

HJR 2 Proponent Testimony for Michael Margolius

Does the size of government matter?

According to the Foundation for Economic Education, the federal government spent \$11 million in the year 1800 and employed 1900 people. To put that into perspective, the government spent \$16 per person and there was no federal income tax, no payroll tax, no social security tax, and no estate tax and the federal workforce represented 0.03% of the population. By 1920, the federal government spent \$8 billion, had created the income tax, estate tax, and payroll tax, spent \$120 per person and employed 29,000 people. By 2020, the federal government spent \$6.6 trillion, roughly \$20,000 per person and employed 3 million people.

We can all agree that the federal government does one thing very well and that is grow. Historically though, unrestrained growth is a recipe for disaster. From Rome to Persia, Mongol to Ottoman, empires often collapsed from the weight of their own government. Why would America be any different? Wilfred McClay said “the size and scale of a republic mattered. Philosophers such as Aristotle had said that a republic had to be small if it was to maintain itself as a republic. Large nations tended either to fall apart into discord or to be transformed into empires under kings or emperors.”

We were founded on the idea of a small, centralized government with the states holding most of the power. Decentralizing power is what allows liberty, peace, and prosperity to flourish. Decentralization discourages tyranny, violence, and revolutions. Likewise, centralizing power in the hands of the state and local governments grants them the ability to control national powers, causing a never-ending game of checks and balances (i.e. federalism).

All empires come to an end when the individual freedoms of many are controlled and abused by a few. As JB Shurk said, “the milk of tyrants always turns sour”.

The federal government has been subtly stealing states’ powers since George Washington stepped down and somewhere along the way, the states have forgotten who is really in charge and it’s not the federal government.

So, what are we to do? We can bide our time and wait for our number to be called as the next civilization to collapse, or we can do something. The great state of Ohio can join 19 other states in reclaiming its power by passing HJR2. The state legislature can acknowledge the pleas of nearly 120,000 Ohioans and support HJR2.

“The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.”