

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.

Risk Management: The Nationhood Under Fire By Michael Byrne

When a company tries to look into the future and make some educated guesses about where it will be and what forces will hurt or hinder it we call it "risk assessment." The kinds of programs the company undertakes on the basis of this assessment are called "risk management." Governments ought to do the same. Responsible governments actually do, but politicians, well they're not so interested in long term strategies (unless it has to do with re-election).

The founding fathers did a great deal of risk assessment. They tried to design a governmental system which took into account what they felt were the greatest forces that should be guarded against when maintaining a free and open society. They were quite familiar with the opposite of that because they had just risked their lives to throw off an oppressive government. The principle they held dearest was the concept of representative government.

The vehicle they chose to maintain that was the fair and honest election. Two things have happened in the last few days that cause me to wonder how much longer we will be enjoying the fair and honest election process. The first was the knee-jerk reaction I am hearing and reading about suggesting that one way out of the state of Wisconsin's budget dilemma (read *overspending dilemma*) is to consolidate services and streamline government by boundary modification. That's my new term for the risky practice suggested recently in the *Capital Times* where they featured lobbyists for the elimination of town government.

The second was the almost too-scary-to-contemplate late night assault on the first amendment by the United States House of Representatives, which passed the Shays-Meehan Bill. That bill, under the guise of "protecting the people from evil self-interests," if signed by the President, will be the greatest assault on free speech since men referred to above released their first documents at Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

The first threat of consolidated government will destroy the purest form of democracy we have, the local board accountable to your neighborhoods. The people who sit on those boards have to try their hardest to represent their surrounding neighbors or they

will eventually be voted out of office. **You can still go to your town's board meetings, look these people in the eye, state your case, and expect a response.** How long do you think the population could do this if the representative board were, say, sitting in judgement responsible to thousands if not hundreds of thousands of citizens? How long do you think there would be a feeling by a few hundred people 20 or 30 miles away from 50,000 people that they were fairly represented?!

In the second instance, we have become a society, like it or not, completely dependent on our media sources for news of what our government is doing. If the media outlet (and you pick whatever one you like) decides what is important to point out about this or that government official, and all other parties who may disagree with that viewpoint are shut out of the process, a very dangerous situation can develop. How long do you think any of the world's most infamous dictators would have stayed in power had their activities been exposed early in their political careers?

You as a citizen, unlike the town board situation, don't have much hope of actually getting a chance to sit in front of your federal government representative very often. When you do, it may be a rushed appointment or a crowded listening session. But you can form up ranks with hundreds or thousands of other people who feel the way you do and place your issue squarely in front of everyone (including your elected federal representative) and enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that your viewpoint was exposed. If Shays-Meehan becomes law, that may not be the case.

This is an excellent opportunity for some widely divergent groups to agree upon something. Suppose a particular politician, while in office, has taken the liberty of quietly forming alliances with a very unethical company and is turning a blind eye to some sort of pollution. Sorry, environmentalists, you may not be able to buy airtime close to the election to point this out. On the other hand, perhaps you feel that a particular politician has been espousing some socialist program and you don't feel like paying for it with your taxes because you have information the money is not only misspent but possibly even siphoned off. Once again, you may be shut out of the opportunity to bring this matter to public attention ahead of the election.

This whole bill amounts to "the incumbent's protection act." It is wholly undemocratic. It will require a very stiff spine and some very principled decision making on the part of the executive to veto it. Whether he does will speak volumes about who is running the country.

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