

**Volume 17**

**Number 027**

**A House Divided: (39): Kansas'  
Competing Constitutions - III**

**Lead: One hundred and fifty years ago the Republic was facing its greatest crisis. This continuing series examines the American Civil War. It is *A House Divided*.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: When a territory wishes to become a state, it must among other things submit the results of a referendum requesting statehood and a constitution**

**demonstrating that the state's laws will be follow the United States constitution and legal system.**

**In 1857 Kansas submitted two constitutions, one pro-slavery and one banning slavery from the future state. The latter reflected the will of the vast majority of those residing in the territory. The problem was Congress had to chose which Kansas constitution to accept and Congress was divided with a Democratic Senate dominated by pro-slave southerners and a House divided between free soil Republicans and Democrats split North and South on the slave issue.**

**In early 1858 President Buchanan caved into the South and submitted the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution with a recommendation that Kansas come into the Union as a slave state. Leading the opposition to this in Congress was Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas. He had come up with the idea of majority determination on the question of slavery and if Congress so ignored the clear will of Kansas free-state majority, his idea would have been meaningless. With his help, the pro-slave constitution was rejected by Congress, just barely and eventually Kansas would enter the Union as a free-state in January 1861, just as the clouds of war**

**rendered such a non-event.**

**In Richmond, Virginia, this is  
Dan Roberts.**

**Resources**

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