1.

“In the name of god, amen. **We** whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of...King James, by the grace of God...having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of ye Christian faith and honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant ye first colony in ye Northern parts of Virginia, **do by these presents** solemnly & mutually in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and **combine ourselves together into a civil body politic**...”

The missing language clearly changes the context and emphasis of this important historical document. The Mayflower traveler’s faith in God was obviously a very significant part of why they came to America. Why is this language so often left out? The missing language represents important facts from our American history.

Reporting the truth about what was written or what the pilgrims believed is not state-sponsorship of religion; it’s simply accurate history. Leaving it out is nothing but censorship.

Another way that our Founders and their related documents are censored in textbooks is by their words being taken out of context. Contextual censorship of our Founders leads to a faulty understanding of essential principles.

For example, applying modern meaning to the 18th century words of the Declaration of Independence not only paint Jefferson in a negative light, but also change the original meaning of the document. This Houghton Mifflin textbook quotation is typical:

“When Jefferson wrote that ‘all men’ were equal, he really meant ‘all citizens.’ Women and blacks were not included.”²

First of all, Jefferson wrote, “all men are *created* equal” and the term “men” was used to denote “mankind” – both *male* and *female* – not the specific gender. Furthermore, Jefferson was a tireless fighter against slavery. In his original draft of the Declaration of Independence, the first and longest complaint was that the King forced the continuation of the slave trade against the wishes of most of our colonies. In Jefferson’s Notes on Virginia (summarized on the wall of the Jefferson Memorial), he explained his true concern regarding slavery:

“And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis; a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God; that they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country, when I realize that God is just, and His justice cannot sleep forever!”³

Another historic figure taken out of context is Alexis De Tocqueville, the French historian and author of “Democracy in America.” He is often discussed in textbooks, but minus his conclusions regarding the influence of religion on America. The Center for Civic Education, authors of the No Child Left Behind funded civics textbook, “We the People,” assigns Tocqueville a faulty conclusion based on his censored work:

² America Will Be, Teachers Edition, Houghton Mifflin 5th grade Social Studies, Boston, 1994, p. 264.

³ Jefferson Notes on Virginia, Writings, Bergh editor, 1905, Vol. II, p. 227.

“Tocqueville...wondered how a society so devoted to materialism and the pursuit of individual self-interest could produce the civic spirit needed for self-government.”⁴ [Ellipses in textbook.]

The surrounding text leaves readers with the clear idea that Tocqueville is wondering this about America. The truth, however is that he was referring to Europe in comparison to America. In Tocqueville’s uncensored book, he writes: “*amongst the Americans materialism may be said to hardly exist.*”⁵

Later, on the same page, the textbook author concludes: “...*Good citizenship for Tocqueville, therefore, was nothing other than **enlightened self-interest.***” [Emphasis in textbook]. This is not Tocqueville’s conclusion. It is the author’s opinion based on censored text. Tocqueville never used the term “enlightened self-interest,” and his conclusions about America were entirely different. Tocqueville’s own uncensored words reveal the truth:

“The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and of liberty so intimately in their minds, that it is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other; ...”

“There are persons in France who look upon republican institutions only as a means of obtaining grandeur.... When these men attack religious opinions, they obey the dictates of their passions, and not of their interests. Despotism may govern without faith, but liberty cannot.”⁶

This misrepresentation of Tocqueville fits well with the popular redefinition of America’s root principles of government. According to “A More Perfect Union,” a popular 7th grade Minnesota textbook, American government was based upon “Enlightenment principles.” Although few textbooks include footnotes, this particular one explained how it arrived at this conclusion:

According to the textbook, a study of 15,000 quotations from our founding era revealed that the top three sources most often quoted by our founders were philosophers: Baron De Montesquieu, David Hume and John Lock. Attributing these three to the enlightenment movement sweeping Europe, the authors conclude that America must be enlightenment-based.⁷

Unfortunately, the authors ignore important facts from the original study. Not mentioned in the textbook, but revealed in the actual study, is the HISTORICAL FACT that our

⁴ We the People, CCE, Calabasas, CA, 10th printing, 2002, p. 191

⁵ Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans by Reeve, Century Co., NY, 1898, Vol II, p. 167.

⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 392 – 393.

⁷ A More Perfect Union, HMSS, 8th grade textbook, Boston, 1991, p. 83 & 109.

founders directly quoted the Bible TWICE as often as the top three individuals combined!⁸ Ignoring this fact, the textbook concludes about the American Founders: *"Here they were, the first people in history to have the chance to create an entirely new government based on Enlightenment principles."*⁹ The uncensored study clearly shows that the Bible had much more influence on our founding than did the principles of the enlightenment.

The French Revolution, which was based on enlightenment principles, produced anarchy and led to the reign of terror and finally to the dictatorship of Napoleon. France has been through seven completely different forms of government since its revolution. America alone has remained a stable nation and is now the longest running constitutional republic in history.

The credit goes to America's founding charter: The Declaration of Independence. Unfortunately, the Declaration is often demoted or snipped entirely from study. Current textbooks present it as nothing more than an announcement or a list of grievances to justify our separation from England. Erich Martel, for example, a High School History teacher from Washington DC who writes for the Fordham Foundation, has called it an *"historical error"* to consider the Declaration a *founding document that sets forth guiding principles for our nation...* explaining: *"The Declaration is only symbolically a founding document, since it proclaimed independence. It has no legal status and establishes no rights or duties."*¹⁰

The Declaration of Independence was, however, more than just a proclamation and list of grievances. It was also a statement of principles that our founders believed to be timeless and true. Among these "self-evident truths" was the belief that our rights come from a Creator God and apply equally to all mankind, and therefore government's primary duty is to secure those Creator-given rights. The Declaration contains 12 such principles that are nowhere found in the Constitution itself.

John Quincy Adams did a much better job of explaining the true relationship between the Declaration and Constitution at the 50th anniversary of the Inauguration of George Washington:

"Now the virtue which had been infused into the Constitution of the United States...was no other than the concretion of those abstract principles which had been first proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence – namely, the self-

⁸ Lutz, *The Origins of American Constitutionalism*, Louisiana State University Press, 1988, p. 141 – 142. Not only did the textbook ignore the Bible, it also skipped over Sir William Blackstone and listed Hume instead. "Blackstone's Commentaries on the Law" served 160 years as America's Law textbook. It was Blackstone that defined the phrase, "The Laws of Nature and of Natures God" mentioned in our Declaration of Independence as "the will of God." Further, Blackstone explains: "...This law of nature dictated by God Himself is of course superior in obligation to any other law. This law of nature is binding over all the globe, in all countries at all times. No human laws are of any validity if they are contrary to this...No human law is to contradict this law of nature and natures God found in the Holy Scripture." [Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Vol I, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1765, pp. 41-42]

Furthermore, based upon the quotations our founders chose regarding the other two individuals, the study concludes: *"When it came to building and running civil societies, few American Whigs in the 1770s saw any conflict between what they read in Locke or Montesquieu and what they read in the Bible."*, Lutz, *Origins...*, p. 140.

⁹ *A More Perfect Union*, HMSS, p. 83

¹⁰ Posted testimony on MDE website during Social Studies Standards debate, 2004.

evident truths of the natural and unalienable rights of man...and dissolvent sovereignty of the people, always subordinate to the Supreme Ruler of the universe.... This was the platform upon which the Constitution of the United States had been erected. It's VIRTUES, its republican character, consisted in its conformity to the principles proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence."¹¹

The Constitution, "*written in order to form a more perfect union,*" serve as the working paper that put the Declaration principles into action. Without that understanding, the Constitution can be made to say anything – even without amendment. And that, unfortunately, is what the textbook publishers seem to believe. Houghton Mifflin's textbook, "A More Perfect Union" has a heading title, "Change Without Amendment" and explains:

"The Constitution is not a rigid document. ...By unofficial [change] method is meant, first, the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Constitution, which differs sometimes from court to court, depending on the view of new justices."¹²

Without the understanding that our rights come from God, the only thing left is to believe that our rights come from the *government* itself (or, in the case above, the Supreme Court).

Many textbook authors actually come to that conclusion. For example, AGS, Inc's textbook, "United States Government," asks the question: "*May citizens enjoy rights that are not listed in the Bill of Rights?*" According to the Teacher's Edition, the proper answer is "NO"¹³ – In other words, you have no rights unless specifically granted by government decree.

This is a terribly false statement – especially in light of the uncensored 9th and 10th amendments,¹⁴ which clearly prove the opposite true – that all non-listed rights are "retained by the *people*." Our Constitution is a document that *limits* the power of the federal government by specifically enumerating what *it* has the authority to do. Access to original and complete documents would ensure students and teachers have the tools necessary to counter such misinterpretation.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is gaining popularity among textbook authors as the greater document over America's Bill of Rights, (See "We the People" by the CCE, for example). However, the Universal Declaration is a document that gives all power to government and limits the rights of people. After listing what rights you may have, Article 29.3 takes them away: "*These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.*"

The "We the People" textbook, written by the CCE, demotes the Bill of Rights and ignores lessons on the 2nd, 9th and 10th amendments. While venerating the Universal Declaration

¹¹ J.Q. Adams, Jubilee of the Constitution. A Discourse..., New York, Samuel Colman VIII, publisher, 1839, p. 54.

¹² A More Perfect Union; p. 396.

¹³ Smith, United States Government, p. 238.

¹⁴ I mentioned the *uncensored* 9th and 10th amendments since these seem missing from any meaningful discussion in most textbooks. See Quist, Textbook Review of "We the People" by the CCE, available at www.Edwatch.org, for example.

of Human Rights, the CCE ignores pointing out Article 29.3. These biased and incomplete lessons are having an effect: A distraught mother gave me a copy of her daughter's quiz that showed her "correct" answer: *"Our government has absolute authority over the citizens!"* [see attachment]

In conclusion:

Study after study reveals a deplorable lack of American history-knowledge among our students. If we expect our children – the future voters, citizens, representatives, and defenders of America – to understand and cherish the American principles of Liberty, we must ensure they have access to and study the original documents and writings of our Founders.

It is interesting that Minnesota's 250 pages of rules governing the licensing of teachers require ALL TEACHERS (even gym teachers) to "understand the cultural content, world view, and concepts [of] Indian Tribal Government," and the "vital role of the American Indian value system...."¹⁵ There is nothing wrong with studying Native American History, but those same rules do not likewise require, even among our History Teachers, an understanding of *America's founding principles, world view, or the vital role of our Founder's value system.*

The preamble to our Minnesota State Constitution states that we are "grateful to God for our Civil and Religious liberty" and that we desire to perpetuate these blessings to future generations. How can the people of the state of Minnesota perpetuate those blessings if we continue to censor our Founders and their source principles of freedom?

The purpose of this Bill is to go the extra step beyond the basic and general framework of the recently passed social studies standards by ending that censorship and proactively ensuring that our children have full access to America's Founding Principles of Freedom.

America's education system has traditionally been about the free exchange of ideas. This Bill in no way threatens that tradition, but rather guarantees it, by eliminating the censorship of our history based upon religious writings. It simply seeks to balance history with the too often missing perspective of our own Founders.

President Woodrow Wilson once explained: "A nation which does not remember what it was yesterday, does not know what it is today nor what it is trying to do." Likewise, James Russell Lowell once asked rhetorically: "How long will the American Republic endure? As long as the ideas of the men who founded it continue dominant."

Thank you for considering this important bill meant to pass on the ideas that will perpetuate the blessings of civil and religious liberty for your children and mine.

www.AmericanHeritageResearch.com

¹⁵ Taken from the passed - Proposed Rules Governing the Licensing of Teachers, p.7, Sec. 8710.2000, Subp. 4G; also p. 165, D.(4)