Most likely from the standpoint of a Democrat, this editorial is a response to the Republican criticism of Obama’s back to school speech. While the speech remained solely motivational and encouraging to the youth, Republicans viewed this to be an intrusive act upon the youth of the country. Some parents went to the extreme of dismissing their children from school on the day of the speech and the author seems to suggest that Obama’s race has fueled the criticism. This article compares Obama’s recent speech to George Bush’s address to public schools and explains that the only skepticism regarding Bush’s speech was the spending of tax dollars, whereas Obama’s speech was scrutinized for imposing his “socialist” beliefs on the youth of America. Though the 14th amendment states each individual’s entitlement to life and liberty, the author makes it clear that Obama’s motivational speech did not in any way infringe upon these rights. However, this article suggests that conservatives are enraged by Obama’s imposing of ideals, therefore overstepping his boundaries as the president. Additionally, as Republicans view the speech to be an exploitation of power, they may also perceive the address to be unconstitutional as it may exemplify the lack of separation of powers by endowing a single leader (Obama) with too much power and authority.

Word Definitions:
**Innocuous**: not harmful or offensive
→ As Obama’s speech to public schools encouraged children to set goals, work hard, and stay in school, the Republican reaction was more so a criticism of the President’s “socialist ideology” than the innocuous motivational speech.
**Nonpartisan**: not biased or in favor of any political group over another
→ Though President Bush’s version of the speech was significantly less scrutinized than President Obama’s, both speeches were very similar in their neutrality and nonpartisan words.


In the fall of 2009, Obama and his administration delivered a speech to all students in public schools to encourage hard work in the hopes of decreasing the drop out rates in the school system. The speech grew to be a highly controversial issue because many conservatives considered Obama’s speech to be part of a political agenda targeting the youth. Though the decision to show the speech was left to school administrators, several conservative parents argued against the schools having authority over that of a parent/guardian. From the Republican standpoint, requiring kids to see this speech is an intrusive act and an unnecessary one as kids may readily view it on the Internet. Other critics argued that taxpayer money should not be used to promote Obama’s “political agenda”. This speech may be perceived as unconstitutional seeing as the president’s words may indeed inflict upon an individual’s entitlement to liberty and freedom (1st
Amendment). The fact that tax dollars were used to influence kids potentially against parental consent may be viewed as unconstitutional in the sense that it may be an abuse of power, which opposes the nation’s principle of the separation and balance of power within the federal system. Though this speech had the intent to encourage and motivate kids, such heavy public scrutiny has resulted in the questioning of Obama’s motives.

Word Definitions:
**Indoctrinate**: to teach a person/group to accept a set of beliefs uncritically
→ Critics of Obama’s speech concluded that the president’s use of tax dollars went to indoctrinating kids, therefore abusing his power as president.

**Unprecedented**: never done or known before
→ Obama’s speech was not an unprecedented one, as George H. W. Bush had delivered a similar address to students, which comparably encouraged hard work; however, Bush’s speech underwent significantly less public scrutiny.


The purpose of Obama’s speech was to emphasize the importance of pursuing an education. However, after the endless criticisms regarding the viewing of his speech in public schools, Americans have questioned the necessity of viewing the speech in classes. This article pertains to the Aiken County where it was decided by School officials that parents are permitted to choose whether they want their child to view the speech or not. The school district’s web forum was filled with hateful messages sent from parents who feared their children would be “brainwashed” by Obama’s speech. Though the schools of Aiken County were not allowed to show the speech unless the teacher related it to the curriculum bring studied, parents remained frustrated. As the speech was viewed by minors, conservative parents of Aiken County have been angered by the potential effects that this speech may have on their children. From the conservative standpoint, the speech may have been viewed as a violation of the 1st Amendment, which states that the government may not influence or pass laws which may conflict with a citizens’ freedom of speech. In this case, “freedom of speech” may equate to a child’s entitlement to his or her individualism, which should not be altered nor swayed by a governmental figure.

Word Definitions:
**Supplemental**: something that may complete or enhance
→ In Aiken County, classes will not view the speech unless the teacher of the class may use the speech to supplement the lessons already being taught in the curriculum.

**Polarizing**: divide, or cause divide between two sharply contrasting groups
→ As Dr. Beth Everitt stated her frustration with the lack of organization with the president’s address, she remained neutral as a County Superintendent for fear of taking sides on an already polarized political debate.
This cartoon depicts President Obama delivering his Back to School Speech on September 8th 2009, which encouraged kids across America to push themselves academically and to set goals for their studies. However, as this cartoon was most likely drawn from a republican perspective, the speech was widely perceived as an “abuse of power”. The fact that kids in the cartoon view the speech as unpatriotic or “un-American” furthers instills the Republican standpoint that the speech was unconstitutional by imposing ideals. As several critics highlighted Obama’s use of tax dollars to fund the address, many parents were enraged that some schools had authority over their own in deciding whether their children would view the speech or not. The matter of the speech abiding by the constitution has ultimately polarized the debate between the democratic and republican parties. One may argue that the president’s address deprives children of their entitlement to life and liberty as the speech may have influenced their way of thinking without parental consent in some areas where the speech was shown without parent approval.