

Governor George C. Wallace's "Schoolhouse Door Speech"

On June 11, 1963, Alabama's Governor George Wallace came to national prominence when he kept a campaign pledge to stand in the schoolhouse door to block integration of Alabama public schools. Governor Wallace read this proclamation when he first stood in the door-way to block the attempt of two black students, Vivian Malone and James Hood, to register at the University of Alabama. President John F. Kennedy federalized the Alabama National Guard, and ordered its units to the university campus. Wallace then stepped aside and returned to Montgomery allowing the students to enter.

**STATEMENT AND PROCLAMATION
OF
GOVERNOR GEORGE C. WALLACE
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
June 11, 1963**

As Governor and Chief Magistrate of the State of Alabama I deem it to be my solemn obligation and duty to stand before you representing the rights and sovereignty of this State and its peoples.

The unwelcomed, unwanted, unwarranted and force-induced intrusion upon the campus of the University of Alabama today of the might of the Central Government offers frightful example of the oppression of the rights, privileges and sovereignty of this State by officers of the Federal Government. This intrusion results solely from force, or threat of force, undignified by any reasonable application of the principle of law, reason and justice. It is important that the people of this State and nation understand that this action is in violation of rights reserved to the State by the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Alabama. While some few may applaud these acts, millions of Americans will gaze in sorrow upon the situation existing at this great institution of learning.

Only the Congress makes the law of the United States. To this date

no statutory authority can be cited to the people of this Country which authorizes the Central Government to ignore the sovereignty of this State in an attempt to subordinate the rights of Alabama and millions of Americans. There has been no legislative action by Congress justifying this intrusion.

When the Constitution of the United States was enacted, a government was formed upon the premise that people, as individuals are endowed with the rights of life, liberty, and property, and with the right of self-government. The people and their local self-governments formed a Central Government and conferred upon it certain stated and limited powers. All other powers were reserved to the states and to the people.

Strong local government is the foundation of our system and must be continually guarded and maintained. The Tenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States reads as follows:

"The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people."

This amendment sustains the right of self-government and grants the State of Alabama the right to enforce its laws and regulate its internal affairs.

This nation was never meant to be a unit of one. but a united [sic] of the many this is the exact reason our freedom loving forefathers established the states, so as to divide the rights and powers among the states, insuring that no central power could gain master government control.

There can be no submission to the theory that the Central Government is anything but a servant of the people. We are a God-fearing people – not government-fearing people. We practice today the free heritage bequeathed to us by the Founding Fathers.

I stand here today, as Governor of this sovereign State, and refuse

to willingly submit to illegal usurpation of power by the Central Government. I claim today for all the people of the State of Alabama those rights reserved to them under the Constitution of the United States. Among those powers so reserved and claimed is the right of state authority in the operation of the public schools, colleges and Universities. My action does not constitute disobedience to legislative and constitutional provisions. It is not defiance – for defiance sake, but for the purpose of raising basic and fundamental constitutional questions. My action is raising a call for strict adherence to the Constitution of the United States as it was written – for a cessation of usurpation and abuses. My action seeks to avoid having state sovereignty sacrificed on the altar of political expediency.

Further, as the Governor of the State of Alabama, I hold the supreme executive power of this State, and it is my duty to see that the laws are faithfully executed. The illegal and unwarranted actions of the Central Government on this day, contrary to the laws, customs and traditions of this State is calculated to disturb the peace.

I stand before you here today in place of thousands of other Alabamians whose presence would have confronted you had I been derelict and neglected to fulfill the responsibilities of my office. It is the right of every citizen, however humble he may be, through his chosen officials of representative government to stand courageously against whatever he believes to be the exercise of power beyond the Constitutional rights conferred upon our Federal Government. It is this right which I assert for the people of Alabama by my presence here today.

Again I state – this is the exercise of the heritage of the freedom and liberty under the law – coupled with responsible government.

Now, therefore, in consideration of the premises, and in my official capacity as Governor of the State of Alabama, I do hereby make the following solemn proclamation:

WHEREAS, the Constitution of Alabama vests the supreme executive powers of the State in the Governor as the Chief Magistrate, and said Constitution requires of the Governor that he take care that the laws be faithfully executed; and,

WHEREAS, the Constitution of the United States, Amendment 10, reserves to the States respectively or to the people, those powers not delegated to the United States; and,

WHEREAS, the operation of the public school system is a power reserved to the State of Alabama under the Constitution of the United States and Amendment 10 thereof; and,

WHEREAS, it is the duty of the Governor of the State of Alabama to preserve the peace under the circumstances now existing, which power is one reserved to the State of Alabama and the people thereof under the Constitution of the United States and Amendment 10 thereof.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, George C. Wallace, as Governor of the State of Alabama, have by my action raised issues between the Central Government and the Sovereign State of Alabama, which said issues should be adjudicated in the manner prescribed by the Constitution of the United States; and now being mindful of my duties and responsibilities under the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the State of Alabama, and seeking to preserve and maintain the peace and dignity of this State, and the individual freedoms of the citizens thereof, do hereby denounce and forbid this illegal and unwarranted action by the Central Government.

SOURCE:
http://www.archives.state.al.us/govs_list/schooldoor.html

George C. Wallace
GOVERNOR OF ALABAMA