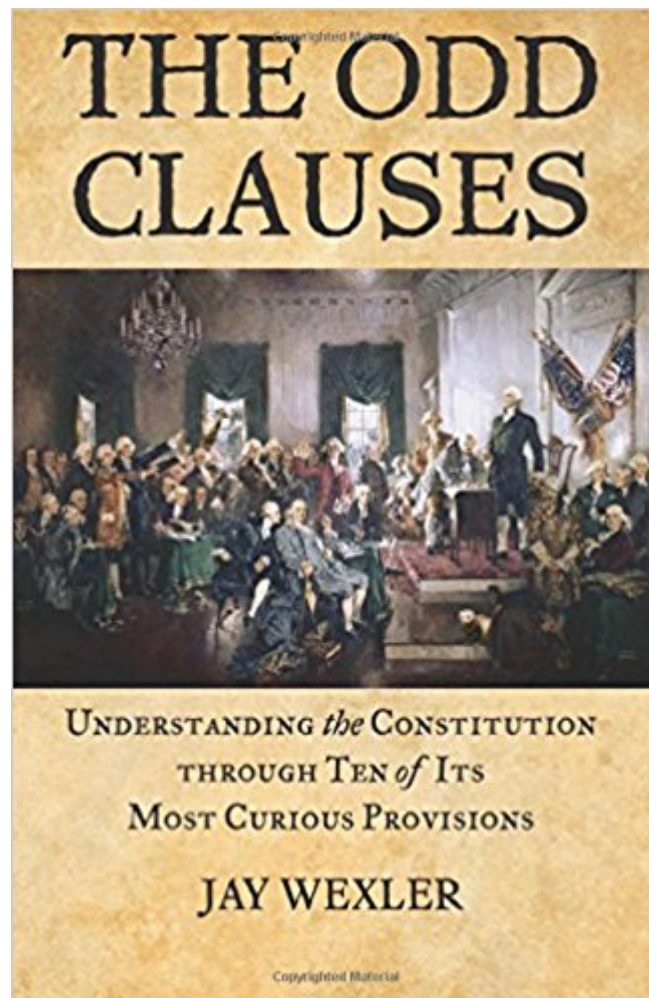




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# The Odd Clauses: Understanding The Constitution Through Ten Of Its Most Curious Provisions



## 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

"I love this book. It is, believe it or not, an utterly entertaining constitutional law book. I am blown away by Wexler's comedic skills and his ability to make the usually dry subject matter so funny and readable." —Gary Gulman, Finalist, Last Comic Standing and Guest, Late Night With David Letterman and The Tonight Show "In Holy Hullabaloo, Jay Wexler took us along on what he called a "road trip" to some of the most important places connected to the First Amendment's religion clauses. This time, in The Odd Clauses, Wexler exits off the highway to take us on a tour of some back roads of constitutional law: places scholars and the public seldom visit like the Bill of Attainder Clause or the Third Amendment (which prohibits quartering of troops in private houses during peacetime, in case you didn't know.) The result is magical: you'll have so much fun reading about these unsung constitutional provisions that you won't realize until the trip is

over how much you've learned.

• Pamela S. Karlan, Kenneth and Harle Montgomery Professor of Public Interest Law

“The book provides a fresh vantage point from which to consider the Constitution.

• Choice Magazine

“Professor Wexler dispenses his expertise on the Constitution with a light touch, imparting many lasting insights and a few belly laughs along the way. What a delight to discover that our founding document is not only brilliant, but brilliantly weird.

• Ben H. Winters, author of *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*

“A know-it-all's treasure trove, a cabinet of constitutional curiosities, *The Odd Clauses* touches down on NASA, Ellis Island, even Saturday Night Live. Jay Wexler is brilliantly snarky, erudite and comedic.

• Julianna Baggott, author of *Girl Talk* and *Pure*

“The maniacs who run the modern American political process seem determined to reduce our Constitution to a electoral fetish object. Thank God, then, that we have Jay Wexler, whose wise and funny treatise reminds us that the Constitution is, like the men who drafted it, brilliant but imperfect. I learned more reading this book than in my entire college career. This isn't saying much given my college career, I realize. But I now plan to attend law school. It's that good.

• Steve Almond, author of *Candyfreak* and *God Bless America*

From the Hardcover edition.

Jay Wexler teaches at the Boston University School of Law. He previously clerked for Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and then served as a lawyer in the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel. Wexler's writing has appeared in *Boston magazine*, *Spy*, and *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, among other publications. His first book was *Holy Hullabaloo: A Road Trip to the Battlegrounds of the Church-State Wars*.

From the Hardcover edition.

On the plus side, this unusual book serves a valuable purpose in that it offers several examples of how a number of often overlooked clauses in the Constitution inform the debates over how we should interpret other clauses. I'm aware of no other books on this topic, and Mr. Wexler has been kind enough to write one that's highly readable and accessible for lay audiences. On the minus side, Mr. Wexler inserts a great many unnecessary politically partisan asides, which will undoubtedly turn away conservative readers, for no good reason. In addition, he sometimes takes much longer than necessary to get to his point. In the chapter on weights and measures, for instance, he takes two full pages to show us how much he knows about the space program when all he needed to do was write a paragraph explaining how the US lost an expensive space probe because a NASA

contractor sent the probe some data in English units of measurement instead of metric. If that were the only example, I wouldn't mention it. I'd happily give this book 5 stars if it went to a second edition after getting a good scrubbing by a non-partisan editor with a taste for concision.

As a high school teacher, I am always looking for engaging ways to educate my students about the Constitution. This book, even with its unique focus, conveys a large amount of information that I would consider essential to understanding perhaps the most important document we have. The humor (besides the imagined dialogue) keeps your attention and you'll rarely find yourself reading information you're already familiar with. Think 'Lies My Teacher Told Me' if it was about the Constitution and actually told you new information.

It's 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 is 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.

It went along perfectly with the government class I'm taking. It was a pretty funny read and it really explains the US Constitution. Although the main focus of the book are the odd clauses of the Constitution, it goes into depth on a lot of other parts of our government. It's pretty wacky but if you want a basic understanding of how our Constitution works, this is a great book for you. If you are a high school student and your teacher is making you read it, you'll be fine. It's a good book and not too long either (193 pages not including index and notes).

great read for understanding law without a degree

A delightful and fascinating romp through the obscure and bizarre rules buried within the US Constitution.

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?

The author is not just smart, he is also a bit of a smart ass, which is 90% of the reason this book is highly readable.

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