

Turnabout: Uncle Sam does not know best

Dick Harwood

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Harwood responds to a March 5 editorial.

It might seem strange that the Legislature is considering action to declare Idaho's sovereignty under the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. State sovereignty should be a given.

Yet, it isn't. "Change" is the latest buzzword in politics; that's what President Obama campaigned for when he ran for office and since he took office in January. He wants "change" in the political climate in Washington and "change" in how business is conducted.

Don't get me wrong, change isn't all bad. We go through constant changes in our personal lives and change is often good in politics. But when it comes to states' rights and upholding something as sacred as the 10th Amendment to the Constitution, then the kind of "change" the president is talking about is not healthy.

In my view, we need to get back to the basics of sound government - the blueprint put together by George Washington, John Adams, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin and other framers of our Constitution.

That's why I am sponsoring a joint memorial before the Legislature. Idaho must send a strong message to the president and Congress reminding our national leaders that the federal government was created by the states specifically to be an agent of the states. Unfortunately, over the years the states have become agents of the federal government. We are seeing those dynamics in the form of the Endangered Species Act, the management of wolves and other wildlife, No Child Left Behind, regulation of air quality and other measures.

It's time for the federal government to back off and it's high time for states to control their destiny. Idahoans are perfectly capable of solving Idaho problems. I totally resist the thinking that the president, the Congress and federal agencies somehow possess greater wisdom on issues as they affect states. I am opposed to the federal government's practice of mandating certain actions by states under the threat of civil or criminal penalties, or loss of funding. The memorial seeks to stop that practice.

As legislators, we need to keep fundamental states' rights in mind as we consider the federal stimulus package that recently was approved by Congress and signed by the president. Here are two big problems I have:

- This package appears to be to be an outright assault on state sovereignty under the 10th Amendment.
- I cannot figure out how the nation can spend its way out of a recession. Part of the problem is extended credit, and the president wants to solve the problem by granting more credit. I don't know of many people in District 2 who see that as a winning formula.

Idaho is scheduled to receive about \$1 billion in federal stimulus money and the governor and others are trying to figure how much of that money can be used - and what kind of strings are attached with those federal funds. If the federal funds help plug some holes in the state budget, or delays larger-than-expected budget cuts in programs such as education, transportation or Medicaid, fine. But I'll say "no thanks" if the money goes to federally mandated programs that Idaho does not need or want. I'll say "no thanks" if receipt of those federal funds compromises states' rights, or the provisions under the 10th Amendment.

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