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KNOWLEDGE AND GOVERNANCE PROBLEMS

By Steve Bakke  April 16, 2018



Here's what provoked me:

In this submission to the Minneapolis StarTribune, I try to point out something that I believe distinguishes serious thinking mainline conservatives from similarly committed radical progressives. Specifically, I'm referring to the value given to the thoughts, philosophies, ideals, and goals of our Founders as they created our form of government.

Here's my response:

Knowledge and Governance Problems

"It's not what to know but how to think that matters." That's the message of a letter on 4/14. The writer takes exception to a 4/13 editorial promoting rigorous civics education requirements for Minnesota. He doesn't think students need much knowledge about our government. He wrote: "I think what's needed is not more civics but more current events and a course in critical political thinking."

Whatever the writer wants solved by "critical political thinking," I believe most citizens, from across the political spectrum, would agree on several things:

- Rigorous civics education is an important part of our form of government – i.e. a government "of and by the people."
- "We the people" can't govern without basic knowledge about the intent of our Founders. And without that knowledge, "we the people" can't reconcile our Founders' ideals to the realities of today's world.
- If the writer has "given up" because he doesn't think our government is working, the problem he struggles with is partly the result of attitudes such as his.
- Critical thinking is part of good citizenship, but we must have knowledge of what we are thinking about.

I'd like to add some ideas which would not enjoy universal approval:

- The writer's opinion reflects a frame of reference which values "process" over progress.
- Likewise, the writer is probably satisfied with good intentions, no matter the result of his precious process.
- I believe these shortcomings are a common symptom of progressive leadership, and this contributes mightily to the governance problems we face today.