

George Mason's Awesome Idea

When this great nation, The United States of America, was founded (that means created) it began with 13 colonies declaring to the king of Great Britain that they no longer want him to rule over them. He was a pretty bad king. He was so bad, that he sent more soldiers and made more unfair rules to try to control them. But some very brave people in these colonies decided to fight back for their freedom. This fight was called the Revolutionary War. Even though the king was very strong and had many soldiers and ships to fight for him, the colonists were more determined to win and after 7 years of fighting, they did!

But now that they had kicked out the King, they had a new problem. How would these thirteen colonies, who now called themselves states, agree to work together to grow strong and defend themselves from future attacks from other nations? Many felt it was necessary to form a new government that would serve to provide protection and guidance to all those new states.

However, they also knew that the people of these new United States would not tolerate being bossed around by any new rulers who would try to control them like the king had. They would need a set of rules that the people in this new government body would swear to obey and protect the freedoms of the people.

So some very carefully selected men were sent from each state to meet and talk, or deliberate. This went on for a very long time until they could agree on all the words and phrases in this very important set of rules. This meeting is known as the constitutional convention. After 115 days of deliberation, they finally agreed that the rules were good enough to keep their country free and peaceful and strong. They had drafted The United States Constitution.

Two days before they had declared it to be finished, one man, named Colonel George Mason, stood up and shared an idea. He wanted them to add a rule that if the leaders in this new government somehow became as bossy, or tyrannical, as that mean king had been, they could have a way to add new rules that would

make that bad behavior stop. Everyone agreed and wrote that special rule to be a permanent part of the Constitution, which is now known as Article V.

And so, two days after George Mason's awesome idea, 38 men signed the document that is now known as the United States Constitution! In that Constitution is a short list of the duties that this new government is responsible for doing. They are known as enumerated powers. They include dealing with other countries and providing protection with a navy and an army, making sure the states deal fairly with one another, creating money, that would be accepted in all the states to buy things, and providing a postal service (back then, snail mail was the only way to communicate with other people who lived far away, the phone and the internet was not yet been invented!).

The Constitution also made clear that all the other ways that the people of this new nation needed to be served was to be done through governments established by the each state. This power that states declared for themselves is know as sovereignty and many were very reluctant and nervous about forming this national government for fear that it would, at some point in the future, try to take control over the states.

Unfortunately that is exactly was is happening today. The Federal government keeps making decisions and laws for Americans that should be the responsibility of the state governments. They make rule after rule that people should be making for themselves or through permission given to the leaders of our state as well as local governments of our towns and cities. These proper assignments of rule making roles for local, state and national governments is known as federalism.

While the national government is responsible for specific powers listed in The Constitution, our state and local governments have what is known as jurisdiction over all other things. For instance, states are responsible for figuring out how to care for poor people who get sick, our county governments decide on how our schools are run, and your city government gets to decide things like whether or not a new fire truck or ambulance is needed to serve the people in your community.

All levels of government have their own level of responsibility to their people. This is federalism. But the national government has been breaking the rules of federalism and has been making rules they should not make, spending money

they should not spend, and taking too much control over the people they are supposed to be serving. This is why we need to use George Mason's awesome idea to make new rules that will stop their ever-increasing bossiness we call tyranny.

We the people, that means you and your parents, can ask the leaders in your state government to use Article V of the Constitution to hold a Convention of States to propose new rules, called amendments. The states can then have a vote to put them in the Constitution and that will make the federal government stop behaving badly and give us back freedom from rules they never should have made, restoring what we call Liberty!!