

# Freedom Matters

A Weekly Newsletter

Dane County, Wisconsin

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We are a free people in a republic, under a constitution which limits the powers of government to those necessary to secure the unalienable rights of each person to their life, liberty and property. Yet, when a legislature is in session, no one's life, liberty or property is safe. It's the curse of a democracy. That's why we have a republic instead. *Freedom Matters* dedicates itself to the fight to restore our republic. Most of the press and courts fail to do so. They've forgotten that freedom matters.

## Broken Promises, Broken Dreams: 20 Years of "Smart Growth" in Oregon

by Michael Byrne and Bob Bowman

Wisconsin has a new Smart Growth and Comprehensive Planning law. Will it work? It has not in other places. Instead, it is a tool for power grabs by bureaucrats. One witness to this, a man who liked Oregon's original Smart Growth initiatives but is now an opponent, is Larry George, Executive Director for Oregonians in Action (OIA), which he helped develop into the largest and most effective property rights group in the U.S.

George spoke here in Madison at the behest of Citizens for Property and Rights (CPR) — a Wisconsin-based property rights watchdog group — on Friday, November 9 at Jingles Coliseum Bar and Restaurant. In a virtuoso presentation, George pointed out that Smart Growth is not about planning versus no planning. It is about a peculiar and narrow theory of planning, that works to force people out of single family homes into apartments, out of cars into trains, and out of private land ownership into being packed on top of each other in densely populated cities.

George said, "They like to say you are either 'for their system or you are anti-planning. We're not anti-planning, because everybody plans. We just believe that planning doesn't mean that you try to change how everybody lives."

*FreedomMatters* questioned George for our readers.

FM: What will Smart Growth planning do to our state?

George: "Let's talk about the disastrous after effects of the Oregon Smart Growth laws, such as traffic congestion, densely packed and undesirable neighborhoods that drive new home buyers farther and farther away from their place of work (because people want space,) and the skyrocketing price of home ownership."

FM: These effects are starting to appear around Dane county. You need only to station yourself on any incoming artery in the morning and witness the line of cars driving in to work.

George: "That will only get dramatically worse over time."

FM: Is Smart Growth changing cities as well as rural areas?

George: "You should be aware of and guard against the attempt to change the character of existing urban neighborhoods when density standards are revised to comply with the vision of the "smart people." Multi-family dwellings are coming into and forever changing single family home neighborhoods in Oregon cities. New laws prevent a home from being rebuilt, or an occasional empty lot cannot be built upon unless it is multi-family."

George stressed how the legal system with its onerous complexity and enormous costs is the biggest reason that property rights are being eroded. People cannot afford to fight it.

So how does our Smart Growth law compare to Oregon's?

George noted that Wisconsin's law looks like Oregon's law; warm and fuzzy goals, and unwritten promises of "bottom up" planning; i.e., local control. What happened in Oregon? The bureaucrats continually revised their administrative law into ever more restrictive rules, and because of the vagueness of the statutory language, the courts have always upheld the rules.

George's advice: To make Wisconsin keep its promise that comprehensive planning is bottom-up, get that written into the statutes. Otherwise, Wisconsin will go the way of Oregon, and end up with oppressive central planning.

Another idea urged by George is citizen notification. The type of notice allowed by Wisconsin's open meetings law is like a farce: fine print in vague language buried in newspapers. Oregon law now requires that notices of pending land use legislation be mailed directly to property owners; e.g., via the addresses used for mailing the property tax notices. Require these notices to state the consequences of the proposed legislation. That motivates voters, who then motivate legislators not to pass oppressive laws.

Without the security of knowing they own their land and can control it, the citizens of America risk becoming indentured servants to an intrusive and uncontrolled government. Property owners must invest in the political process, or they will be destroyed by it. George urged that all the property watchdog groups stay in touch and act in concert. As confirmed by Paul Kitzmann, president of CPR, that's the purpose of CPR.

## Promises Kept: The American Dream and Veteran's Day

by Michael Byrne

*Freedom Matters* wishes to acknowledge our veterans for all of the sacrifices they made in the armed resistance to tyranny. Regardless of the fact that their own life may have been headed in a completely different direction, veterans answered another, higher call. Working as they did to restore democratic principles in countries where the citizens had lost them, it is our veterans who have come face to face with what happens when a government is not benevolent.

The history of modern civilization is remarkably consistent. Time after time America has shown that our ability to maintain a good economy and improve our living conditions rests on adherence to principle. That ideal of a free society is grounded in personal responsibility and personal rights and yes, personal property. We know of no greater example of love for those principles than a willingness to leave your home and risk death to uphold them!

Wherever freedom has been absent, America has tried to be there. We, at this newsletter, love our government because we know in our hearts that every time we cast our ballots we are part of that government. And we know that on Veterans Day our entire nation draws a collective breath and says "Thanks" to those amongst us who shouldered the ultimate burden for all of us.

Our founding fathers knew that our republic would require constant vigilance. They knew that human nature would present challenges from within to the stability of the system. They counted on citizens to understand the strengths, and they designed a government to assist those citizens to maintain their freedom. That's what *FreedomMatters* is all about.

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

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