

April 29, 2011

Dear Members of the 10th Amendment Committee,

As you debate the 10th bill to reaffirm the 10th Amendment, it may be useful to recall the context in which Rhode Island signed the Constitution. We were the last of the original thirteen colonies to do so, and our reluctance had much to do with money :

After the Revolution, many Rhode Islanders were in debt – much as the whole country is today – but we had a novel approach to resolving this crisis. Our agrarian forefathers wished to print and circulate paper money in lieu of hard currency. These “soft-money” men believed that so doing would allow them to more quickly dispense with their post-war debt burdens. For a time, our state even tried to require that merchants accept paper money – at par value with hard currency – to conduct commerce. This “forcing act” quickly found its way into court where it was overturned, but not without rancor and subsequent efforts to reintroduce the bill. It finally went down in defeat at the hands of disgusted merchants and farmers who threatened to leave the state should the law be re-enacted. So repulsive were these antics to our neighbor states that they dubbed us “Rogue Island” and threatened to embargo our goods if we failed to ratify the Constitution.

Fast forward to today and the irony can't be lost that the Federal government is awash in debt and trying to print its way out, and Rhode Island has become a petri dish for the Fed's experiments in social-engineering, tax schemes, and all manner of regulation upon our businesses and lives – all of which costs money we don't have. Fortunately, even the most hard-core of Rhode Island liberals are coming to realize that the days are over when the legislature could spend and pander and ingratiate itself to every hand seeking money.

Rhode Island is in trouble. Democrat, Republican, or whatever, unless you've stuck your head in the sand then you know we're grossly over-extended and getting more so by the day. What's the answer? It must come from the people of Rhode Island themselves. But we labor under an ingrained sense of entitlement – a collective inertia. So what better way to jog our State's conscience than to pass a bill reaffirming the 10th Amendment? We, as a State, must reassert that we are beholden to ourselves: “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.”

Reaffirming the 10th Amendment would be a catalyst for the change we desperately need. Please send this bill to the full legislature. Let your colleagues debate the wisdom of our Founding Fathers, and let your debate ignite a ferment of Independent thinking throughout our State. How ironic and fitting would it then be for us, at long last, to turn the tables on our neighbor States and take a stand to help lead our country back from the abyss, instead of into it. You have the power to set the State free. I urge you to seize this moment to reaffirm Rhode Island's Independence!

With Liberty,

Dean Fachon
East Greenwich, RI