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# Libertarian to government: Back off

*By Jessica Goodman Staff writer*

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Pop history quiz: What are the last two amendments of the Bill of Rights, part of the United States Constitution?

Amendment 9: The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

Amendment 10: The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

The two amendments were a big focus in the talk by Robert Levy, chairman of the Libertarian Cato Institute, on Saturday in the Hendersonville High School auditorium. The talk, organized by Henderson County's 9/12 Project, focused on "Expanding Government, Losing Liberty."

"What is the proper role of government?" asked Levy. "Libertarians view the powers of government very narrowly and the rights of the individual very broadly."

The ninth and 10th amendments are important, explained Levy, because they limit the amount of power given to the federal government and protect innumerable rights of the individual. The Libertarian view is to read the Constitution as the words are written, not to be interpreted by "the intent" of its creators nor to flex its structure to current times.

"If the power isn't there (in the Constitution), it means (the government) doesn't have it," Levy said.

Students from Henderson High School's Advanced Placement Government class, taught by Alan Broadhurst, asked tough questions to Levy, including addressing the constitutionality of the current health care reform and same sex marriage.

On the health care bill: It's not allowed under the Constitution, according to Levy: "The Social Security System and the health care system are unconstitutional." Levy added it was not a question of "whether it is a good idea," but whether the systems are allowed to be formed by the federal government under the Constitution.

On same sex marriage, he said it's unconstitutional to ban it: "The states, by prohibiting the marriage of same sex laws, are violating rights provided by the Constitution." Levy explained he felt marriages should be "a private, civic arrangement." He also felt schools should be private institutions.

"Government is not in the rights-granting business," said Levy. "It's in the rights-protecting business. Whatever power it gets is from the consent of the people."

The 9/12 Project is "a non-political movement designed to bring us all back to the place we were on Sept. 12, 2001. The day after America was attacked, we were not obsessed with red states, blue states or political parties," according to the project's brochure.

"We really came together as a group of strangers," said Marcia Ballard, coordinator for the local organization. "We had a mutual concern for what's going on in this country."

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," quoted Levy during the talk. "That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

"We don't tell people how to think or talk," added Ballard. "We have people think for themselves."

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