

Bigger government means smaller citizens

By: Mark Landsbaum – June 8, 2013

Liberty contracts as federal authority expands.

We lost track of where we left off counting the reasons for small, limited government. It may have been at No. 421.

Let's pick up the count at No. 422. A small, limited government wouldn't do what the IRS did to the nonprofit Freedom Watch organization and its donors, which government bureaucrats said was acting too political. When the IRS was publicly challenged about its ideologically inspired audits, the tax collecting agency declined to comment and cited taxpayer confidentiality.

Only a government grown too big can claim it is trying to protect you by refusing to explain to you why it hurt you.

No. 423: The IRS not only targeted Tea Party and conservative groups with audits, it also singled out Christian ministries, including the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Billy Graham? Really?

The IRS even demanded the Coalition for Life of Iowa tell government auditors what they had prayed for and insisted they pledge not to protest abortions at Planned Parenthood clinics. At least a couple of constitutional rights were trampled there. To coin a phrase, any government big enough to take your money is big enough to tell you what you may do with the money it doesn't take. Call this one, No. 424.

No. 425 is illustrated by the virtually unaccountable National Labor Relations Board, which has been declared null and void by two federal appellate courts, acknowledging it operates without a quorum.

A government is too big when it thumbs its nose at a writ of mandamus, a direct court order, and proceeds nevertheless to persecute a private company, Cablevision, by making costly demands, and requiring the firm to spend "massive resources" to defend itself against a run-amok government agency.

Another reason to detest big government is illustrated with No. 426, when government drives people like cattle to places they otherwise wouldn't go, simply to avoid state taxes and regulations. As the Mercatus Center at George Washington University points out, "Americans value freedom," which explains why areas are thriving in Houston and Dallas, while areas with burdensome taxes, regulations and high government spending, like St. Louis and Milwaukee, rank in the bottom 10 for job growth.

Similarly, the 427th reason small, limited government is preferable was illustrated by a recent Cato Institute study that found high-tax regions, which are necessary for bigger

government, from 1980-2007 were vastly surpassed in population growth by the 10 lowest-tax metro areas. Clearly, what grows best in highly taxed areas is government.

Advocates of big, limitless government twist reality to fit their self-serving worldviews. That takes us to the 428th reason to prefer small, limited government. With inverted logic, big government advocates unreasonably insist that high earners should pay even more of federal income taxes than they already do.

This is despite the fact that the top 20 percent of earners already pay almost 70 percent of all federal income taxes. The bottom half of earners pay about 2 percent of total taxes. Some even get "refunds" of other taxpayers' money in the form of credits, a perversion of the language that makes the IRS a source, rather than a collector, of income.

Small, limited government should be preferred not only at local, state and federal levels, but internationally too. Reason No. 429 demonstrates this truism.

Big, less accountable government is perfectly willing to send its own peoples' money around the world to other would-be big, unaccountable governments. Foreign aid is a faux charity that ignores economic reality. Few people aware of reality would write a personal check to an undeveloped country's government. Big government writes those checks without blinking.

A World Bank study showed foreign assistance undermines "the quality of political institutions in recipient countries through weakened accountability of political actors, more corruption, greater chances of conflict and a weakening of the incentive to reform inefficient institutions and polices," writes Christopher Coyne, associate director of the F.A. Hayek program for advanced study in philosophy, politics and economics.

Ultimately, we get the government we deserve. A lack of vigilance and an abundance of indifference result in bestowing authority that is likely to be abused in proportion to the expanse of that authority. Power corrupts. As we note often: no one should be surprised when giving someone else power over them that the power is used.

This next point may anger you. For the most part, this oppressive, intrusive, costly and inefficient government is what you want.

If you didn't want it to be like this, you wouldn't have blessed its expansion by your silence. The founders didn't do that. They rid themselves of a government they didn't want and created a government they did want. We've created one we want by not doing what's needed to prevent it.