

American Constitution Society Constitution

Article I

This organization shall be known as "The American Constitution Society."

Article II

Statement of Purpose

The American Constitution Society for Law and Policy is a group of students concerned about the pervasive conservative orthodoxy in American law and politics. We believe deeply in the importance of law as the mechanism that governs the relationships between and among the individuals and institutions that form our society, and we recognize the direct relationship between legal theory and the broader political debate about the kind of society in which we live.

For almost twenty years, the view has been ascendant that the traditional values of compassion, decency of treatment, and respect for human dignity, have little or no place in legal or political discourse. This view permeates all aspects of legal debate: academic scholarship, judicial interpretation, and debate about laws proposed for enactment. The cornerstone of this legal view is an approach to understanding the United States Constitution that is essentially devoid of concern for the way in which the law affects the lives of the people who make up the nation in which we live.

People who have entered the legal profession, government service, and the academy, have been driven to abandon traditional values of decency and compassion by the pervasive legal and political culture in which these moral principles are ridiculed. Individuals who stand up for them risk disparagement and marginalization. These values are caricatured and lampooned by the most powerful voices in our society. Compassion is ridiculed as weakness. The common humanity of all people is, at best, ignored. Reason is shouted down. Decent treatment of individuals by each other and by their elected officials is dismissed as an unaffordable luxury.

We believe, contrary to this pervasive conservative orthodoxy, that the law, and, in particular, the Constitution, serves human values. We believe that the Constitution is a charter of liberty, the blueprint for a noble and unique experiment designed to prevent the excesses of government in order to protect the human dignity necessary for individuals to realize the full potential of their lives. The goal of the Constitution, and the United States it created, is to permit people to succeed in the "pursuit of happiness," one of the inalienable rights this nation explicitly was founded to secure to the American people.

We believe that the Constitution, and by extension, many other areas of American law, can be understood only by reference to transcendent principles of decency, reason, humanity and compassion. We believe that those who enforce the law must have greater concern for the way in which it affects the lives of the people who make up the nation in which we live. And we believe these principles should form a starting point for enactment, as well as interpretation, of the law.

To banish these fundamental, traditional American ideals from the law is to leave our country without moral principles for its guidance.

We believe that there has been a failure on the part of our political leadership to articulate a coherent vision for society that is faithful to these traditional values that are central to the idea of America. In the resulting vacuum, our culture has moved toward a climate in which most successful political movements have been those that appeal to what is worst in people: pettiness, anger, distrust, xenophobia.

The mission of the American Constitution Society is to harness the values of compassion and respect for each individual, and to re-incorporate them into American law and politics, in order to build a stronger and more decent national community. The Society's role is to influence the debate on the law, both in its interpretation and its creation, and to restore these traditional American values to their rightful place in legal and political debate. Our goal is not the restoration of a failed approach to government, but a rekindling of the hope that by reason and decency, we can create an America that is better for us all.

Article III

Membership shall be open to all Seton Hall Law School students, faculty and staff.

Article IV

The American Constitution Society officers shall be members of the American Constitution Society Executive Board, which will meet periodically to determine the general direction of the American Constitution Society and to decide issues of long-term importance to the American Constitution Society.

Only current Seton Hall Law School students, faculty, and staff may serve as officers.

The American Constitution Society officers shall be as follows:

Faculty Advisor: The Faculty Advisor shall serve as a resource for the Society members, facilitate the acquisition of speakers, and serve as a liaison between the local chapter and the advisors of American Constitution Society chapters at other schools.

President: The President shall call Society meetings, coordinate the operations and direction of the Society, and serve as a liaison between the Society and the Seton Hall administration.

Vice-President: The Vice-President shall call Society meetings in the President's absence and coordinate the activities of the chairpersons.

Secretary: The Secretary shall compile and maintain the minutes of meetings and the records of the organization, keep a current list of members, and be responsible for notifying members of meetings.

Treasurer: The Treasurer shall maintain the financial accounts and records of the Society, set forth the Society's budget, submit the Society's financial reports to the Student Bar Association (SBA) according to SBA guidelines.

Membership Chairperson: The Membership Chairperson shall organize a membership drive in the fall and shall organize additional membership drives as needed to recruit new members and to assign them to committees.

Article V

The American Constitution Society officers shall be elected by a majority vote of all Society members in April of each year.
Each officer will serve for a term of one year.

Article VI

Officers may be removed for good cause by the unanimous vote of the remaining members of the Executive Board.

Article VII

Amendments to this constitution and to the by-laws shall adopted by two-thirds vote of the Executive Board, except that no amendment shall be adopted without the affirmative vote of both the President and the Faculty Advisor.

Article VIII

This organization shall be governed by this Constitution, its bylaws, and the rules and regulations of Seton Hall Law School.