

Dear Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, all State Legislators (present and absent) and citizens of the State of Maine,

My name is John Cleverly and I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am testifying in favour of bills LD-51, LD-1098 and LD-1209.

I used to work as a Security Officer at Waldo County General Hospital. I was there when the Covid Pandemic started and continued to work there for the next eighteen months until I was denied my Religious Exemption to the Covid Job.

Thanks to governor "where are they going to go" mills, I mean that sincerely, thank you governor, I am in a much, much better place now.

I didn't really pay much attention to politics until 9/11.

I thought politicians were lazy or corrupt or both, living off the taxpayer and making the occasional speech full of empty promises.

After 9/11 I started paying attention. It soon became apparent that lobbyists were the driving force behind much of what the government does and that was how politicians got rich. They were not working for the voters. They were working for their sponsors and the voters ended up suffering.

For example we can thank George W. Bush for the Patriot Act that spies on its own people and Obama for the Unaffordable Care Act pushed by Big Pharma and the Insurance companies, with a shout out to Senator McCain (hope it's warm where you are). President Trump did an amazing job considering the constant attacks by the opposition party and the media and the lack of support from his own party. Instead of getting rich off Big Pharma, he instead GAVE billions of tax payer dollars TO the drug companies, but then he wasn't a politician. The last two and a bit years have been an unmitigated disaster.

The U.S.A. is still the greatest country in the world, just ask the millions pouring across the border, but it is heading the way of the Greeks and Romans.

Most of the rest of the world is run by Communists or Socialists (one step away from Communism).

What makes America the greatest is its Constitution with The Bill of Rights.

My brief study of The Constitution blows me away. I am gobsmacked that The Founding Fathers were able to come up with such a succinct set of guidelines that has stood the test of time to this day.

As a foreigner, I feel a bit strange quoting documents that you probably know by heart.

The first part of the 1st Amendment of The Constitution states:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

And Article I Section 3 of the State of Maine’s Constitution states:

“All individuals have a natural and unalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences, and no person shall be hurt, molested or restrained in that person's liberty or estate for worshiping God in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of that person's own conscience”

LD-798 removed those Religious Freedoms and violates both those clauses. The pharmaceutical companies Merck, Sharp & Dohme and Pfizer contributed \$250,000 each towards passing LD- 798. What did they have to gain? Is that considered ethical?

You can uphold your Oath of Office and repair the damage done by LD-798 by passing LD-51, LD-1098 and LD-1209.

Will that save the U.S.A? No! But it IS a very small step in the right direction.

Thank you.