

November 29, 2023

Members of the Higher Education Committee:

I am sorry that I could not be here in person today to share my thoughts on version 11 of Senate Bill 83. I have another commitment this morning – namely teaching a course on *American Political Thought* at the University of Cincinnati.

I am struck by the profound disconnection between this bill and the reality of our state universities, the reality of our classrooms, the reality of the professionals whose life's work it is to sustain Ohio's world-class institutions of higher education.

I will give you one example of this disconnection.

According to the bill, a course like mine in Political Science or History would be required to assign at least five essays from the *Federalist Papers*. Those essays – as **mandated** by this law¹ – would be selected by the chair of my department.

I assign several *Federalist Papers* in my course. I have taught the *Federalist Papers* many times. I have cited the *Federalist Papers* in my published scholarly writing.² My dog-eared copy of the *Federalist Papers* has been with me since my very first class, in my very first semester as a college student and is covered in highlighter marks, underlining, and notes in the margin.

The core purpose of having an academic teach a course is to give students the benefit of that scholar's training, research, expertise. But under this bill – I am required to throw out every single thing I know about the *Federalist Papers* and ask the department chair which are the good ones.

I have tremendous respect for my department chair. I would call upon his expertise on many subjects. But my department chair studies international relations and cyber security. He has never – not even for one day, not even in one class session – taught the *Federalist Papers*.

If I were teaching a similar course at the University of Cincinnati in the History department, I would be asking their department chair – a scholar of the British empire -- to tell me what to teach about one of the most fundamentally American documents ever created.

This is a very small piece – literally three lines -- of a 66-page bill. But this example is emblematic of the bill's fundamental incongruity. In an effort to solve problems that do not exist, the bill creates problems that would forever persist. Is there anyone here today who thinks cyber security and British history experts should decide what our students read about the American constitutional debate?

¹ Page 32, line 901.

² For example: Niven, David, Benjamin Plener Cover, and Michael Solimine. "Are Individuals Harmed by Gerrymandering? Examining Access to Congressional District Offices." *Social Science Quarterly* 102, no. 1 (2021): 29-46. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ssqu.12883>

I urge the committee to reject this legislation and stand up for the simple premise that we should teach our students to the best of our abilities – not to the limits of unfounded mandates. Let me add, I have had the pleasure of having numerous legislators visit my classes. I would like to invite each of you to visit my class in the future and join our very thoughtful discussion of the *Federalist Papers*.

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