July 5, 2008

Dear AP American Government & Politics Student,

As your summer vacation gets well under way, hope you will enjoy the leisure and time away from school. But at the same time, I write to you to acquaint you with a reading which will provide an introduction to your course in Advanced Placement American Government & Politics.

You are to read over the summer The Imperial Presidency by Arthur Schlesinger which is available in most bookstores and online. The ISBN number is 0618420010, the book cost $16.00

Historian Arthur Schlesinger coined one of the most famous and often-quoted political phrases, used not just in academe but in the real world of government too. The demise of Richard Nixon, because of the Watergate scandal, inspired Schlesinger to look back in US. History to locate the roots of the tremendous power that the executive had accumulated. His observations led him to develop the idea of an “imperial Presidency,” with all the connotations that phrase carries. The author believes that the imperial presidency initially evolved for a clear and identifiable reason; it then grew due to other secondary factors. Certain presidents—Roosevelt and especially Kennedy—garner praise from Schlesinger for their judicious use of imperial powers. Other presidents he condemns. Schlesinger’s discussion of Richard Nixon, the ultimate imperial president as well as its destroyer, is a frank and unvarnished critique of the man who turned the imperial presidency homeward, against the American people. Schlesinger concludes with an intriguing theory of presidential power.

You are to have a notebook (preferably a spiral notebook with perforations so pages can be removed cleanly) specifically for the AP American Government & Politics course. You must take notes on the book and write one good (’good means not to ask about something obvious) question from each chapter.

For the first day of classes in September you must prepare for a discussion of the book. You MUST have a notebook with a set of notes as well as your written questions about the book. You must also answer ALL of the following questions.

Enjoy your summer,

Gerald A Miller Jr.
Reading Questions

"The Imperial Presidency"
By: Arthur Schlesinger

Answer ALL of the following questions.

What does Schlesinger mean by the revolutionary or imperial presidency?

What are the historical antecedents both domestically and internationally which led to the development of the imperial presidency?

Schlesinger states the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 did not typify the imperial presidency. b.) Why? c.) Is that an accurate interpretation?

How did Nixon personify the imperial presidency according to the author? Is that an accurate interpretation?

Can you think of any actions taken by George W. Bush, Clinton, Bush Sr., or Reagan, which typify the imperial presidency? Please explain.