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### **Education Fla. School Districts Refuse to Distribute Constitution Booklets Donated by 9/12 Project**

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Two Florida school districts won't be handing out pocket-sized Constitutions to their eighth graders because they were donated by the local 9/12 Project, prompting concerns from school officials about the "opinions and viewpoints" the booklets contain.

According to the [St. Petersburg Times](#), the Nature Coast 9/12 Project gave thousands of copies of the Constitution to the Hernando and Citrus school districts in central Florida in August. But because of certain handouts and forewords that accompanied some of the booklets, along with the organization's name and website, officials decided not to pass them out.

"It doesn't matter what group it is," Hernando superintendent Bryan Blavatt said. "The question is, are we giving out resources that are primary sources ... or is it subject to opinions and viewpoints and selective choice of materials?"

The St. Petersburg Times reported:

Some booklets donated to Hernando were published by the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, whose website describes its mission as serving communities through "fellowship, compassion, and dedication to God, family and country."

These booklets contained other primary texts such as the Declaration of Independence, Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and Patrick Henry's Call to Arms. A foreword to the booklet reads: "Unless Americans remember and preserve our rich heritage of liberty, a new Dark Age of tyranny could lock the majority of mankind into the harsh chains of totalitarian slavery."

Some booklets donated to Hernando were accompanied by a one-page sheet from the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank, with the heading "Constitutional Authority." The sheet asserts that the Constitution has been misinterpreted, leading to "a government that's effectively unlimited ... and increasingly unaffordable."

Booklets donated to the Citrus district refers the reader to books published by the National Center for Constitutional Studies, a conservative, religious-themed organization formed by Mormon political writer Cleon Skousen, who argued that the founding of the United States was a divine miracle. One of Skousen's books referenced in the booklet,

*The 5,000 Year Leap*, is often cited by political commentator and 912 Project founder Glenn Beck, who wrote a foreword for a later edition.

Citrus officials plan to return the booklets because the school board said the additional material conflicts with the district's policy of not passing out political material; in Hernando, principals were told to give them out to any student who wanted one, but not to pass them out to every student.

"When you add all of those things together, it's not just a simple Constitution," said Mike Mullen, assistant superintendent for Citrus schools. "You've got to be real careful when you're passing out information to the kids."

Nature Coast 9/12 Project organizer Maureen Arrigale said her group reached out to school officials last year about donating booklets and submitted samples for review, which were approved.

"The booklets they have are the same booklets we sent them," she told the Times. "We're not promoting any kind of agenda or politics whatsoever. Our name just happens to be on the book."

Mullen acknowledged staff members reviewed the booklets, but said they didn't research the National Center for Constitutional Studies or the 9/12 Project itself at the time. He also said the sample booklets received did not contain the 9/12 Project name and website.

"I know they claim they're not a political group, but they have direct links from their website that do take you to partisan political websites," Mullen said.

But the Nature Coast 9/12 Project donated money to a local Tea Party group to purchase Constitution booklets for schools in another Florida district this year without any problem, Arrigale said. Those booklets were stamped with the Tea Party's name, which a district spokeswoman told the Times was fine — "[a]s long as it's not included with any sort of political message."

For the 9/12 Project, the controversy is just the latest setback in an attempt to get schools to teach U.S. history taught in a complete, unbiased way.

"What we're out to do is educate people that things in the Bill of Rights are being taken away from us and are being misconstrued," Nature Coast 9/12 member Annette Weeks said.