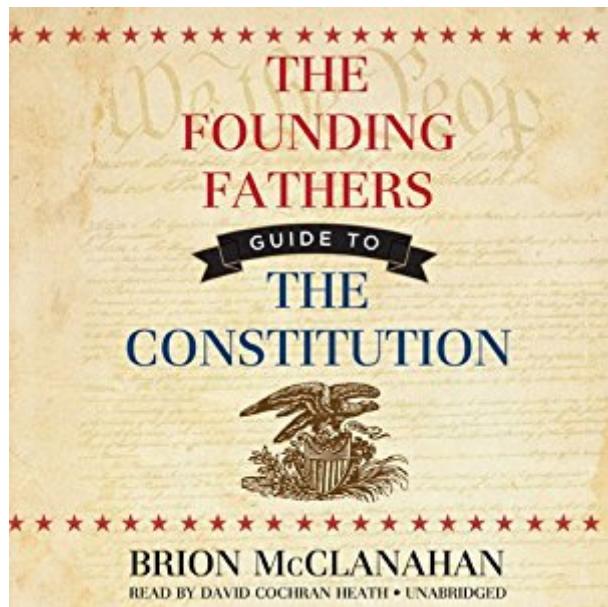


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# The Founding Fathers' Guide To The Constitution



## **Synopsis**

What does the Constitution really mean? How did the founding generation intend for us to interpret and apply the Constitution? Are liberals right when they cite its "elastic" clauses to justify big government, or are conservatives right when they cite its explicit limits on federal power? Professor Brion McClanahan, popular author of *The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Founding Fathers*, finds the answers by going directly to the source—the Founders themselves, who debated all the relevant issues in their state constitutional conventions. In *The Founding Fathers' Guide to the Constitution*, you'll discover how the Constitution was designed to protect rather than undermine the rights of states; why Congress, not the executive branch, was meant to be dominant and why the Founders would have argued for impeaching many modern presidents for violating the Constitution; why an expansive central government was the Founders' biggest fear, and how the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were designed to guard against it; why the founding generation would regard most of the current federal budget, including "stimulus packages," unconstitutional; why the Founding Fathers would oppose attempts to "reform" the Electoral College; why they would be horrified at the enormous authority of the Supreme Court; and why they intended Congress, not the Court, to interpret federal law. Authoritative, fascinating, and timely, *The Founding Fathers' Guide to the Constitution* is the definitive layman's guide to America's most important—and often most willfully misunderstood—historical document.

## **Book Information**

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 6 hours and 32 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Blackstone Audio, Inc.

Audible.com Release Date: August 13, 2012

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B008X8SZ7G

Best Sellers Rank: #103 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Political Science > Constitutions #109 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Politics & Current Events > Political History & Theory #399 in Books > History > Americas > United States > Revolution & Founding

## Customer Reviews

This is it! This is the book I've been hoping for years that somebody would write. Reading, and sorting through the debates, writings, ideas and opinions that formed the United States Constitution is a daunting task. But, it is the only way that one can discern precisely what the founders had in mind when they framed, and then enacted, our governing system. Dr. McClanahan cuts through all of the nonsense forwarded daily by elected representatives, incongruous Supreme Court Rulings, left-wing television pundits and right-wing radio talk show hosts with regards to the Constitution and what the Founders intended upon ratification of the document. From familiar subjects such as "General Welfare", Federal "Supremacy" and "Necessary and Proper" to seemingly tenuous subjects, such as Article I, Section Four's delegation of power to control elections, new light is shed on virtually all areas of the Constitution. Additionally, it puts the Bill of Rights in proper context, as well as in proper order of importance (from the Founder's perspective). The arguments of both proponents and opponents of the Constitution are given so that the true meaning of the powers delegated (as well as many which were voted down, and why) may be discerned in proper context, and as the founders intended. Drawing heavily from the Philadelphia Convention, the Federalist Papers, the Anti-Federalist Papers, the State Ratifying Conventions, and various other writings by the Founders, this is neither a "right-wing", nor "left-wing" treatise of the Constitution- it is instead a contextual dissection of the powers delegated by that document. It is substantiated, not by the writer's opinion, but by the words of the Founders themselves.

What does the Constitution mean for us today? What did it mean for those who drafted and ratified it? Is the answer to those questions the same? Can they be? Should they be? The Constitution is the foundation-stone of our American political system, "the supreme Law of the Land" as the document styles itself in Article VI, Clause 2. As such, one might expect American citizens to have a good knowledge of the form of government outlined in the Constitution, particularly those who, as elected officials, take an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution. As is well-known, this is not the case. Most Americans, even those who consider themselves good, patriotic citizens have never read the thing in whole or in part and have perhaps only the vaguest idea of how it came to be and why. Even among those with some familiarity with the Constitution there is disagreement with regard to the previous questions. Some claim that the system of government drafted in Philadelphia in 1787 is simply inadequate for a modern, diverse, nation of 300 million people. We can't be bound by the strictures of a document written so long ago. Others claim that it is simply impossible to know what the Founding Fathers intended when they wrote the Constitution. The language is vague and

antiquated, they claim, and even the Founding generation argued among themselves about what the Constitution meant. How can we, over 200 years later, hope to see more clearly what they could not? At best, what the Constitution then provides us is a flexible, "living document" that can be adapted to the needs and desires of the present.

One of the measures of a great book is how much clarity it brings to sticky subjects. The sticky subject in this case affects many: how much power and reach does the central government rightfully have? Should the Constitution be loosely interpreted, existing as an elastic "living document" where new powers are added freely? Or should it be strictly interpreted, existing as a "limiting document" whereby the powers given are limited to those expressly defined? Leapfrogging over 220+ years of punditry and political posturing, Dr. McClanahan's fascinating *The Founding Father's Guide To The Constitution* goes directly to original interpretations made by those who proposed and voted the new form of government into being. It was here, after all, that proponents and opponents grappled with the same issues of how the sparsely worded document should be interpreted. By revealing these arguments that won the day and earned the Constitution its ratification we find great clarity of intent. It's at this moment of the Constitution's path toward ratification that McClanahan submerges us -- where we experience the debates surrounding the document's handful of provisions. In their own words we see proponents of the Constitution interpret the new nation's proposed powers while overcoming opponents' interpretations to win agreement and win ratification. Did the "Necessary and Proper" clause, for example, create an "elastic power" that gave free reign to expand the central government's reach? Or was it simply a means to strictly execute the powers outlined in the previous clauses of the document? Only one of these interpretations assured States and enabled the Constitution's ratification.

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