

# Should I fix the spelling in the United States Constitution?

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Commenter Dave jokingly remarked, “I’ve grown used to handling characters with ASCII. (If it was good enough to represent every character in the US Constitution, it’s good enough for me.)” But there’s a double-joke in there. You see, not every character in the United States Constitution can be represented in ASCII! If you take a close look, you’ll see that some words appear to be “misspelled”: At the end of the second line, it says “*Blefsings* of Liberty”, and Article 1 Section 1 declares that “All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a *Congrefs* of the United States.” That f-like character is actually a long S, a character which has fallen into disuse in modern English. It also doesn’t exist in ASCII.

My friend The Knitty Professor told me a story of a class she taught many years ago. A student emailed a question:

When I want to quote an excerpt from Locke in my paper, should I fix the spelling? Some words use f instead of s, and others are incorrectly capitalized.

Today is Constitution Day, a United States holiday celebrating the United States Constitution. Since 2005, all educational institutions which receive federal funds must teach about the United States Constitution on this day, even hairdresser schools.

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