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Welcome to the September edition of the NAFSL Newsletter!

Recently, David McCullough passed away at the age of 89. Mr. McCullough was a bestselling author and historian who twice won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. He was also given the Presidential Medal of Freedom, one of the United States' highest civilian awards.

He once asked, "How can we not want to know about the people who have made it possible for us to live as we live, to have the freedoms we have, to be citizens of this greatest of countries in all time?" Mr. McCullough stated, "we have to know who we were if we're to know who we are and where we're headed." In other words, it is imperative that we understand and learn from our history as a people and a nation. Instead of tearing down our history we ought to be building it up.

On September 17th, Americans will be celebrating the 235th anniversary of the signing of our United States Constitution. At this time in 1787, after a long hot summer of dissension, deliberation, and intense debate, our Founders finally reached consensus on a document for the ages.

Although they acknowledged some of the potential shortcomings of their efforts, as men always bring with them "their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views", those great and focused minds gathered together, toiled and drafted a Constitution that they acknowledged, if not the best, could not have been much better - a document that, they said, "will astonish our enemies".

Our Constitution provides a basis, a foundation, from which all posture and policy ought to emanate, and advances the Biblical precepts of sacrifice and self-restraint, altruism over personal ambition, as well as limited government and autonomy.

As the story goes, Dr. Benjamin Franklin was leaving the Constitutional Convention on the last day and was asked by a Mrs. Powell, "What have you given us sir, another monarchy"? Keeping in mind the skepticism over a new national government, he replied, "No ma'am, a republic, if you can keep it."

To preserve our republic and keep our precious freedom, we need to be familiar with and embrace the core values of the great American experiment, and our elected representatives especially should know the basics about the document they took an oath to defend and uphold, as well as the sacred trust they hold with the constituents they are obligated to serve.

Our Founders presented us with a representative form of government which has, so far, withstood the test of time. It is essential that we are reminded of and recommit ourselves to the certain unshakable traditions and institutions of our nation, especially in a factionalized political environment that ebbs and flows on subjective passions. We are on the brink of losing our grip on much of what the Founders created during that hot summer of 1787. It is vitally important that we make sure that their efforts will not have been in vain.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Kallinger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "K".

James Kallinger, President
National Association of Former State Legislators