

Why bother? What is the value of a “Constitutional County” resolution if it doesn’t have legal teeth to defy State mandates?

This is the question that I have been asked the most since Cattaraugus County passed the Constitutional Resolution.

And I am sympathetic with all who ask. Like you, I too wish that the situation was as easy as “Pass one resolution and we are back to normal” or “Pass one resolution and we can be free from Albany and D.C. and their iron fists.”

But the situation is not that simple.

For years and years, We the People have been either been uninvolved or naively trusting our government to be good and decent. And all the while, the government at the State and Federal levels and in bureaucracies and classrooms everywhere have become populated with BAD IDEAS. Progressive ideas. We no longer live in a nation that is beloved by the majority of its people. We no longer live in a nation in which most of the citizens understand that the government governs at the consent of the people and that government is to be limited and restrained. We now live in an era in which people look to the government as a solution to their problems. Instead of recognizing that government exists to secure our liberties, we approach government as something above us, an entity from which we must ask permission to live our lives and run our businesses and raise our families.

It is very distorted from what it is supposed to be.

As a society we have become ignorant about the proper role of government and the proper position of the People. In our ignorance, chains have been forged through decades and decades of funding in the form of state aid and federal grants. **Funding is the heart of the reason why unhitching from Albany and D.C. will take great grit, persistent education efforts, and commitment at both the citizen and the local government level to identify creative ways to divorce from the dependence on funding.** It’s not just the State and Federal government that is standing in our way. It is the naivety and ignorance of ordinary people everywhere, including the communities in which we live. We must proclaim a great message to convince our communities to change the way we interact with the state and federal government. And we must do so within the rule of law.

When someone asks the common question, “Can Cattaraugus County ignore the State mandates since it passed a Constitutional resolution?” the answer is “no.” The resolution does not have the legal teeth to ignore the mandates.

What good is it then?

There are two answers. The first answer is this: Words matter. Ideas matter. The statements we use to frame the situation will season our efforts as we move forward. A cohesive statement of ideals – which the resolution is – gives us a vision and a reminder that we are in this for the long haul. It is the hook upon which we hang our efforts, and it is the message by which we educate and recruit others to prepare to take the next steps. The next steps – if a broad enough coalition is built throughout the State – will be to nullify and peacefully disobey mandates that are unreasonable and unconstitutional. Our efforts at this moment, however, must be to build that coalition. It must be to reach out to our fellow citizens and

educate them with the beautiful message of liberty. It must be to encourage rural legislatures and boards of supervisors to join with Cattaraugus County.

The second answer is: The resolution is only as good as our efforts make it. Will we be a people that press on? Will we be a people that think clearly and strategically and understand that we need to have great wisdom and a long view of what we are trying to accomplish? Will we be smart and courageous and good? Will we craft our arguments well? Will we graciously and persuasively speak to those around us – at work, at home, at church, at school, at stores and businesses – about the frail jewel of liberty we have inherited? Will we run for that school board position? Will we run for local and county offices? Will we attend those local meetings and make our voices heard?

Will we show up and get involved even when we are the only one doing so? Will we continue on even when we are bone-weary and dog-tired? Will we keep our wits about us and refuse to be baited into violent behavior?

My friends, the resolution is the beginning.

The rest is up to us to stand up and to speak up – alone if necessary – and always strategically, wisely, and persuasively.

There is a lot of hard work to do.