Gov. Perry Speaks in Support of States' Rights

Revisits the Tenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Thursday, April 09, 2009

Thank you, Representative [Brandon] Creighton and thank you for taking the initiative to introduce a piece of legislation that I believe will serve as a wakeup call to a lot of Texans.

Here in Texas, here in the capitol, we typically spend more time talking about the Texas constitution, but it is definitely time to talk about the U.S. Constitution and the protections it guarantees.

I am here today to express my unwavering support for efforts all across our country, but, most of all, here in Texas, to reaffirm the states' rights affirmed through the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

I am in favor of the clear, bold step represented by HCR 50, introduced by Representative Creighton, and co-authored by Representative Guillen. It's clear that this is not a partisan issue: it concerns all Americans, and all Texans.

The Tenth Amendment was enacted by folks who remembered what it was like to be under the thumb of a distant, all-powerful government. Unfortunately, the protections it guarantees have melted away over time.

You are probably familiar with the old adage about how to boil a frog…you just ease the heat up a little bit at a time, so the frog doesn't realize the danger it's in, until it's too late.

Since the U.S. Constitution was first ratified, the federal government has slowly, steadily and successfully eroded the notion of state’s rights. The Founding Fathers understood that a one-size-fits-all approach just doesn't work, especially in a country the size of America, and it certainly doesn't work for Texas.

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Our economic strength, compared to the federal budget mess and other states’ troubles, is evidence that Texans know what’s best for Texas. We’re proof that good things happen when governments lower taxes, reduce spending and encourage private sector growth.

When Washington interferes with our proven approaches, experience tells us what the outcome will be, and it isn’t pretty.

Like the Constitution and the other 26 amendments, the 10th Amendment has been the subject of extended debate, by scholars and lawyers of every sort, but I come down on the side that favors state’s rights over unrestrained federal power.

I believe the Constitution does not empower the federal to override state laws without restraint. I agree with Texas’ 7th governor, Sam Houston, who once said, “Texas has yet to learn submission to any oppression, come from what source it may.”

We didn’t like oppression then and we certainly don’t like it now.

I believe the federal government has become oppressive in its size, its intrusion into the lives of our citizens, and its interference with the affairs of our state.

Texans need to ask themselves a question: do they side with those in Washington who are pursuing this unprecedented expansion of power? Or do they believe in the individual rights and responsibilities laid out in our foundational documents?

Texans need to stand up and be heard, because this state of affairs cannot continue indefinitely.

Returning to the letter and the spirit of the U.S. Constitution, and its essential Tenth Amendment, will free our state and, ultimately, strengthen our Union.

Regardless of your party affiliation, that is a goal we can all embrace.

Thank you all for being here and may God continue to bless the great state of Texas.