



Some Parts of Government Should Be Shut Down Forever

By: Daniel J. Mitchell - Oct 08, 2013

I realize we're in the middle of a government shutdown and there's a debt limit deadline rapidly approaching, but I'm not going to write about fiscal policy today.

Instead, I'm going to share a story about evil and stupid government policy. I guess you could say this is part of my why-decent-people-should-be-libertarian series. Previous editions – all of which highlight examples of innocent people having their lives turned upside down by the state – include these horror stories.

Now watch this powerful video from the Institute for Justice and see whether it's also an example of heartless and oppressive government.

The answer – if you believe in fairness, decency, and the rule of law – is that this definitely belongs on that list. What the federal government has done to the Dehko family is utterly despicable and a horrifying episode of thievery.

Just as other examples of bureaucratic theft should get us upset.

In the case of the Dehko family, they got in trouble (notwithstanding the fact that they did nothing wrong) because of so-called anti-money laundering laws.

These laws were instituted beginning about 30 years ago based on the theory that we could lower crime rates by making it more difficult for crooks to utilize the financial system.

There's nothing wrong with that approach, at least in theory. But as I explain in this video, these laws have become very expensive and intrusive, yet they've had no measurable impact on crime rates.

As you might expect, politicians and bureaucrats have decided to double down on failure and they're making anti-money laundering laws more onerous, imposing ever-higher costs in hopes of having some sort of positive impact. This is bad for banks, bad for the poor, and bad for the economy.

So we'll see more people victimized, like the Dehko family.

Which brings us back to the beginning of this piece. At what point do well-meaning people connect the dots and conclude that government is a danger to liberty?

And when you draw this obvious conclusion, isn't it time to become a libertarian?

This doesn't mean you have to be a pot-smoking, Rand-quoting stereotype. Instead, it simply means that you have a healthy distrust of unlimited state power and you think individuals should have both the freedom and responsibility to manage their own lives.

To see where you stand, here are a couple of quizzes.

A just-for-the-fun-of-it quiz I put together involving pot, police cars, and a tractor.

A thorough quiz on libertarian purity.

Last but not least, if you decide to be a libertarian, I hope you can figure out how to make our cause more popular.