

# Charleston Gazette-Mail

## Left begins to appreciate limits to presidential power

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“Here’s a basic principle of good government: Don’t endorse a government power that you wouldn’t want wielded by your worst political enemy,” wrote Trevor Burrus of the Cato Institute’s Center for Constitutional Studies. “Democrats will soon be learning that painful lesson.”

Yes, it is a painful when government authority implements rules without adequate representation from or concern for the people affected, as those who made a living in the coal industry under President Barack Obama can attest.

The president, who infamously bragged of having a pen and a telephone to write and implement executive orders when he couldn’t get the constitutionally created Congress to go his way, has set dangerous precedent for growth of the power.

Now, looking at a fiery and unpredictable Donald Trump as the next president, those who supported Obama’s power grab are suddenly and rightfully concerned of too much power being concentrated in that office. But to be fair, Obama was not the first president to overreach.

“Every president expands the power of the presidency,” said Neal Devins, a law professor at the College of William & Mary, as reported by Washington Post Senior Editor Marc Fisher. “This is a constant pattern. They never shrink the presidency. A President Trump could say, ‘I’m going to use the Obama playbook,’ and go pretty far.”

“A president who might act unilaterally was one of the chief fears expressed in the original debates about the Constitution,” Fisher wrote. “The system of checks and balances — giving Congress the authority to make laws and decide how money is spent, and giving the Supreme Court the last word on what laws comport with the Constitution — was supposed to rein in the president.”

How did the office grow so big that the expectations — and responsibilities — expand to deity-like proportions?

“The vision of the president as national guardian and spiritual redeemer is so ubiquitous it goes virtually unnoticed,” wrote Gene Healy in The Cult of the Presidency. “Americans, left, right, and other, think of the ‘commander in chief’ as a superhero, responsible for swooping to the rescue when danger strikes.”

Perhaps now people on the left, right and middle will reflect on American history and realize the Constitution's authors, having experienced life under King George III and being well aware of the dangers of unbridled executive power, can work together to restore the system of checks and balances created in our Constitution and rightfully limit the powers of the president.