

here to stress a far simpler way to understand the Constitution.

Let me simply say that we should each take the time to simply sit down and read it. Those who are in a position to make our Nation's laws should do so being fully versed in the laws that guide us here as well, and those are written right here in the Constitution. And that is why I am so proud to come and support my good friend from Texas, Mr. CONAWAY, who just spoke a little bit ago, on his bill, H.R. 883. It is a piece of legislation that every Member of this House should sign up in support of and support hopefully in September. It is the AMERICA Act of 2006, A Modest Effort to Read and Instill the Constitution Again and take the commonsense approach by stating that Members of Congress take the oath of office to uphold the Constitution and using the powers delegated to them under the Constitution, so Members and staff should take the time periodically to sit down with that Constitution.

And I might just say on an aside when I mention staff, there is member of staff of the U.S. House of Representatives who has not only taken time to read the Constitution, but this woman has also taken the time to put together a book on the Constitution. It is called "The Constitution Translated For Kids." So if a Member of the staff can take the time to write a book on it and can write a book for kids to be able to read the Constitution, then I think it becomes the obligation of each Member of Congress to sit down with this Constitution as well.

Mr. Speaker, as the Constitution is very clear on the rights that it protects and the protections of the guidelines for this Nation provided for a limited in scope and nature of Federal Government, it is vitally important that we write our laws and perform all of our other official duties with this in mind. We owe it all to our constituents as well as in the past and into the future. For how can we uphold the Constitution if we are simply unclear as to what it says?

Our collective efforts in this Constitutional Caucus is in large part because we feel that the Congress has drifted beyond its constitutional limits. Enacting and living by recommendations of the AMERICA Act of 2006 will be helpful to set that ship aright again.

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It will be helpful to make sure that we abide by the Constitution.

So I simply suggest that Members need not wait also until this legislation is passed by this House. They actually can do it right today. They can sit down and read the Constitution.

And I make this final suggestion that if anyone is in need of a Constitution, feel free to contact my office and we will humbly provide them with one.

THE IMPORTANCE FOR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND STAFF TO READ THE CONSTITUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I also appreciate the opportunity of being here to talk about Mr. CONAWAY's piece of legislation dealing with the Constitution.

In *Mack v. The United States*, Justice Scalia said, "The Constitution protects us from our own best intentions. It divides power among sovereigns," that is the national and State government, "and among the branches of government," the executive, legislative, and judicial, "precisely so that we may resist the temptation to concentrate power in one location as an expedient solution to the crises of the day."

The Founding Fathers also understood this when they were trying to sell the Constitution originally. Madison wrote in *Federalist 45* that "The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the Federal Government are few and defined" and those to the States are "numerous and indefinite. Those we were supposed to deal with were the external objects like war, peace, negotiations, foreign commerce. The States were supposed to deal with everything which affected the ordinary course of affairs, concerns the lives and liberties and properties of the people, internal order, improvement of prosperity of the States.

So why don't we really do that today? It is not because we are deliberately trying to trample upon the concepts of the Constitution. It is not something that is vicious. It is something that we simply do not do because we tend to base our actions on the traditions of what we have always done, rather than the principles of what we ought to do.

So enter Mr. CONAWAY and his resolution. Why should we do it? Well, maybe if we did read that document more often we would not follow the traditions we have always done instead of the principles we ought to do. It does not happen by itself.

I was a poly sci major. Three of my children are. None of us were ever required to actually look at the document itself. When I taught AP government classes, I required our classes to read the document every year. It took a week to just go through it going at a fast clip.

But none of my kids were ever required to replicate that experience when they were in college, even if they were poly sci majors. My kids did know at that time what the *Gitlow* decision in the 1920s did to impact the 14th amendment in the 1950s. They did know the answers that I am repeatedly asked, like how often are congressman up for reelection or which Senator is supposed to represent our part of the State of Utah or when you go down to the Senate Chamber that was restored, why are there 11 chairs instead of nine?

They understand the concept of the Supreme Court's declaring things unconstitutional. It is not written in the document itself. It is a precedent that was established 15 years after the document was written. Jefferson always thought the legislative branch should be the one doing that job. Washington, and he was there when this thing was written, always thought the executive should declare things unconstitutional, and that was the purpose of the veto. In fact, the first six Presidents of the United States only vetoed items for constitutional issues.

I always ask my students if the Constitution allows you a guaranteed right of a secret ballot. And when they say, yes, I say that is a unique concept, especially since it was not popular only until 100 years after the Constitution was actually written. Why else would George Washington be able to buy a round of drinks for all the people that voted for him for the House of Burgess? Or when Thomas Nast draws his cartoons and there is this round globe there, what is that? In fact, it took a while to realize that was the ballot box of the 1800s. It was clear you got your ballots from the political parties. They were color coded; so everyone knew how you voted publicly. And, in fact, in New York one year, they even perfumed the ballots in case you were color blind so you could at least smell the proper ballot to cast.

It is fitting and proper that we and staff read the Constitution. Why? Well, maybe we will start asking the right questions or maybe it is just the right thing to do. If the Boy Scouts of America can insist that every kid wanting to get an Eagle has to read the Constitution first, if it is good enough for a 13-year-old kid, it ought to be good enough for us and for our staffs.

In fact, we should thank Mr. CONAWAY for making it an easy resolution. He is simply asking us to read the document. He could have made it tougher by asking us to understand it at the same time.

Maybe it would even allow us to rein in the size and growth of the Federal Government because, as PJ O'Rourke very clearly said, "The mystery of government is not how Washington works but how to make it stop."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)