

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview:
Hidden Consequences (15–20 minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY

Goal

Students apply Patrick Henry’s warning about “latent consequences” by predicting what might happen if certain powers are granted to government.

Instructions

1. Divide students into pairs or small groups.
2. Read the instructions together as a class.
3. Give student pairs about 8–10 minutes to answer the questions and discuss their answers together.
4. Ask for volunteers to offer their answers, and discuss as a class.

Questions/Suggested Key (Answers Will Vary!)

1. Scenario 1: The national government has the power to overrule all state laws.
Possible Benefit: National unity
2 Hidden Consequences: States lose sovereignty, one-size-fits-all laws hurt local needs, etc.
2. Scenario 2: The President serves for life unless he is removed.
Possible Benefit: Stability
2 Hidden Consequences: Tyranny, abuse of power, etc.
3. Scenario 3: State governors are appointed by the national government.
Possible Benefit: Consistency among states
2 Hidden Consequences: Governors obey Washington (not citizens), states lose independence, etc.
4. Scenario 4: The Constitution contains no Bill of Rights.
Possible Benefit: Simpler document
2 Hidden Consequences: Rights may be violated, government claims powers never intended, etc.

Wrap-Up/Final Direction

Ask students:

- Why did Patrick Henry think Americans could accidentally surrender liberty?
- Are “hidden consequences” still important in politics today?
- Why do governments often gain powers gradually instead of all at once?

Say to students: All four of the above scenario suggestions were **real ones made by Nationalists**, as we saw in the book section. Final questions:

- What does it say about those individuals who made those above suggestions?
- If someone today in the U.S. government were to stand up and say, “We need a permanent President, a U.S. government that appoints all 50 state governors, the power given to the U.S. government to overturn state laws, and no Bill of Rights,” what would you think?

Final Point: There were many even in America’s early days who favored powerful, centralized government.

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Patrick Henry warned that people often cannot foresee the “latent consequences” of powerful governments. Predict what could happen in these situations.

1. Scenario 1: The national government has the power to overrule all state laws.

Possible Benefit:

2 Possible Hidden Consequences:

2. Scenario 2: The President serves for life unless he is removed.

Possible Benefit:

2 Possible Hidden Consequences:

3. Scenario 3: State governors are appointed by the national government.

Possible Benefit:

2 Possible Hidden Consequences:

4. Scenario 4: The Constitution contains no Bill of Rights.

Possible Benefit:

2 Possible Hidden Consequences:

