



The Ultimate Power: The People Themselves

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Of America's founding architects, Thomas Jefferson is arguably one of the greatest minds and ardent defenders of liberty and the fundamental rights of man. Yet he was wise enough to recognize that he was not immune from the corrupting effects of governing power.

Jefferson said, "If once they [the people] become inattentive to the public affairs, you and I, and Congress, and Assemblies, judges and governors shall all become wolves ... Cherish therefore the spirit of our people, and keep alive their attention. Do not be too severe upon their errors, but reclaim them by enlightening them."

From textbooks to taxes and everything in between, alarming issues, which hit too close to home, have awakened a sleeping giant. As a result, communities across America have witnessed a more active participation in local government by the people.

While some rolled over and hit the snooze button, many have answered the call to civic responsibility by becoming involved. The inalienable First Amendment right to petition the government for a redress of grievances has been dusted off and asserted. Citizens are beginning to hold their elected officials accountable. They are sincere, they are passionate, and they are engaged in the process. This would make Jefferson proud.

While the outcomes may not always be what some call successful, the real achievement, which must not be overlooked, is the awakening itself. This rebirth is an indication that the people are in the process of rediscovering their individual liberty, personal responsibility and civic authority - attributes of freedom cherished by America's original builders.

Jefferson continued, "The people are the only censors of their governors: and even their errors will tend to keep these to the true principles of their institution...The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right."

The Republic is not won or lost on just one issue. But there is tremendous value in the experience, which will lead to more successful outcomes in future citizen efforts. Extraordinary understanding is gained in the process.

The ability to use the experience as training, along with proper instruction and focused energy, will be the key to success in continuing the experiment in self-governance the original designers began.

In order to keep the unique Republic we inherited, the proper balance of power between the people and the government at the federal, state, and local levels, must be restored as it was originally intended.

Whether our inheritance is claimed or not, We the People, brimming with power and energy, remain the stakeholders in a self-governing society. However, many citizens do not understand the governance process, have been alienated from it in the past, or have given up involvement altogether. To make matters worse, a few in governing positions make it clear they prefer it that way, contrary to America's founding principles.

With daily reports of our basic freedoms being whittled away, many citizens feel more like a cowherd, begrudgingly manipulated by the issues, rather than the governed, from which all power is derived. This, combined with the politically correct speech used by some officials today, does more to divide than unite, contriving a nation of "We the Pieces" rather than "We the People".

Jefferson said, "I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power."

With citizen training in the architect's self-governing philosophy, the original design of limited government can be restored. Proper instruction is the key to demolishing the mind-forged manacles developed over decades. When the shackles are removed, the language of captivity is replaced by the language of liberty.

Jefferson made it clear. The correction will not happen by accident. He stated, "The qualifications for self-government in society are not innate. They are the result of habit and long training."

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