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Hillsdale College's Matthew Spalding Testifies Before House Oversight Subcommittee

Spalding addressed attempts by the Smithsonian to replace the story of America's past with an activist ideology.

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Matthew Spalding, Kirby Professor in Constitutional Government and dean of the Van Andel Graduate School of Government at Hillsdale College, testified Tuesday before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform's Subcommittee on Delivering on Government Efficiency at its hearing, "Rewriting American History: Examining the Smithsonian's Efforts to Reshape the Past."

Spalding's testimony examined efforts by the National Museum of American History to replace the story of America's past with an activist ideology aimed at transforming its future.

"The real crime here, premeditated and followed through, is that America's story — the well-established narrative of main characters and key events long at the center of American self-understanding — has been so reframed, jettisoned, decentered, deconstructed, and 'problematized' that it no longer exists in recognizable form," Spalding said.

The hearing was held in the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, D.C. Spalding testified as the subcommittee considered attempts by the Smithsonian to reshape and rewrite America's history.

Spalding argued in his testimony that the museum has deliberately replaced America's story with an activist ideology that uses history as a tool of social transformation. He said the museum should instead tell America's national story "as accurately as possible with minimal present-day bias."

"America's history belongs neither to liberals nor conservatives," Spalding said. "It belongs to the American people. It should be told, warts and all, so that visitors understand the basic chronological narrative and see how the nation got to where it is today. Nothing integral to that history should be erased or whitewashed. But social transformation should not be the objective."

Spalding said the museum should tell the story of a nation and a people that have struggled, sacrificed, and corrected flaws to overcome injustice and live up to their heritage and principles.

"A healthy attachment to this country is neither blind to its flaws nor fanatical in believing that America is the source of all good," Spalding said. "Nevertheless, each generation should be equipped with a knowledge of America's principles and history, a reverence for their liberties, and a reflective love of their country. That patriotism must be strong and unsentimental enough to coexist with criticism, dissent, disappointment, and opposition. But it is love all the same."

Spalding said a museum that teaches national self-loathing and reframes the past for ideological purposes undermines this reflective patriotism that is the very foundation of a self-governing republic.

Spalding is the Kirby Professor in Constitutional Government, dean of the Van Andel Graduate School of Government, and vice president for Washington operations at Hillsdale College, overseeing Hillsdale's Washington, D.C., campus. He is the author of "The Making of the American Mind: The Story of Our Declaration of Independence."

For screenshots of Spalding's testimony, click here. For a recording of the hearing and Spalding's written testimony, click here. For a headshot of Spalding, click here. For photos of Hillsdale College, click here. For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click here.

About Hillsdale in D.C.
Hillsdale College's campus in Washington, D.C., extends the College's educational mission to the nation's capital by teaching and promoting the principles and practice of American constitutionalism. As the home of the Washington-Hillsdale Internship Program, the James Madison Fellowship Program, the Van Andel Graduate School of Government, and a variety of lectures and events open to policymakers and the public, Hillsdale in D.C. seeks to inspire and form students, citizens, practitioners, and statesmen who will restore America's principles and revive self-government in the political life of the nation. For more information, visit dc.hillsdale.edu.

About Hillsdale College
Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, Imprimis, with a circulation of more than 7.5 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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