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State Sovereignty: The Last Hope for the Nation?

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With much of America in an uproar over the Obama administration's seemingly constant attack on the free market, ever-encroaching rules and regulations impeding liberty, and the (apparently) deaf ear of many of their Federal representatives, more and more people are turning to exercising their 10th Amendment states' rights.

What was once perhaps regarded as politically "kooky," the 10th Amendment movement has launched into the mainstream as the Congress continues to fall completely out of touch with the folks back home. With the Congress moving forward on pieces of legislation that in some cases are opposed by the vast majority of their constituencies, the frustration levels of the American people have reached new highs. Conversely, Congressional approval ratings are at all-time lows. Having had it with the status quo and being ignored, a sizeable and vocal movement has given up hope on Washington and instead is focusing on their state governments and the State's rights under the U.S. Constitution.

The 10th Amendment to the Constitution states simply, "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." Basically, each state has the freedom and latitude to govern itself and act as an independent agent – even to the point of confronting the Federal government on issues they believe to be in contradiction to the Constitution. Most understand the United States to be just that – "united" states. Historically that is true, but each state is its own entity, has its own identity, and can govern by its own laws. Each state is essentially a sovereign territory, agreeing to be loosely bound with other state by the U.S. Constitution – but not being slaves to central government. Think of each state as a member of the nation's "board of directors" and having the freedom to leave the board if so inclined.

Now, before you think that sounds too far-fetched, just look at the recent statements by Governor Rick Perry (R-TX): "Texas is a unique place. When we came into the Union in 1845, one of the issues was that we would be able to leave if we decided to do that."

Other elected officials have made such statements in recent months; and nearly half of the states have discussed or introduced "State Sovereignty" resolutions and legislation in their state legislatures, reaffirming their intentions to limit ever-encroaching Federal authority and exercising their 10th Amendment rights. Tennessee is among that number as are our neighbors Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama, Kentucky, Missouri, Georgia, and Virginia. These resolutions would have been thought of as nuisance or "crack-pot" bills a few years ago; but the frustration with Washington, D.C., has compelled the citizenry to seek refuge and a barrier from too-big and too-powerful Federal government.

Let's face it: with whom are you more likely to have access – the Congressman or Senator hundreds or thousands of miles away from home – or the State Representative or the State Senator you likely see at church or the gym each week? The answer is a no-brainer. When the legislator has to look the voters in the eye on a regular basis he/she is apt to be much more accountable to the people. Further, you have access to your local government almost equal to that of the lobbyists. In D.C., on the other hand, the lobbyists are constantly surrounding your Congressman while you are back home out of sight and out of mind.

These are the basic reasons for the state sovereignty movement, but there is much more to it. In Montana, for instance, the people are fed up with a number of federal abuses to freedom. One of them is the overreaching arm of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATFE). This agency has become notorious in recent years for an all-out assault on the 2nd Amendment rights of citizens – even targeting licensed gun dealers and haranguing them over the most minor paperwork errors. Thus, the State of Montana passed legislation stating that under the 10th Amendment, Montana firearms manufacturers can build firearms in the state, stamp them "Made in Montana," and sell them within the

state without any additional regulation by the BATFE or any other Federal agency – provided they remain in the state. At the time of this writing, Tennessee has a similar bill being considered. This is just one example, but even those in state government are backing these bills; they see a regular onslaught of unfunded Federal mandates being foisted on the states, leaving local government to figure out how to pay for the new legislation.

It is likely we will hear more about this, as it appears political brushfires are being set across the nation on a scale unseen in the U.S. since the 1860s.