

To: Members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee
From: William J. Federer
Re: **H.B. 239**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to H.B. 239.

My name is William J. Federer and I am a speaker/lecturer on American history. As an author of 20 books, and a frequent radio and television guest, my travels take me to over 100 cities a year. I have spoken in colleges, universities, schools, military bases, and innumerable other settings in the last 25 years. A common reaction after a lecture is “Why was I not taught this basic American history in school?”

This is why I oppose H.B. 239.

If testing is reduced, studying will not take place, and the history will be lost.

Roman Statesman Cicero wrote in *Ad M. Brutum*, 46 BC: “Not to know what happened before you were born is to be a child forever.”

British Statesman Edmund Burke wrote in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1790: “People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors.”

Harvard Professor George Santayana wrote in *Reason in Common Sense*, Volume I of *The Life of Reason* (1905): “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

Pulitzer Prize winning historians Will and Ariel Durant wrote an 11-volume, *The Story of Civilization* (published 1935-1975), in which they examined the rise, flourishing and fall of major world civilizations. In a companion book, *The Lessons of History*, 1968, the Durants wrote: “Civilization is not inherited; it has to be learned and earned by each generation anew; if the transmission should be interrupted ... civilization would die, and we should be savages again.”

There have been approximately 6,000 years of recorded human history, with the first evidence of civilized man appearing in the Mesopotamian Valley around 4,000 BC. In all this time, the typical form of government has been monarchy, with power concentrated into the hands of one person, sometimes called a Pharaoh, Caesar, Czar, Kaiser, King, Emperor, Monarch, Sultan, Maharaja or Communist Dictator. If someone was friends with this leader, they were more equal, if they were not friends with this leader, they were less equal; and if they were an enemy of this leader, they were dead – it’s called treason.

There were only a few dozen significant alternatives to monarchy throughout the ages, and they all collapsed: Democracy of Athens, Republic of Rome, Icelandic Commonwealth, Italian City-States, Seven United Netherlands, etc.

When America's experiment without a king began, Ben Franklin addressed the Constitutional Convention, June 28, 1787: “We have gone back to ancient history for models of Government, and examined the different forms of those Republics which, having been formed with the seeds of their own dissolution, now no longer exist.”

America's Declaration of Independence made a revolutionary statement, “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights...” eventually resulting in everybody being recognized as equal, no matter which race, sex or economic status.

President Calvin Coolidge stated at the unveiling of the equestrian statue of Bishop Francis Asbury, October 15, 1924: “The history of government on this earth has been almost entirely a history of the rule of force held in the hands of a few. Under our Constitution America committed itself to the practical application of the rule of reason, with the power in the hands of the people.”

President Ronald Reagan stated in 1961: “In this country of ours took place the greatest revolution that has ever taken place in the world’s history...Every other revolution simply exchanged one set of rulers for another.”

Daniel Webster stated in his Fourth of July Oration, Fryeburg, Maine, 1802: “We live under the only government that ever existed which was framed by...deliberate consultations of the people. Miracles do not cluster. That which has happened but once in 6,000 years cannot be expected to happen often. Such a government, once gone, might leave a void, to be filled, for ages, with revolution and tumult, riot and despotism.”

TIME Magazine published the article "Looking to Its Roots" (May 25, 1987): "Ours is the only country deliberately founded on a good idea. That good idea combines a commitment to man's inalienable rights with the Calvinist belief in an ultimate moral right and sinful man's obligation to do good. These articles of faith, embodied in the Declaration of Independence and in the Constitution, literally govern our lives today."

President John Quincy Adams: “Posterity - you will never know how much it has cost my generation to preserve your freedom. I hope you make good use of it.”

Thank you for taking the time to listen to this testimony in opposition to H.B. 239.