

A means to smite the federal Leviathan

The Founders foresaw the need to reinstitute limited government

By Tom Coburn - - Tuesday, February 24, 2015

Throughout my time in Washington, it was my goal to constrain the scope and size of our federal government to that which our Founders intended. There were successes along the way, of course, but the federal behemoth continues to grow almost unabated year after year, election cycle after election cycle. The reason for this is surprisingly simple: It is human nature to attempt to collect as much power and control as possible, and in few places is that more evident than in Washington, D.C.

Our national soul is being corrupted by Washington's unhindered and unconstitutional overreach. Our Founders anticipated the federal government might get out of control at some point, and they gave us a constitutional mechanism to rein it in. It's called a Convention of the States, outlined in Article V of the Constitution.

Too many in Washington have, unfortunately, have forgotten they work for the American people, and that needs to change if America is going to remain a strong, free and prosperous nation. As it now stands, we are a nation mired in massive and growing debt, out-of-control regulation, high taxes and less freedom. Washington cannot and will not fix this — only the American people have the will and power to put America back together.

Although I am a proud conservative, this is not a partisan issue. Politicians and bureaucracies in Washington, D.C. will never voluntarily relinquish meaningful power — no matter who is elected.

If there is one thing Americans have always agreed on it's that government functions best when decisions are made closest to the people. Only through a Convention of States may the clear, unfettered voice of the people be heard and overreaching government be reined in.

This is a movement whose time has come. In 26 states, citizens are working through their state legislatures to file applications to convene a Convention of States, and three others — Florida, Georgia and Alaska — have already passed the legislation necessary to move the process forward. The Constitution requires two-thirds of the states to submit applications for such a convention, and they all must address the same issue.

Some question this process. Despite several hundred applications by states for an Article V Convention since our nation's founding, none have achieved the necessary two-thirds of states in order for a convention to be called. Too few Americans know this remedy even exists, so a key part of this process will be to educate them about the solution the Founders were wise to provide for us.

Others even go so far as to call using the clear language set forth in the Constitution to bring government back to the people unwise or even "dangerous." I could not disagree more.

It is testament to the wisdom of our Founders to have included the Convention of States provision in Article V in the Constitution because they knew someday government might grow too big, take on too much debt and promulgate reams of regulation that stifle American prosperity. There is no question that is the Washington that exists today.

Moreover, the Founders trusted the states and the people to step up and defend their own liberty and sovereignty. So do I.

I'm enthusiastic about the prospects of making this Convention of the States a reality as well as the resonant benefits it will bring to our country. After more than 200 years of nonstop growth, it's clear the federal government is out of control. It's time for Americans to experience a rebirth of democracy designed for everyone's benefit, not just the Washington elites.

This battle is just beginning. It's time to rein in Washington and return power to where it rightfully belongs — with the people.

• Tom Coburn, a former Republican member of the U.S. Senate from Oklahoma, is a senior adviser to Convention of States, a project of Citizens for Self-Governance.

