

4. POLICY POSITION

URGING SUPPORT OF THE FEDERALISM SUMMIT

BACKGROUND

All across the country state lawmakers have felt the federal government has become overly centralized, overly burdensome, too big and out of reach of the people. It is time that the issue of state sovereignty was taken seriously. The federal government has assumed a vast and unprecedented set of powers that are antithetical to both the letter and the spirit of the Constitution. It is time for the divisions of power between the state and federal government to finally be addressed.

More than 15 states have passed resolutions affirming the validity of the 10th Amendment, which reads: "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."

In the past decade, the U.S. Supreme Court has endorsed a broader view of states' rights. Nevertheless, as the courts grapple with constitutional questions, state lawmakers want to redefine the relationship between Washington and the states. There will be increasing pressure on the Congress to take a narrower view of the federal government. This is partly in recognition that the courts cannot do it alone.

States' legislators and governors are encouraged by the recent developments on the federalism front but are wary of relying on Washington. It is time now to shift our focus away from the process to force real change but instead focus on substance. The purpose and goal should not be to eliminate one's power but instead balance the power.

RECOMMENDATION

A gathering of state leaders is scheduled for October 1995 in Cincinnati, Ohio. The Federalism Summit is intended to assess the current status of states in the federalism system and set priorities to strengthen their role into the next century.

The Southern Legislative Conference strongly supports the scheduled Council of State Governments' Executive Committee and Federalism Summit and urges its legislative leaders to participate.

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