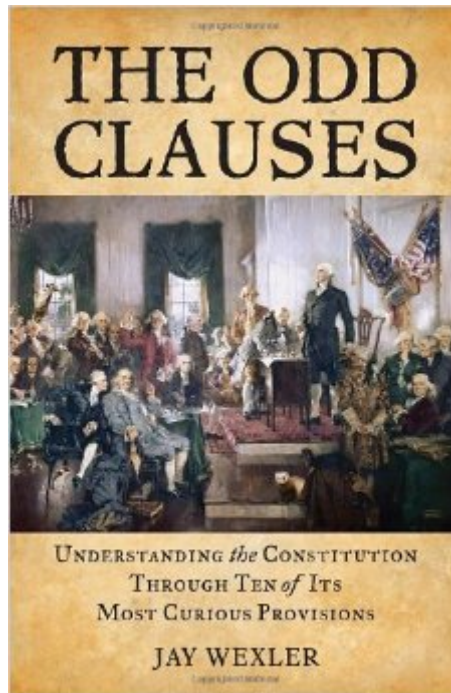


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The Odd Clauses: Understanding The Constitution Through Ten Of Its Most Curious Provisions



Synopsis

An innovative, insightful, often humorous look at the Constitution's lesser-known clauses, offering a fresh perspective on the document's relevance today. For a variety of reasons, many of the Constitution's more obscure passages never make it to any court and therefore never make headlines or even law school classrooms, which teach from judicial decisions. In this captivating and witty book, Jay Wexler draws on his extensive professional and educational backgrounds in constitutional law to demonstrate how these "odd clauses" have incredible relevance to our lives, our government's structure, and the integrity of our democracy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a retired lawyer, with a lot of time on my hands now to read for pleasure, the title of this book piqued my interest. To my dismay, this book was a sophomoric attempt to explain ten odd clauses the author chose to expound upon. There simply was not a lot of substance in this book regarding the legal concepts and ideas behind the insertion of these clauses into the constitution. The writing itself showed a lack of discipline by the author. He meandered his way through each chapter, randomly jumping from thought to thought without any logical or rational basis for doing so, except, perhaps, the author's attempt to bolster his weak attempt at legal analysis by inserting humor throughout the book. His attempt failed miserably. Additionally, the author unabashedly attacks republicans, conservatives, and others who disagree with his political view points throughout the book. These personal attacks are what the younger generation may now describe as "Snarky." As most of us learn in middle school, and again, later in high school, let alone in college and law

school, the United States was established as a constitutional republic, not a democracy. The founders were adamant in their belief that a democracy would not long last. So I should have known, based upon this author's statement in his introduction alone (as well as mentions of it throughout the remainder of the book) regarding our "democracy," that the rest of the book could not possibly be a serious attempt to explain the odd clauses by a constitutional expert, or scholar of any note whatsoever. Amateurish would be another good word to describe this book.

Its uneven. The treatment of the Incompatibility Clause, for example, shows how seemingly unrelated parts of the constitution form a cohesive whole with a consistent philosophy of government. The treatment of the weights and measures clause, on the other hand, is mainly a diatribe against the US system of inches, pounds, etc. As other reviewers noted, the author likes to make fun of conservatives. To be fair, he occasionally makes fun of the liberal members of the supreme court as well. Many of his jokes are funny. What is more to the point, is that the author spends more time than he should cracking jokes. This a short work and the humor which pads it means that the real meat in this book is brief. On the whole, I learned a fair amount from this book.

An entertaining book marred only by the author's occasional inability to distinguish between when he is being funny (most of the time) and when he is just belittling people who disagree with his own personal views. In other words, it occasionally reads like the New York Times, which I suppose isn't surprising since at one point he refers to that periodical as "the nation's most important newspaper." Well, I suppose they *do* have Will Shortz. Anyway, worth the ten bucks, and maybe now I'll come up with some fantastic nobility clause or weights and measures argument I might have missed before. Like most kindle books, there are formatting errors, but these are mostly limited to the inclusion of "the odd clauses" and page numbers randomly throughout the text-- not nearly as bad as some of the older, hastily converted books I've purchased. But come on publishers, is it too much to ask that you proofread the kindle version at least once?

This book would have 4-5 stars, for the depth of knowledge, but more and more, the author put his political bias front and center. This detracted enormously from a thoughtful account of lesser known sections of the Constitution. His bias did nothing for the book, and only served to irritate perhaps 1/2 the readership.

The Odd Clauses by Jay Wexler is a fun, yet informative, book on the more obscure sections of the

US constitution. Wexler, often citing landmark cases tries to make the obscure clauses of the constitution relevant in the modern world. For the most part he succeeds, here and there the connection is a stretch, but overall Wexler's reasoning is sound. Wexler often editorializes throughout the discussion, but it is clear where he is speaking his mind and where he is citing facts or quoting sources. Wexler's editorials and political humor have a liberal bent, but whether or not you agree with his politics, the editorials and humor help to liven up what could very easily be another dry book on constitutional law. Between the editorials and humor, there is a great deal of interesting material. Wexler's research, both legal and general, is not exhaustive, but is educational in an entertaining way. The list price of *The Odd Clauses* is twelve dollars. If the subject matter is of an interest to you, then twelve dollars is a fair price for a few evenings' worth of easy, yet informative reading.

The Odd Clauses, by Jay Wexler, provided a fascinating and very accessible journey through ten of the Constitution's more obscure provisions. A professor at Boston University School of Law, Mr Wexler writes with a large dollop of snarky political asides, that I found in no way affected my understanding of the difficult subject matter. Separation of Powers; Weights and Measures; Recess Appointments; Original Jurisdiction; Natural Born Citizen; Federalism; Letters of Marque and Reprisal; Title of Nobility and Privilege clauses are all treated thoroughly enough that even a political neophyte like myself grasped a basic understanding of these parts of our Constitution without making me feel stupid. I came away with a much greater respect and admiration for the framers of the Constitution who were prescient to include these clauses to ensure a more free and open society than what they had left in Great Britain. My interest has been piqued enough that I will pursue more on this and similar subjects.

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