

# The Family Heritage Series

A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom.  
Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency.



Volume II

Lesson Fifty-Five

## Davy Crockett

### LESSON IDEA

To examine closely one incident in the life of Davy Crockett, and to learn from it an important constitutional principle that is regularly violated by politicians today.

### PREPARATION

Look up some facts and figures on expenditures for the war on poverty and for welfare which will tie this lesson in with current government policies. Recommended sources are *American Opinion* and *The Review Of The News*.

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**D**AVY CROCKETT — probably everyone has heard of this famous hunter, Indian fighter, frontiersman, and pioneer; but did you know he served as a representative from Tennessee in the Congress of the United States? Or that he fought as hard to protect the Constitution from its enemies as he did to protect his family from Indian massacres? Or that he knew more about one of the basic principles of our Constitutional Republic than most politicians do today?

One day, for example, while Davy was serving in Congress, a bill came up which proposed using public money to pay benefits to a widow of a distinguished naval officer. It seemed to be a worthy cause, a nice thing to do, and the Speaker of the House was ready to ask for a vote when Crockett rose from his seat and asked to speak.

"Mr. Speaker," began the Tennessee pioneer, "I have as much respect for the memory of the deceased, and as much sympathy for the sufferings of the living, if suffering there be, as any man in this House, but we must not permit our respect for the dead or our sympathy for a part of the living to

lead us into an act of injustice to the balance of the living. I will not go into an argument to prove that Congress has no power to appropriate this money as an act of charity. Every member upon this floor knows it. We have the right, as individuals, to give away as much of our own money as we please in charity; but as members of Congress we have no right so to appropriate a dollar of the public money. Some eloquent appeals have been made to us upon the ground that it is a debt due the deceased. Mr. Speaker, the deceased lived long after the close of the war; he was in office to the day of his death, and I have never heard that the government was in arrears to him . . . .

"Every man in this House knows it is not a debt. We cannot, without the grossest corruption, appropriate this money as the payment of a debt. We have not the semblance of authority to appropriate it as a charity. Mr. Speaker, I have said we have the right to give as much money of our own as we please. I am the poorest man on this floor. I cannot vote for this bill, but I will give one week's pay to the object, and if every member of Congress will do the same, it will amount to more than the bill asks."

Crockett sat down. No one replied. And when the vote was taken, the bill was defeated. The avalanche of approval expected for such a "worthy cause" only minutes before, dwindled into nothingness.

The next day, when challenged by a fellow Congressman to justify his position, Crockett told the following story:

