

# Freedom Matters

A News & Opinion Paper

Dane County, Wisconsin

Preserving Property Rights

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*Our republic limits government to securing individual unalienable rights to life, liberty, and property. These rights are eroded by legislatures, and by courts complicit with them. To encourage wise jurists and journalists to help, Freedom Matters dedicates itself to the fight to restore that republic.*

## A Renewed Challenge

by Michael Byrne

The results of the election a few weeks ago have made the mission of Freedom Matters more important than ever. New left-leaning majorities-- nationally and state-wide in the Wisconsin Assembly-- will bring a fresh assault on property rights and possibly the end-game strategies in the plan to eliminate rural township authority. We have been warning for some time in our pages that some officials consider town governments to be redundant and obsolete. For the first time in our modern politically-correct world the majority rule party has the opportunity to eliminate town government forever. They have the opportunity to take decision-making authority away from farmers and businessmen holding the lands in question and give that authority to people sitting at desks miles and miles away.

This pivotal power-grab will not go without a fight; we at Freedom Matters are committed to that fight. We will not be satisfied with a town government in-name-only situation which delegates to the towns the responsibilities for snow-plowing and vote collecting. Surely there will be fiscal arguments resting on consolidation of services, analysis put forth as justifications for these maneuvers. However, we believe many other responsibilities delegated to townships under the Wisconsin constitution are important enough to maintain. Land use and all of its implications are critical to the future of Wisconsin's rural towns and Wisconsin's rural townspeople. Counties cannot be relied on to control rural township land use decisions because they, by definition, will always act for their own benefit.

Far too many counties and now, Assemblymen, have bought into the anti-sprawl, no-growth agenda. This has resulted in a property rights nightmare for many rural landowners. Not only have they been impacted negatively for their personal finances, they have also had painful consequences imposed upon them that have resulted in splitting up families and family businesses. Even the townships have seen their financial balance sheets hurt because they cannot count on any increase in property tax revenue.

Our governor is already warning that hard times are ahead for the state. How ironic, in view of the fact that

out of the other side of his mouth and those of his strategic partners in the Wisconsin Legislature are statements threatening higher taxes on all the businesses and corporations operating in our state. The implications of this open contradiction are clear: if they won't get more money coming downhill to the townships and less money to the counties, then those who claim that belt-tightening must include consolidation schemes will be insisting there are no other options available. Beware, towns! They are coming for you.

From our point of view at Freedom Matters, this is a public education challenge. Anyone who lives in a rural area and hopes that they and their descendents can continue to do so can still vote to protect their future. If they do not, their backyard and indeed all of America's backyards, will be controlled by a city-first, city-only agenda. In future issues, we will be listing the ways we can mount a resistance.

Here is a slice of the Wisconsin Towns Association web page, which will help illustrate the legal basis for Wisconsin's 1,259 towns:

*Legal Framework of Towns: Towns are "general purpose" local governments, which means that they provide basic services used daily by all residents (Wisconsin also has "special purpose" governments that offer more targeted services, such as school districts). The major duties and powers of all towns are spelled out in Article IV, Section 23 of the Wisconsin Constitution, Ch. 60 of the Wisconsin Statutes (which pertains specifically to town governments) and Ch. 66 of the Wisconsin Statutes (which applies to towns, villages and cities).*

Ninety-five percent of the land area of our great state is governed directly by people who can attend a town meeting and speak their piece. This is 30.4% of the total state population. *Freedom Matters* will not stand by and permit the disenfranchisement of 1,695,776 residents whose only problem is where they happen to live. Please join with us in supporting the vigorous defense of their rights. Let your representatives know you are watching. Let each other know you are watching. Keep a lantern in the window and do not miss any opportunity to inform your friends and neighbors. The opposition forces are well-organized, clever, and relentless.

Readers' Bulletin Board. e-mail us your comments. Include your name, for publication by *Freedom Matters*

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