



American Government

for Christian Homeschoolers:

Scott Clifton

(Sample)

(Section titles indicate the week and day that section is read—e.g., “12.4” means that section is read on Week 12, Day 4.)

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(or the end of this sample).

1.2 – What the Bible Says Government Should Do (🙏)¹

Why Government Exists, Says the Bible

BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND and apply the principles in this section! They'll guide you into approaching the study of government from a Biblical—and therefore, sensible and moral—worldview.

Are you ready? It's very simple: Here's what God's Word says about why government exists:

1. To punish violence and harm
2. To provide justice

That's it.

That's *all*.

Popular today are notions that the government should educate children and young adults, tell employers how much they have to pay employees, pay for doctor visits, make housing “affordable,” tell adults what they may eat or drink or smoke, and build roads.

But none of those above functions is a legitimate, moral, true purpose of government. Now, if someone wants to *believe* that the government should do any or all those things, he's free to believe that, or that $2 + 2 = 5$. But a Christian's standard is what the *Bible* says, and the Bible clearly tells us what the only legitimate purpose of government is. Let's take a look.

Violence and Spoil, Judgment and Justice

In the book of Ezekiel, God explains a just ruler's duty:

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice (Ezekiel 45:9).

The word **violence** in that verse is also translated “wrong,” “cruelty,” “injustice,” “oppressor,” “damage,” and “false” (like a witness who lies in court).²

The word **spoil** in that verse is elsewhere translated “destruction,” “oppression,” and “robbery.”³ And we all know what **judgement** and **justice** mean. So the Bible's message about government is clear:

God says the duty of rulers is to punish those who harm, kill, steal from, or otherwise violate the rights of others. (This includes protecting the people from outside invaders.)

¹ Pray for your parents and government officials!

² In order, these verses are Genesis 16:5, Genesis 49:5, Job 16:17, Proverbs 3:31, Proverbs 26:6, and Deuteronomy 19:16.

³ Job 5:21, Psalm 12:5, Proverbs 21:7. There's an old saying: “To the victors [in war] belong the spoil” (i.e., a war's winners are able to steal anything they want from the losers).



We're talking about things like murder, kidnapping, stealing from or cheating someone, or lying about someone in a trial. In fact, for the Israelites, God specified (in Leviticus 6:1-7) that anyone caught stealing—which included getting something by fraud or by lying in court—had to pay back what he stole *plus* a penalty of 20 percent! And here's another example of what God expects from a ruler (emphasis added):

*Thus saith the LORD [to the king]; Execute ye **judgment and righteousness**, and **deliver the spoiled** out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, **do no violence** to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place (Jeremiah 22:3).*

(The word **spoiled** in that verse means those who have been violently robbed of their lives, liberty, or property. You've probably heard of pirates or robbers dividing up the "spoils"—those items they stole.)

Notice again—this is an important concept!—that **a ruler's duty is to punish those persons who commit violence against others**. Rulers also are to judge righteously, as well as protect society's most vulnerable members and those who are victims of oppression. This includes "strangers" (foreigners), the innocent, and orphans and widows (who are more likely to be poor, and therefore less likely to be able to fight back against their oppressors).

Terror and Revenge to Evil and Evildoers

The Biblical purpose of government will be a recurring theme throughout this book. The New Testament duplicates the Old Testament's teachings of the government's proper duties. Here are two key passages on government's purpose (emphasis added):

*For rulers are not a **terror** to good works, but **to the evil**....for he [the ruler] is the minister of God, a **re-venger** to execute wrath upon him that doeth **evil** (Romans 13:3-4).*

The Bible says that rulers are to punish those who kill, harm, or steal from others.

The word "evil" in that passage is **an act that injures, harms, or kills**. It does *not* refer to immoral behaviors that don't harm or cheat others, like being jealous, getting drunk or high on drugs, or using obscene language.

That word *evil* translates as **harm** two other times in the New Testament—once when Paul tells a jailer who's about to kill himself with his own sword not to *harm* himself (Acts 16:28), and once when a venomous snake bites Paul, but miraculously does not *harm* him (Acts 28:5). Here's another passage similar to that one (emphasis added):

*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are **sent by him for the punishment of evildoers** (1 Peter 2:13-14).*

Punishment in that passage means *administering justice or vengeance*. The word **evildoers**, to restate, does *not* refer to those who simply act *immorally*, but those who act *criminally*—harming, kidnapping, stealing from, or killing others. So the job of rulers, the Bible says, *is to punish those evildoers*.

“But That’s Not What Governments Are Doing These Days!”

True. Probably no current ruler confines himself to what God says is the proper role of government; very few ever have. A few words about that:

1. God hates wickedness, but He allows wicked rulers (Proverbs 16:12).
2. God sets up rulers (Daniel 2:21), but some rulers come into power without His approval (Hosea 8:4).
3. Wicked rulers and judges encourage sin and destruction, and they hurt society’s most weak and helpless (Isaiah 9:16, 10:1-2, Ecclesiastes 8:11).
4. Don’t be surprised to see evil rulers, but know this: God is watching them, and He is higher than they are (Ecclesiastes 5:8)!

A Quick Recap—Be Sure You Know This!

The Bible says that the purpose of government is to do these two things (they’re almost like two sides of the same coin):

- **Punish violence** against life, liberty, and property (done by “evildoers”)
- **Provide justice** to those violated or oppressed by others

I want to reemphasize this:

These ↑ are the only purposes of government that the Bible teaches are legitimate.

There are many *sinful* actions that people commit that shouldn’t be *crimes* that the government punishes. And when some claim that the government should “give things” to others...hoo, boy—that opens up a whole can of worms called “plunder.” More on that in the next section!

What Do You Think?

1. **Fill in the blanks: The Bible teaches that the proper duties of government are to remove ____ and ____, to be a “terror” to ____, and to execute ____ and ____.**
2. **Tell whether the following acts are matters that a government should punish: (a) breaking someone’s arm in anger; (b) calling someone insulting names; (c) getting drunk; (d) crashing into a car while driving drunk; (e) failing to finish a job after being paid to do it; (f) lying on a job application.**



The American Government Times

WEEK 7, DAY 1

HENDERSONVILLE, MONDAY, OCTOBER 3

FINAL EDITION

BREAKING NEWS: KIDS HAVE “A RIGHT TO AN EDUCATION,” JUDGE RULES

By DALE E. NUZE
Political Writer



Paul and Joy Grutch (POLICE FILE PHOTO)

LITTLETON TOWN – A local judge ruled yesterday that a free education—from kindergarten all the way through high school—is the Constitutional right of all children, to be provided by the school district in which they live.

Judge Judith Wackton ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, Jacob and Bethany Grutch, who had sued the Derf County School Board after their daughter Joy and son Paul were permanently suspended from school. The children’s permanent record was dappled with 73 violations, including tardiness, cheating, throwing food at teachers, “constantly making weird faces,” and a near-fatal game of Pin the Tail on the Donkey.

Attorney Ron Lastinger, who represented the plaintiffs, asked Judge Wackton not to abdicate her duty during the two-day trial: “Judge Wackton,” said Lastinger, “I ask you not to abdicate your duty during this two-day trial. These youngsters *need* an education, just like *every* young person. Our Constitution says explicitly: ‘Congress shall have power to provide for the general welfare.’ All we’re doing is trying to look out for the *welfare* of the Grutch kids, and that depends upon their ability to read and write effectively.”

Judge Wackton agreed, ruling in favor of the Grutches: “Basic literacy is crucial to success in our modern world. All residents in Derf County pay property taxes that fund public schools, and it is the duty of our society to provide an education for *all* children, regardless of their personal, uh, situations.”

Derf County School Board member Robert Pross disagreed. “Those two kids should *not* be allowed to return to school,” he glowered; “they’re dangerous, and they haven’t shown any desire to learn at all.” But Bethany Grutch disagreed: “It’s just the *Christian* thing to do. The government’s job is to protect our rights, and we’re glad the court did the right thing.” ■

What Do You Think?

🙏 Name some ideas expressed in this news story that you would disagree with, both as a Christian and knowing what you know about the purpose of government.

8.1 – The Constitution, Part 3: What a Surprise!

“Hmmm...Should I Decide in Favor of Myself, or Against Myself?”

I JUST KNOW YOU'RE ITCHING TO CHECK IN on that “neighborhood” we’ve talked about a few times, so let’s do it! We’ll give the neighborhood a name: Oak Valley. The last time,⁴ the families in Oak Valley decided to send representatives to touch up their neighborhood contract, but instead, their representatives threw out the old contract and rewrote a new one in secret to create a group with power over all the Oak Valley families. (Let’s call this central group in charge “The Managers.”) Then the agreement was approved, after a lot of fighting, debate, concern, and demands that protections for the rights of neighborhood families would be added to the agreement.

But a huge problem quickly springs up: Soon after being put into power, The Managers decide that every Oak Valley household must plant five extra trees in its yard. The Managers also pass a law that *punishes any member of an Oak Valley household who criticizes decisions that The Managers make!*

Many families in Oak Valley protest mightily: “There’s not *anything* in the contract that says you can do either one of those things!” But this time, and other times when there’s a dispute over whether The Managers are granted a certain power (let’s say the wording in the contract is a little unclear), they assure the families: “The contract might not *specifically* grant us that power, but *we* think it’s there, and *we’re* in charge, so what *we* say goes.”

• • • • •

This is the situation Americans found themselves in after the ratification of the national constitution, and it’s a general problem with the institution of government itself. As we saw earlier, James Madison pointed this out:

In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.

The key lesson in this section is this, one you should not forget:

When the government itself interprets the rules that define and limit its powers, when a question comes up, the government will almost always decide in favor of itself.

Think about it: What kind of person is eager to get into government? There are exceptions, of course, but it’s generally somebody who likes to be in charge, to make rules, and to direct others. And that’s the *last* kind of person who should be the one

⁴ See Section 7.3.



who decides: “Hmmm...does the rulebook for what I may and may not do say I can’t do [insert questionable action here]? We-e-l-l-l-l...I think it’s probably okay. I think I should, and anyway, *I’m in charge!*”

And that kind of person rarely thinks, *I should oppose this proposed government action, since it ignores the Bible’s guidelines on what the government should do: nothing more than **punish violence and execute justice.***

When the government itself is in charge of deciding its own powers, it will rarely decide against itself.

Why On Earth Are We Surprised?

Among many other Americans of his time, Thomas Jefferson recognized this tendency among those in government positions to find magical new powers for themselves. In an essay he wrote called the “Kentucky Resolution” (more on that later), Jefferson said this:

[If] the general [United States] government is the exclusive judge of the extent of the powers delegated to it, [it will] stop nothing short of despotism [tyranny], since the discretion [judgement] of those who administer the government...not the constitution, would be the measure of their powers.

In the late 19th century, historian Henry Adams expressed that idea this way:

The essence [substance, spirit] of Virginia republicanism lay in a single maxim [saying]: The Government shall not be the final judge of its own powers.⁵

That’s only common sense, and I guess, since it is, it’s rare to find this logical approach today. Why are we surprised if government gets out of control, when we (a) give power to a group of persons, and (b) tell them that *they themselves get to interpret the document that’s supposed to explain and limit their powers?*

I mean, come on! What do we *think* is going to happen when we say, “Here, guys—take all these powers, and also, *you* can be the ones to judge on whether or not you’re breaking the law!” The thing is, though, you often hear almost the *opposite* notion expressed in different ways from people today:

- “Congress just passed [unconstitutional or senseless law here]. Well, it’s Congress, so they have the right to, I guess.”
- “The President just [committed some action totally outside of his listed constitutional powers]. But hey—he’s the President!”
- “Yeah, the Supreme Court decided this morning that [some totally bonkers decision here]; I guess they know what’s best.”

⁵ Henry Adams, *History of the United States During the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson*, 1890 (Part I, Chapter 9).

Two Ways to Stymie a Lawbreaking Government

So what can be done about governments who overstep their boundaries? Here are just two suggestions:

1. **Go local.** Get rid of the *centralized* government and replace it with government that is local, local, local. Centralized governments are so far away from the people they govern that they're just flat out too hard to reach, and generally out of touch ("We're in charge!")—which is to be expected.
2. **States should interpret.** If the first suggestion isn't realistic at present, *at the very least*—in the case of our government, for example—we should acknowledge that individual state governments have every right to decide on what's lawful or not. In other words, if the U. S. government passes a law that violates the Constitution, the states should just say, through their representatives, "This law is *not* a legitimate law; any law that *breaks* the law *isn't* a law, and this one does." (More on that concept later.)

What Do You Think?

🙏 In the "neighborhood scenario" at the beginning of this section, what do you think the households should do about the decisions of The Managers to forbid any criticism of them and force everyone to plant trees? And what kind of danger would there be if The Managers had a large group of armed troops under their control?



8.3 – Interpreting the Constitution: What’s the Problem?

REMEMBER THE TWO GENERAL VIEWS OF GOVERNMENT and interpreting the Constitution represented by the Nationalists (who are now often wrongly called “Federalists”) and the Federalists (now often wrongly called “Anti-Federalists”)? To sum it up:

Political Group	Should the U. S. Government Rule Over the States?	How Should We Interpret the U. S. Constitution?
“Federalists” (Nationalists)	Yes	BROADLY: “The U. S. Constitution doesn’t list <u>all</u> the U. S. government’s powers; if we think it ‘needs’ more powers, we can take and use them.”
“Anti-Federalists” (the <i>real</i> Federalists)	No	STRICTLY: “If the power isn’t listed in the Constitution, the U. S. government <u>may not</u> take that power.”

“You Can Trust Us!”

Knowing how the two groups viewed the Constitution so differently, it’s interesting how many members of the two groups *both* could have been satisfied with it at all. Adding the Bill of Rights soon after it was approved by the states did help appease the *real* Federalists, but it’s still a real head-scratcher.

We saw in Section 7.4 how Nationalist Alexander Hamilton *promised* the Federalists that if the national constitution were ratified, officials in the U. S. government would never even *dream* of going beyond their listed powers:

The...convention declares that the power of Congress...shall extend to certain enumerated [listed] cases. This specification of particulars evidently excludes all pretension to a general legislative authority, because [a] grant of special powers would be absurd, as well as useless, if a general authority was intended.

To restate: Constitution critics suspected the U. S. Congress would take for itself more powers than the ones listed in the Constitution. To those doubters, Hamilton said, “Hey, don’t worry!⁶ We *listed* the powers that Congress has. The U. S. government can’t *possibly* go beyond its *listed* powers, because then what would be the point of having a *list* of its powers in the Constitution?”

Of course, we also saw in Section 8.2 that men like George Mason simply didn’t trust the new government to limit its own powers. They predicted a national

⁶ Some historians believe Hamilton actually said, “Yo! Don’t worry!”

government that would dominate the states. But how could that happen? Didn't Hamilton pledge there was only one way to interpret the powers listed in the Constitution?

Well, he *did*, but that brings us to a little section about the whacked-out, zany world of “interpreting the Constitution,” which I'll title...

The Whacked-Out, Zany World of “Interpreting the Constitution”

We'll get more into the Constitution's actual words soon. But for now, let's think for a minute about how crazy this idea of “interpreting the Constitution” is. Here's the situation:

We have a document called “The Constitution.”

It's written on paper.

What's written on paper?

Words.

In what language?

English.

Did the writers of the Constitution understand their own written English?

Yes, they did.

So how can we possibly have two “interpretations” of the Constitution?

To answer that question, without giving too much away, it's obvious that the Nationalists and the Federalists absolutely *could* have a different interpretation of, for example, a list of powers in the Constitution. And let's be honest: This whole idea of “interpreting the Constitution” really means this:

**The Federalists and the Nationalists both said that
*they were going to interpret the Constitution differently.***

So now the only question became this:

**Which group was going to win elections and
therefore get to “interpret” it THEIR way?**

Again, I ask you: How can two persons—assuming they're not currently locked up in a nuthouse—*look at the same, exact document*, like...

- a recipe,
- an employment contract,



- a set of marriage vows, or
- directions to somebody's house

...then come to completely **different** conclusions on the meaning of the exact same words in that document?⁷

That's easy: It's because one person's bias or viewpoint on a topic contrasts with another's (in the example of the U. S. Constitution, his belief on what the government's proper purpose is).

Okay, then, questions:

Can a person elected President have this bias?

How about a person elected to Congress?

How about a Supreme Court judge?

Obviously, the answer to all those is "Yes." So a lawmaker's bias influences what kind of laws he introduces or votes on, a President's bias influences what kind of bills he either signs or vetoes, and a judge's bias influences what kind of judgements he makes on laws.

"No" Means "Yes"?

Here's just one example. The Second Amendment to the Constitution says that "the right of the people to keep and bear arms...shall not be infringed [interfered with]." So, the United States government is prohibited from making *any* laws that limit the people's right to own guns.

Prohibited!

Yet, depending on what source you check, the U. S. government has passed anywhere from hundreds to thousands of gun restrictions and regulations. There's even a government department called the "Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, **Firearms**, and Explosives"!

So somewhere along the line—and again, this is just *one* example—government officials read the Constitution's Second Amendment, which says in plain, English words "the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall **not** be infringed." And for whatever reason—either because they were biased in favor of big government, or because they just inhaled several cans of paint thinner—they decided this:

"You know, we think that when the Second Amendment says, 'the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed,' these words actually mean that we can infringe upon the people's right to bear arms!"

This is the epitome of arrogance, dishonesty, or both.

⁷ I guess we could say that some Christians interpret certain *Bible* passages differently, too. But the difference is that the U. S. Constitution was being written right then and there, and fought over by different "sides." And one "side" suspected the other "side" of (a) *wanting* to "interpret" that document in a way that gave the government more power than the Constitution said it had, and (b) *actually* "interpreting" the Constitution in that same way—despite that "side's" repeated promises that they wouldn't do so. (But they did anyway; keep reading!)

And this is, again, the problem with writing a constitution that's supposed to limit a government's powers, and then relying upon *the government itself* to interpret the document in a way that...limits its own powers.

Back to Basics

Just a quick reminder: Since Christians base their beliefs on all issues upon the Word of God, let's review what the Bible says is the true, moral purpose of the government. If you need a refresher, look these up and fill in the blanks:

- To “remove ___ and ___, and execute ___ and ___” (Ezekiel 45:9).
- “Deliver the ___ out of the hand of the oppressor” (Jeremiah 22:3).
- The government's purpose is the punishment of “___” (1 Peter 2:13-14).
- Rulers are to be a “terror” and “revenger” to “___” (Romans 13:3-4).

What Do You Think?

1. 🙏 In short, what is the problem with “interpreting the Constitution”?
2. If all government officials followed the Bible's guidelines on the proper purpose of government, why would it matter much less about who won elections?
3. Take a few minutes to pray for your local representative, mayor, and sheriff. They might be facing pressure from someone else to make a decision as a government official that goes against their conscience and their belief on what a good government should do!



8.4 – Jury Duty: “But It’s My Part of the River!”

ALL RIGHT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, it’s jury duty time again!⁸ Today you find yourself part of a 12-person jury deciding on the guiltiness or “not-guiltiness” of local beet farmer Claxton Stickle.

The issue: Stickle is using many poisonous chemicals to kill weeds and insects popping up all around his beet fields, and these chemicals are running down those fields into Mills River, which flows across part of his property.

One of Stickle’s neighbors sues him because of this. The neighbor says that the waters running down from Stickle’s part of the river haven’t exactly had a salutary effect on *his* farm. In fact, he says that Stickle’s chemicals have killed fish and other wildlife in the river sections that flow through his property, and that the river water flowing down from Stickle’s farm—which some neighbors collect from the river to drink (on their own property)—has become undrinkable.

After the trial, it’s clear that the evidence positively proves that these chemicals *are* causing the deaths of fish in other areas and making the water unfit to drink for others. But Stickle says in court, “The law should protect my rights! This is my private property, and I have the right to use my land and my part of Mills River the way I see fit!”

Guilty or Not Guilty?

Should you find Stickle guilty...or not guilty? As you think about it, remember what the true, moral purpose of the law is (review our last section if you need to refresh your memory). 🙏

SUMMONS FOR JURY SERVICE



⁸ You won’t get paid this time, either.

9.2 – Article II: Not the King They Say He Is

I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY TIMES I've heard somebody say, "You know, we really need someone like [insert presidential candidate's name here] to *run the country!*"

And every time I hear it, I want to scream and throw my shoes at that person's head.⁹ Because this popular view of the President as some big shot who marches around the country and throws his weight around, barking out orders and "getting things *done!*" is totally erroneous and misguided.

Today, let's look at the Constitution's Article II, which has three sections. Article II concerns the **executive branch** of the U. S. government: the President and Vice President.



Section 1: Execution and Election

Section 1 starts out like this: "The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America." The word *executive* sounds like the word *execute*, which in this case means "carry out." We've seen this word "execute" before, remember: The Bible says that God wants rulers to "*execute judgment and justice*" (Ezekiel 45:9).

Does a President *have* to execute unjust or unconstitutional laws that Congress passes, like some obedient drone who just does whatever he's told? Of course not! Presidents have every right to refuse to execute illegal laws.

But it's wrong to think of the President as someone who *writes* laws or goes around ordering people to do this or that. It's more accurate to see him as a sheriff who *enforces* the law—or better yet, *executes justice*. The *legislative* branch (Congress) is the lawmaking branch. It's not a perfect system, obviously, since Congress passes so many senseless and unjust laws. But do we really want a system in which *one person* just goes around making decrees that the rest of the nation has to follow?

The President is not to *write* laws; he is to *carry them out*.

Look at what two perceptive thinkers said on that subject (emphasis added):

James Madison: "The natural province of the **executive**...is to **execute** laws...the **legislature** is to **make** laws. All his acts therefore...must presuppose [assume] the existence of the laws to be executed."¹⁰

Montesquieu: "There is no liberty, if the judiciary power be not separated from the legislative and executive....Were it joined to the executive power, the judge might behave with violence and oppression."

⁹ Sometimes I do.

¹⁰ James Madison, "Helviadius" Number 1, August 24, 1793, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-15-02-0056>.



Remember that representatives in Congress serve two-year terms and that senators in Congress serve six-year terms. Presidents and Vice Presidents, on the other hand, serve four-year terms.¹¹ A United States President has to be (a) at least 35, (b) a U. S. resident for at least 14 years, and (c) a “natural-born citizen” of the United States. If a President dies or resigns or is removed or otherwise can’t continue, the Vice President takes his place.

The way a President and Vice President *used* to be elected was that the person with the *most* electoral votes (we’ll talk about those next) became President, and the person with the *second* most electoral votes became Vice President. The Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution changed that in 1804, so now voters vote for President and Vice President candidates together.

Knowing what we know about democracy as a poor government system—one where the majority can run over the minority just because it has more votes—let’s talk about the way that a President/Vice President team is elected in the U. S.: the Electoral College.

First, let’s take a look at how the Electoral College works, using a list that explains how the Electoral College works, which I have appropriately titled:

How the Electoral College Works:

1. In a presidential election, Candidate Smith receives more individual votes than Candidate Wesson in a certain state; let’s use Texas as an example.
2. Since Texas has 36 representatives and 2 senators, Candidate Smith gets 38 (36 + 2) electoral votes—just think of them as “points.” Candidate Smith is said to have “won the state,” so Candidate Wesson gets 0 electoral votes.
3. This process repeats in all 50 states, and in Washington, D. C. The majority winner in each state takes *all* that state’s electoral votes each time. (Some states allow electors to vote for a candidate other than the state’s majority winner, but this rarely occurs.)
4. There are 100 senators, 435 representatives, and three electors in Washington, D.C., which totals 538 electoral votes.
5. Half of 538 is 269, so a presidential candidate needs 270 electoral votes to win the election.
6. Bake until golden brown (about 20 minutes). Serves 10-12.¹²

¹¹ A person can now be elected twice as a U. S. President—that’s all. Franklin Roosevelt was elected four times, which led to the passing of the Twenty-second Amendment in 1951, limiting Presidents to two terms.

¹² This step is optional.

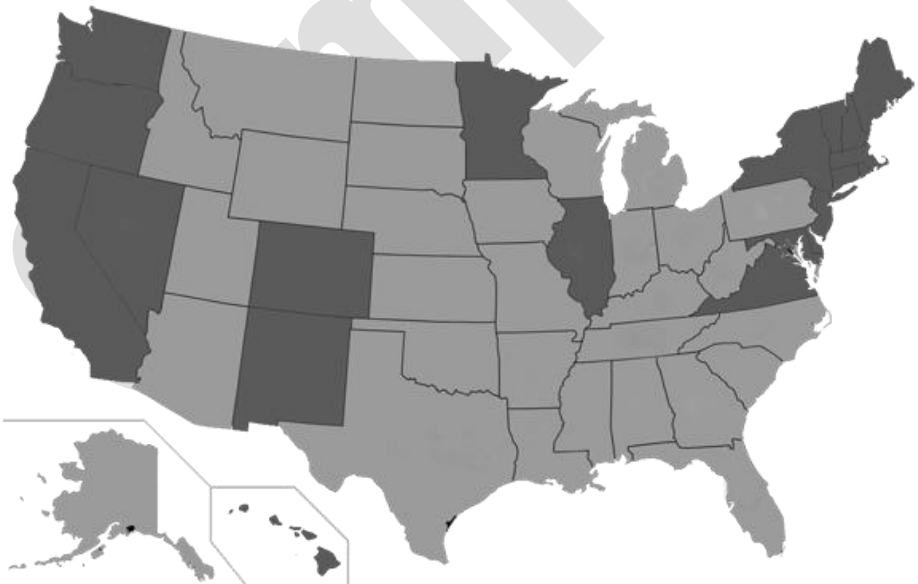
The Electoral College also puts more power into the hands of the *states* on how they run their elections, so it cuts down on the U. S. government’s control over the process. Another benefit of the Electoral College is that it keeps heavily-populated areas of the nation from running over many other states that might not be so heavily populated. This possibility was a concern of less-populated states’ governments during the constitutional debates:

South Carolina delegate Charles Pinckney warned that popular elections would “be led by a few active and designing [sneakily planning] men.” He feared that “the most populous States, by combining in favor of the same individual, will be able to carry their points.”¹³

To put it another way, the Electoral College prevents a pure democracy—a simple majority vote—from determining who wins the office of the presidency in a U. S. presidential election.

To illustrate this, take a look at the following maps of the 2016 presidential election between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. In this election, Hillary Clinton reportedly received about three million more votes than Donald Trump, about 69 million to about 66 million, but she lost in the Electoral College “point system,” 304-227. (304 + 227 doesn’t equal 538 because several other candidates won electoral votes.)

In the following map, Trump won a majority of votes in the lighter states, Clinton the darker:



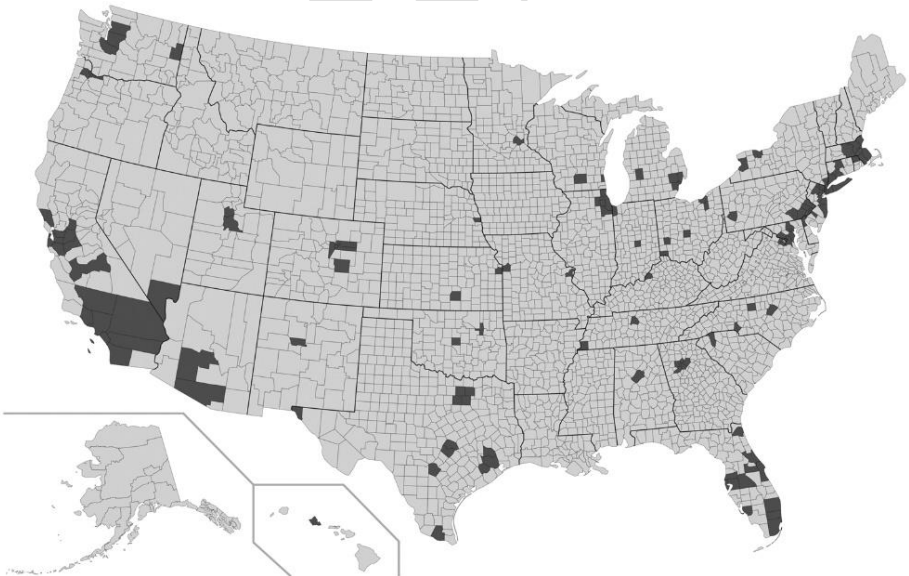
¹³ Michael Maharrey, *Constitution Owner’s Manual* (Michael Maharrey, 2020), 63.



Now let's look at a breakdown in *counties* within the individual states. Trump won a majority of votes in the lighter counties, Clinton the darker:



And here's a curious map; can you guess what the darker counties represent?



Were you able to guess? Well, here’s the incredible answer:

Half of the entire U. S. population lives in those darker shaded counties!

What does this tell us?

That’s right: It tells us that people in Montana and North Dakota are very lonely.

No, no, no, that’s not it. It actually tells us that the Electoral College at least gives states *some* input into a national election, and it prevents a simple majority from dominating the minority. In that map above, that small percentage of counties is prevented from imposing its will upon the rest of the nation.

Sections 2-3: A Short List of Not Much

As mentioned above, many Americans have this idea—which is, frankly, more than a little creepy—of the President as a kind of superhero who wields enormous powers, waving his hands around authoritatively, ordering this and that to happen, and occasionally even causing various items to appear out of thin air (warm breadsticks, small planets, etc.).

But remember the list of powers Article I granted Congress? Well, the same thing happens to the President in Article II.

(Take a minute right now to glance through the powers listed in Article II, Sections 2 and 3 in the back of the book, then come back.)

...All right, now that you’re back, let’s look at the President’s powers and duties, according to Article II, Sections 2 and 3:

President’s Powers and Duties (Article II, Sections 2-3)			
Command armed forces in wartime, but ONLY after Congress declares war	Appoint Supreme Court justices (ONLY if the Senate approves them)		Appoint ambassadors and government department heads
Pardon individuals wrongly convicted of crimes	Veto a bill that is passed by Congress	Make sure federal laws are carried out	Report to Congress on the “state of the union”
Receive foreign ambassadors and ministers	Call Congress into special sessions if needed	Make treaties (ONLY if ⅔ of the Senate approves)	Leap tall buildings in a single bound ¹⁴

Does that look like an impressive and huge list of superpowers to you? Me either. So how has the position mutated into one in which many see the President as “The Most Powerful Man on Earth,” and in which the President does so many things he doesn’t have the constitutional (legal) right to do? Answer: It’s pretty obvious that a number of Presidents have simply ignored their constitutional limitations—in

¹⁴ Okay, that’s not in there.



other words, they're lawbreakers. And the Constitution and/or other branches of government have done little to nothing about it.

Section 4: Being Tried...and Maybe Kicked Out

To **impeach** means to put someone on trial. Article I, Section 4 says if a President commits a "high Crime or Misdemeanor" (a crime or misdemeanor committed by someone in a "high" position), he may be impeached:

The President, Vice President, and all civil Officers of the United States shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.

The House puts a President on trial, and the Senate decides if he is "guilty" or "not guilty"; two-thirds of the Senate must find him "guilty" to remove him. No President in American history has ever been impeached *and* found guilty by two-thirds of the Senate (and therefore removed from office).

An Important Detail: Presidents and War

A U. S. President cannot legally declare war; this is another common myth that much of the population believes. The Constitution, as we saw in the previous section, *grants the power to declare war only to Congress*. Why? Well, for the same reason, essentially, that a President shouldn't have the power to make laws—it's too much power for one person. The Bible puts it this way:

For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety (Proverbs 24:6).

If a nation is going to war, do we want *one person* to take us there—to make that decision alone? Or do we want a lot of arguing and debate—possibly involving the throwing of shoes—as to whether war is the best or only course the nation has left? Thomas Jefferson explained this principle in a letter to James Madison, when the states were ratifying the proposed U. S. Constitution:

[O]ne effectual check to the Dog of war [is] by transferring the power of letting him loose from the Executive to the Legislative body.¹⁵

That is, one way to keep a nation from endless wars is to keep the power to declare war away from a President and give it to Congress. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson nine years later, James Madison said this (emphasis added):

The constitution supposes, what the History of all governments demonstrates, that **the Executive is the branch of power most interested in war,**

¹⁵ *The Founders' Constitution, Volume 1, Chapter 2, Document 23*, University of Chicago Press, <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch2s23.html>.

and most prone to it. It has, accordingly, with studied care, vested the question of war in the Legislature.¹⁶

Unfortunately, except for during Donald Trump's presidency, the U. S. government has been at war almost continuously with at least one other nation for many decades. But the last *lawful* declaration of war occurred when Congress declared war on Germany on December 11, 1941.

What Do You Think?



1. 🙏 **Why should a President be prohibited from making laws?**
2. **Name the requirements for a President.**
3. **How does the Electoral College protect the residents of many U. S. states?**
4. **How does the list of granted presidential powers compare to the common view of who the President is?**


¹⁶ *The Founders' Constitution, Volume 3, Article 1, Section 8, Clause 11, Document 8*, University of Chicago Press, http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1_8_11s8.html.



11.2 – Answer This: “Food Prices Are Too High!”

📖 One day while browsing your social media page, you see the following post by a friend:

10:04 am • 50%  



George Splithers • 2:55 pm

• • •

So sick of food prices getting so high...government needs to DO something about it. The U. S. Constitution says that the government is supposed to “provide for the general welfare of the United States.” When are you going to DO something, Congress?

[Like](#) • [Comment](#) • [Share](#)

Write a brief response “post” of your own; in it, explain these two things:

- (1) The Bible teaches that government has only a few true purposes, and this ↑ isn’t one of them.
- (2) The proper meaning of the “general welfare” clause isn’t what your friend says it is (see Section 9.1).

12.1 – Amendment 2: Guns & Militias • “No” = “Yes”?

ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL amendments in the U. S. Bill of Rights is the Second Amendment. At least, it’s controversial *today*, a time when a good chunk of the American public apparently doesn’t understand the plain meaning of English words.



Like many parts of the Constitution, this amendment splits its “interpreters” into two groups: (1) those who favor a powerful national government, and interpret the amendment in a strange, unnatural way; and (2) those who favor a limited government and natural rights of the people, and interpret the amendment the normal way. Here’s the entire wording of the Second Amendment:

AMENDMENT 2 – A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

Two Key Facts

Remember two things, as usual, before we dive into this amendment:

1. The Second Amendment *does not grant the people the right to bear arms*. The people should *already* have that natural right; this amendment *prohibits* the U. S. government from meddling with that right.
2. Even if there were no Second Amendment at all, *the U. S. government still would have no power whatsoever to limit the people’s right to arm themselves*. Why? Because the power to make laws relating to weapons is not one of the powers granted in the Constitution’s Article I, Section 8.

Protecting the People’s Rights, Not the Government’s Rights

Like the First Amendment, **the Second Amendment protects the rights of *individuals***. But today’s news commentators, government-school teachers, and politicians have created unnecessary confusion with their “Let’s interpret the Constitution to give the government all power” mindset. Those big-government types claim that the Second Amendment’s purpose is to set up and train *government-run* organizations like the National Guard, not to protect the people’s rights. They also argue that the government should place strict limits upon gun ownership and use in America. But those who argue this way are either badly misinformed or dishonest. It’s just not that hard to understand.

Let’s use some common sense. Americans had just fought a war of independence with Britain. Who fought it? Thousands of everyday Americans. How?



Mainly in state militias. With what? Guns and other weapons. (In fact, one of the first major battles of the revolution occurred in Concord, Massachusetts, when British troops tried to confiscate the colonists' weapons and gunpowder.) Is it sensible to believe, therefore, that Americans would approve an amendment that *didn't* protect their *individual* right to bear arms, given that gun ownership was common, that individual armed Americans battled the British and formed state militias, and that colonists resisted when the British attempted to seize their weapons? (Hint: The answer begins with the letter "N.")

What Is a "Well Regulated Militia," and What Is It For?

The Second Amendment opens with this: "A well regulated [trained] militia, being necessary to the security of a free state...." Big-government fans point to this phrase and say, "SEE!? It's the MILITIA that the Second Amendment refers to, not the PEOPLE!" We'll get to the second part of the amendment below, but let's start by asking this question: **"Who are the militia?"**

First, you should know that nearly all early Americans hated—HATED—the idea of a government having a standing (permanent) army.¹⁷ Here are a few ways Americans expressed their feelings about them (emphasis added):

James Madison: "A standing military force, with an overgrown Executive, **will not long be safe companions to liberty.** The means of defense against foreign danger have been always the instruments of tyranny at home.... Throughout all Europe, the **armies kept up under the pretext [phony excuse] of defending have enslaved the people.**"¹⁸

Noah Webster: "Another source of power in government is a military force. But this, to be efficient, must be superior to any force that exists among the people, or which they can command: for otherwise this force would be annihilated, on the first exercise of acts of oppression. **Before a standing army can rule, the people must be disarmed....**The supreme power in America cannot enforce unjust laws by the sword; because **the whole body of the people are armed,** and constitute a force superior to any band of regular troops that can be, on any pretense, raised in the United States. A military force, at the command of Congress, can execute no laws, but such as the people perceive to be just and constitutional; for **they will possess the power,** and jealousy will instantly inspire the inclination, **to resist the execution of a law which appears to them unjust and oppressive.**"¹⁹

Patrick Henry: "A standing army...[will] execute the execrable [awful] commands of tyranny; and how are you to punish them? Will you order them

¹⁷ In Article I, Congress is only given the power to fund a standing army for two years at a time.

¹⁸ https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/debates_629.asp

¹⁹ *Pamphlets on the Constitution of the United States: Published During Its Discussion by the People (1787-1788)*, Paul Leicester Ford, 1888, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/47110/47110-h/47110-h.htm>.

to be punished? Who shall obey these orders? Will your mace-bearer be a match for a disciplined regiment?”²⁰

**The “militia”
in the Second
Amendment is
“the people.”**

It’s clear that Americans who valued liberty opposed a standing army in their midst because (1) it ends up oppressing the people, even though its supporters *claim* that it will only be used to *defend* the people; (2) it enforces unjust laws passed by Congress, unless the people resist; and (3) it’s dangerous, since it has the potential of being better armed than the people.

Which brings us back to the question: “Who are the ‘militia’ that the Second Amendment refers to when it speaks of a ‘*well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state*’”? Have you figured out the answer to that? I’m sure you have—it’s answered by the back half of the Second Amendment: “*the right of **the people** to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.*” Just look at these references to the militia at the time the Second Amendment was added to the U. S. Constitution:

The Articles of Confederation: “[E]very State shall always keep up a well-regulated and disciplined militia, sufficiently armed and accoutered [equipped]....”²¹

Elbridge Gerry: “What...is the use of a militia?...[T]o prevent the establishment of a standing army, the bane [curse] of liberty....Whenever governments mean to invade the rights and liberties of the people, they always attempt to destroy the militia...to raise an army upon their ruins.”

The Constitution of Virginia: “[A] well-regulated militia, composed of the body of the people, trained to arms, is the proper, natural, and safe defense of a free state...Standing armies, in time of peace, should be avoided, as dangerous to liberty...the military should be under strict subordination to, and governed by, the civil power [ordinary citizens]....”

George Mason: “Who are the militia? They consist now of the whole people, except a few public officers.”

Thomas Jefferson: “None but an armed nation can dispense with [defeat] a standing army. To keep ours armed and disciplined is therefore at all times important.”

Tenche Coxe (Pennsylvania delegate): “Who are the militia? Are they not ourselves?...Congress have no power to disarm the militia....The unlimited power of the sword is not in the hands of either the federal or state govern-

²⁰ This was part of a speech given by Patrick Henry at the Virginia Ratifying Convention on June 5, 1788 (http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/print_documents/a1_8_16s10.html).

²¹ Do you see how the phrase “well-regulated” means “well-trained,” *not* “well controlled by the government,” like some anti-gunners claim?



ments, but, where I trust in God it will ever remain, in the hands of the people.”

Is *that* enough proof of who the militia are?

The militia are *the people*. Not “some of the people.” Not “many of the people.” Not “people who hunt.” **The people.** And **the reason the U. S. government is not to violate their right to keep and bear arms is so states can raise their own militias to fight another revolution—this time against that same U. S. government—if the people think they need to.**

If the militia were the National Guard or some other *government* organization, would it make a lick of sense to protect *them* in the Bill of Rights? In other words, it would be just plain crazy to write something like this: “We the people of the United States declare that the *government’s* right to keep and bear arms will not be infringed.” Ridiculous.

And even though it’s clear that the point of this amendment is to guarantee the ability of the *people* to resist a tyrannical government, it’s another question altogether whether *Christians* should be involved in a revolt. Should Christians kill others who are on the side of a government they consider “oppressive”? Shouldn’t we Christians pay our taxes and otherwise obey even tyrannical government officials, unless they command us to do something that violates a command of God?

“No” Means “Yes, If We Feel Like It”?

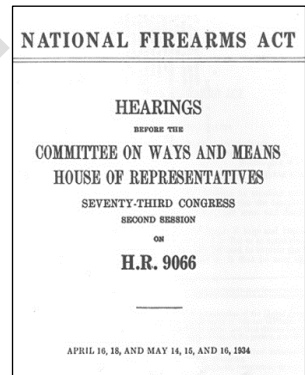
What does the word “not” mean to you?

Is there any doubt about it at all?

For example, if Mom tells you, “Do *not* cook anything at home while I’m at Hobby Lobby for the next 36 hours,” do you watch her drive off, then go ahead to the kitchen and boil some eggs, fry up 10 or 12 bacon strips, and steam up a little broccoli anyway?²²

Well, that’s what Congress has done, flagrantly ignoring the Second Amendment’s plain, simple words. Even though it clearly says, “the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall *not* be infringed,” the U. S. government has passed many gun restriction laws. Here are just a few:

- The National Firearms Act of 1934
- The Gun Control Act of 1968
- The Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993
- The Omnibus Crime Control Act of 1994



²² Imagine being the mother of a Nationalist kid: “But mom, I *interpreted* your saying I *wasn’t* allowed to cook anything as I *was* allowed to cook if I felt like I needed to....”

Congress has passed laws forcing the people to wait a certain amount of time before they can buy a gun, making them get a license before owning a gun, restricting them from buying certain types of ammunition, taking away their right to own a gun if they've been convicted of a felony, and many more.

But how on earth are these U. S. government laws restricting guns possible, when the Constitution is clear that this right “shall not be infringed”? Does the word *not* have a different meaning to the United States Congress? Are we living in some kind of Bizarro World?

And of course, these laws do nothing to stop criminals, anyway—just law-abiding citizens. A “criminal,” by definition, is *someone who breaks the law*. So what makes us think that someone considering robbery or murder will be cowed by a law restricting his buying or carrying a gun? And lawmakers who pass these laws off on “regular people” really don’t believe themselves that the laws work. Here’s just one story that substantiates it:

The California state Senate voted 28-8...to exempt itself from the pointless gun-control laws that apply to the rest of the populace. Legislators apparently think they alone are worthy to pack heat...for personal protection, and the masses ought to wait until the police arrive.”²³

Whose Misunderstanding Is It?

Did the Americans at the time of the writing of the Constitution—both government officials and regular citizens—*all misunderstand the Second Amendment*? I’m just asking because laws restricting the right of millions of Americans to bear arms didn’t consistently appear here until many decades later. To hear big-government-loving news reporters and “professional educators” talk about the Second Amendment, you’d think that early Americans who were *there* when the revolution was fought and the Constitution was written didn’t understand the Second Amendment at all.



And for big-government fans to believe that only the *government* should be armed—instead of the people—strikes me as slightly deranged. They would trust the *government* not to take advantage of the fact that then there’d be no way that the people could resist tyranny? Even when numerous examples in history—the National Socialists (Nazis) and Russian Communists immediately spring to mind—prove that’s a dangerous belief?

Think about it: Why would Americans of the founding era express such concern about the *government’s* restricting their right to bear arms?

Because they thought the U. S. government would try to stop them from hunting squirrels?

Nonsense! It’s because Americans thought that the U. S. government would try to take away their right to revolt.

²³ “One Law for Us, Another for You,” *Washington Times*, June 6, 2011.



What Do You Think?

1. 🙏 **Sum up the “Two Key Facts” at this section’s opening.**
2. **What did many early Americans believe about standing armies?**
3. **Prove that the term “militia” in the Second Amendment refers to the people. What was the purpose of the militia?**
4. **How many gun laws is Congress legally allowed to pass? What about state gun laws? Are these gun regulations good ideas? Why or why not?**

Sample!

17.4 – Supreme Court Case #2: *Marbury v. Madison*

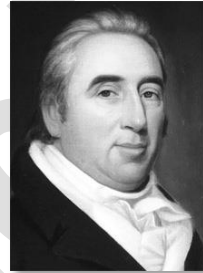
WHEN WE REVIEW SUPREME COURT CASES, we'll briefly look at the facts, of course. But we're *not* going to get bogged down in the cases' technical aspects. It's much more important to look at whether these were moral, just decisions—and whether they stuck to the limits that the Constitution places upon the national government.

“Give Me My Commission!”

Remember the Judiciary Act of 1801?

In that act, a Nationalist Congress created many new court positions, and then President-on-his-way-out John Adams then filled those positions with Nationalists just a few days before his term ended and Thomas Jefferson's term began.

William Marbury was one of those to whom Adams gave a position. The only problem: Marbury's commission wasn't delivered to him before Jefferson became the new President. James Madison was Jefferson's Secretary of State, and Jefferson ordered him *not* to give Marbury his commission, saying it was too late. Marbury then sued Madison, asking the Supreme Court to force Madison to appoint him to the position Adams intended for him to have.



William Marbury

When the Supreme Court heard the case in 1803, Chief Justice John Marshall, a Nationalist who was one of Adams's last-minute appointments, ruled that Madison should have delivered the commission to Marbury. Marshall also ruled that the 1789 Judiciary Act—the first act of Congress to create courts—gave those courts the power to force Madison to give Marbury his position.

But Marshall then ruled that this power granted to the courts by Congress was unconstitutional, which made him look as if he was taking Madison's side. (But it's likely that Marshall simply didn't want to try to force Madison—and President Jefferson—to give Marbury his position, since they would have almost surely just ignored Marshall's order and made him look foolish.)

What Is “Judicial Review”?

Marbury v. Madison was the first time that the Supreme Court had ruled that a law passed by Congress was unconstitutional. The long-term result from this case—which has delighted and pumped up big-government fans for 200+ years—is something Marshall said in his decision:

It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is.



Marshall was saying here that the Supreme Court, just like the President and Congress, had a right to decide if a law was constitutional or not. Now, we could review other rulings by Marshall and conclude that (no surprise here) as a Nationalist, he consistently decided in favor of increased powers for the national government, and fewer powers for state governments. But his above statement doesn't seem controversial or power-grabby, *unless....*

The Supreme Court: Lord and Master?

To those *who are biased in favor of a powerful, central government*, Marshall's above words mean this:

THE U. S. SUPREME COURT IS THE FINAL DECIDER OF ALL MATTERS IN THE U. S., AND PROBABLY CANADA TOO, AS LONG AS THEY'RE LOOKING THE OTHER WAY WHEN THE U. S. SUPREME COURT MAKES THE DECISION, FOREVER AND EVER, AMEN.

But this is ridiculous. *The Supreme Court doesn't have the final say on what the Constitution means*—nothing in that document even comes close to saying that. And if Supreme Court justices are the “final deciders,” then *they're* the real rulers of America—a nine-member oligarchy.

Poppycock!

That idea is silly if you think about it even for a minute. And remember: Supreme Courts are notorious for flip-flopping decisions on similar cases when members change—and their “interpretation” of the Constitution differs. Even Marshall himself didn't claim this in his *Marbury v. Madison* decision, also saying this (emphasis added):

[T]he particular phraseology [wording] of the constitution...confirms and strengthens the principle...that a law repugnant [contradictory] to the constitution is void; and that courts, **as well as other departments**, are bound by that instrument.

In other words, Marshall says here that since the United States Constitution *in writing* tells the national government what it can and can't do, *any* act committed by *any* part of the national government (the courts, the Congress, the President) that violates the Constitution is not a law at all.

Big-government fans just **want** to believe that when Marshall said, “It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is,” it “proves” the Supreme Court can overrule the states and has the final say on the Constitution. And why do they want this “proof”?

The Supreme Court does *not* have the final say on what the Constitution means.

Because the Supreme Court is part of the national government, not the state governments, and big-government fans like when a powerful, centralized government dominates a nation.

Real Checks and Balances

So...what if the Supreme Court gets out of line and claims it has total authority over the Constitution? Then the President can, as the “executive,” refuse to “execute” the court’s decision. And Congress can control the Supreme Court by limiting the kinds of cases it may rule on, as well as impeaching and removing rotten judges.

And what if the *President* gets out of line? Congress can impeach and remove him, and it can pass a law over his veto by a two-thirds majority.

And what if *Congress* passes an immoral, unconstitutional, or dumb law? The President may veto that law, or, like in the case with the Supreme Court, he can refuse to “execute” that unconstitutional law.

The Congress, the President, and the courts all may interpret the law!

What Do You Think?

1. 🙏 Briefly explain what you would say to someone who says to you, “The Supreme Court is the final decider on what the Constitution means.”
2. Imagine you’re President, and Congress passes a law forcing car manufacturers to make only electric cars. You veto it, but Congress passes it over your veto. How could you “undo” this unconstitutional law?



21.4 – Review for Quiz 7!

⌘ If you're in my American Government Homeschool Co-op Class, we'll take Quiz 7 in class next week, right before our Icelandic Folk Dance, and just after our 5K Run With Scissors.

If you're *not* in my class, I'd go ahead and do something about it right away if I were you. (I'm sure you can think of something.)

You can ask Mom or Dad for Quiz 7 when you review the below material.

Quiz 7 focuses mostly on the material from our Weeks 18-20 readings, but it might also contain material from Quizzes 1-6.

Do your best!

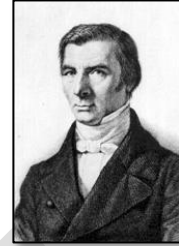


Celebrating the End of Quiz 7 (POLICE FILE PHOTO)

24.2 – Plunder and U. S. Government Spending

Two Kinds of Plunder

IN HIS ESSAY *The Law*, French political and economic writer Frederic Bastiat points out that everybody knows that stealing is wrong.²⁴ When a thief steals a watch, it's obvious to everyone, because of our God-given sense of right and wrong, that he's committing a crime. Bastiat calls this **illegal plunder**. That is, it's just common theft, which violates a law on the books against stealing.



Frederic Bastiat

But Bastiat also points out that **legal plunder** also happens with the help of the *government*, which is an institution that's supposed to *prevent* theft—or at least provide justice to those victimized by it. Bastiat gives his readers a simple way of how to recognize legal plunder:

Does the law take something that belongs to some and give it to another to whom it does not belong? Does the law commit an act that an ordinary citizen could not do without committing a crime? If so, then this is *legal plunder*, and we should abolish this law immediately.

Perfect!

In other words, let's say your next-door neighbor sneaked into your home and helped himself to \$500 lying on your kitchen table or under your couch cushions. If that happened, you could reasonably call the police and have your neighbor arrested for theft. And would anybody in your neighborhood have a problem with this? Of course not! (Except your thief neighbor.)

But let's say you were a homeschooling parent and received a notice in the mail that said this:

PROPERTY TAX BILL – AMOUNT DUE: \$500.
YOUR PROPERTY TAXES PAY FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS.
HAVE A SUPER DAY!

Even though you knew that this money would be used to educate your next-door neighbor's children, what could you do about it? If you pointed out to the local police or government officials that this was the same thing as theft, what do you think *they'd* do?

That's right: They'd break into your house and dig under your couch cushions for more money.

No, no, no, they wouldn't do that. But they would probably look at you like you had a sausage growing out of your forehead.

²⁴ We read *The Law* in my Civics homeschool co-op class; it's one of the most important things you'll ever read! (We cover it briefly in this book in Section 1.3.)



Up to 75 Percent of the Budget?

Walter Williams, Professor of Economics at George Mason University, said this regarding the phenomenon of government plunder in the United States:

Tragically, two-thirds to three-quarters of the federal budget can be described as Congress taking the rightful earnings of one American to give to another American—using one...to serve another. Such acts include farm subsidies, business bailouts, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, welfare, and...other programs.²⁵

Another recent study shows that in 2017 of the \$4 trillion (with a “t”) that Americans paid in taxes that year, \$2.87 trillion (72 percent) was simply handed over to others who didn’t earn it.²⁶ And this plunder happens partly because, as Bastiat points out in *The Law*, although humans do desire to grow and create, we also have a “fatal tendency”:

There is another trait common to men. This trait is the desire to live and to do well, when they can, at the expense of someone else....This fatal characteristic is inherent in mankind—that...urge which pushes man to satisfy his wants, and at the same time, avoid the pain of work.

What Do You Think?

1. 🙏 What do 1 Thessalonians 4:11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10 tell Christians?
2. How does Bastiat say we can recognize *legal plunder*? What makes a program like Medicaid (which is “free” medical care offered to the “poor” and paid for by other taxpayers) less efficient than a doctor’s simply deciding to treat a patient for free? (That is, what other costs come with government programs?)

NEXT:
SAMPLE QUIZ!



²⁵ Walter Williams, “Free To Be a Socialist,” *Jewish World Review*, May 30, 2018, <http://jewishworldreview.com/cols/williams053018.php3>.

²⁶ “A Troubling Trend in Federal Investment Spending, The Concord Coalition, July 2, 2018, www.concordcoalition.org/issue-brief/troubling-trend-federal-investment-spending.

Home School Partners – American Government, Quiz 1 (Weeks 1-3)

- _____ 1. The best way for a Christian to study American Government is to ____.
- (A) watch paint dry, and take lots of notes
 - (B) study famous religious leaders' opinions
 - (C) learn what the "founding fathers" said and quote them
 - (D) find out what the Bible says, then judge by that standard
- _____ 2. To help with the study of government, Christians should ____.
- (A) concentrate on the true purpose of government
 - (B) realize that governments are run by sinful man
 - (C) focus on their citizenship in heaven, not earth
 - (D) all of these
- _____ 3. Ezekiel 45:9 says rulers should "remove ____ and ____, and execute ____ and ____."
- (A) judgement, justice; violence, spoil
 - (B) violence, spoil; judgement, justice
 - (C) oppression, judgement; spoil, justice
 - (D) spoil, justice; judgement, violence
- _____ 4. The first part of Question #3's verse means that a ruler's duty is to punish or discourage all of the following **except** ____.
- (A) killing or injuring someone
 - (B) kidnapping or enslaving someone
 - (C) insulting someone or making him angry
 - (D) stealing from or cheating someone
- _____ 5. Which of the following best shows the Biblical, proper duty of government?
- (A) a law banning 18-year-olds from smoking
 - (B) a policeman who tickets you for speeding
 - (C) a law that fines you for saying something mean to someone
 - (D) a judge who orders an attacker to pay his victim's medical bills
- _____ 6. Romans 13:3-4 says that a ruler is to be a "____" to "____."
- (A) judge, justice
 - (C) terror, spoil
 - (B) terror, evil
 - (D) justice, violence
- _____ 7. John Locke taught that government's purpose was to ____.
- (A) protect life, liberty, and property
 - (C) provide education
 - (B) make and enforce various laws
 - (D) stamp out sin
- _____ 8. In *The Law*, Frederic Bastiat says that the law is simply the collective right to ____.
- (A) freedom
 - (C) property
 - (B) self-defense
 - (D) life
- _____ 9. What does Bastiat call the practice of the law's using its power to provide things for some at the expense of others?
- (A) legal plunder
 - (C) self-defense
 - (B) force
 - (D) illegal plunder



- ____ 10. The phrase “a wall of separation between church and state” was Jefferson’s way of saying that government ____.
- (A) should limit religious practices
 - (B) ought to keep all religious influence out
 - (C) can’t function when Christians work in it
 - (D) shouldn’t involve itself in religious matters
- ____ 11. The best way to explain what the Bible says about “separation between church and state” is that ____.
- (A) church and government should work together
 - (B) the state and church shouldn’t be separate at all
 - (C) the church handles sin, the state handles violence/theft
 - (D) government should enforce “Christian” behavior
- ____ 12. Roger Williams and William Penn agreed that the job of government is to ____.
- (A) protect the lives and property of everyone
 - (B) rule honorably and respect truth
 - (C) allow “non-worship” of God to those who don’t want to
 - (D) all of these
- ____ 13. Christians should obey earthly rulers unless they tell them to do a deed like ____.
- (A) pay outrageously high taxes
 - (B) follow unreasonable speed limits
 - (C) stop meeting with other Christians
 - (D) all of these
- ____ 14. A law is more likely to be a just, good law if it is all the following except ____.
- (A) needed, since there’s no other law like it
 - (B) subject to a great deal of debate and review
 - (C) concerned with punishing violence
 - (D) passed by a group of lawmakers
- ____ 15. James Madison said that the difficulty with government is that it has to govern ____.
- (A) the church and the people
 - (B) the people and itself
 - (C) itself and the church
 - (D) none of these
- ____ 16. The Greeks are credited as being the first to apply ____ to the study of government.
- (A) religion (C) reason (E) gluten-free sunscreen
 - (B) law (D) the Bible
- ____ 17. Greek philosophers also promoted the idea that the law should limit ____.
- (A) a nation’s citizens (C) the influence of Christianity
 - (B) slavery (D) rulers
- ____ 18. Democracy can be described as either ____ or ____ (choose TWO).
- (A) an aristocracy (C) many voters participating in government
 - (B) majority rule (D) a small group rules a nation

- ____ 19. A good summary of **rationalism** for Christians is that ____.
- (A) it's useful, but has its limits
 - (B) it's on the same level as the OT/NT
 - (C) it should be the way Christians view the world
 - (D) it matches up perfectly with God's Word
- ____ 20. "____" means "the idea that man is born with certain obvious rights that should be protected."
- (A) the kingdom of God
 - (B) the will of the people
 - (C) natural law
 - (D) republic

BONUS (+5):

- ____ The best way to describe the duties of the government and the Christian church is that they are ____.
- (A) focused on punishment
 - (B) nearly equal
 - (C) almost opposites
 - (D) both concerned with law
 - (E) based on forgiveness

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