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Our Constitutional Firewalls

Throughout history, government has been a force for good and for evil. Unfortunately, more often than not, government has oppressed the very people it is supposed to serve.

Just consider the monstrous crimes against humanity committed by modern totalitarian “isms” — communism, Nazism, and fascism — during the last century alone. The body count of innocent victims intentionally killed by their own government outside of war numbers in the hundreds of millions.

But government has also been used as a force for good. Such was the case when America’s Founding Fathers created our own government, which has been aptly described as the greatest experiment in liberty in history. Under the U.S. Constitution, the people prospered. They did so because they were free and able to keep the fruits of their labor, as well as to pursue their dreams and happiness without government interference.

The Constitution is maligned in some circles these days as a racist document that only benefits white people, but the accusation is blatantly false. The end of the evil institution of chattel slavery in America, which existed throughout history and throughout the world, was facilitated by the Constitution of 1787, which allowed for Congress to (as James Madison put it) “terminate forever” the importation of slaves to America as of 1808. This is exactly what Congress did. Later, slavery was ended via the 13th Amendment, in the aftermath of the bloody Civil War.

It may at first glance seem incongruous that government can do so much harm, yet be such a boon for humankind. A statement attributed to George Washington explains the seeming paradox simply and succinctly: “Government is not reason; it is not eloquence; it is force! Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master.”

A fire that’s used to heat a home can burn down the house if it escapes the confines of the fireplace and chimney that contain it. The Founding Fathers fully understood this regarding the nature of government. The new government they created possessed enough power to pro-

tect freedom, but not enough power to extinguish freedom. Moreover, to prevent the fire of government from getting out of control, they erected a number of crucial firewalls. Those include a written Constitution limiting the federal government to a few, specified powers, dividing those few powers among three branches of government (the legislative, the executive, and the judicial), checks and balances intended to prevent the branches from exceeding or abusing their powers, and reserving to the states or the people all powers not delegated to the national government by the Constitution.

Over the years the Constitution has served the American people well. Yet there is no question that government has far exceeded its proper authority and that the intensifying inferno threatens to leave America a smoldering ruin. A growing number of Americans realize this and want to bring the fire under control. Yet there is disagreement on how to accomplish this. Many want to control the fire by amending the Constitution via a new convention (the first since 1787), as provided for in the Constitution’s Article V. Others oppose the Article V Convention approach, noting that it makes no sense to change the Constitution, as the problem is not the Constitution, but lack of adherence to it. *The New American*, an affiliate of The John Birch Society, is in the latter camp, and in this Special Report we present our case.

That case includes the fact that, if an Article V Convention is called, the delegates will include not just constitutionally minded Americans but also “progressive” liberals who would use a convention to further their own agenda — getting rid of the Second Amendment, for instance. It also includes the realization that the way to get elected officials to obey the Constitution is to create sufficient understanding among the people who vote them into office.

Even though the Constitution is now being ignored and violated routinely, it is essential to prevent its loss, since when the American people are sufficiently informed, they will bring about its enforcement. But if the Constitution is lost in the meantime, they will have nothing to go back to.

— Gary Benoit