



Trying to Secede? Don't Waste Your Time

I don't know who thought of the scheme that allows citizens to petition the Federal government to allow their state to withdraw from the Union. But whoever it was sure came up with a dandy way to get a lot of good patriots spinning their wheels, wasting their time and pouring a bunch of money down the drain.

On the surface, the pitch sounds pretty appealing. Anyone who can get 150 signatures on a petition can put it on the White House website [We the People](#). The website promises: "If a petition gets enough support, White House staff will review it, ensure it's sent to the appropriate policy experts, and issue an official response." What qualifies as "enough support"? A minimum of 25,000 signatures.



Thus far, petitions to allow a state to secede from the union have come from all 50 States. Texas is leading the tally, with 118,430 signatures submitted as of December 3. But six other States have also passed the 25,000 test: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

As far as I can determine, the White House hasn't issued an "official response" to any of them. As of this writing, there are 146 petitions on the website. Some 66 of them are requests for secession. (Yes, some lucky States have more than one.) And while the White House says it has responded to 82 petitions, none of the secession ones have made the list. It seems there's a little avoidance going on.

It's hard to quarrel with some of the assertions made in the various petitions. Consider this from the one from Texas:

"Given that the State of Texas maintains a balanced budget and is the 15th largest economy in the world, it is practically feasible for Texas to withdraw from the union, and to do so would protect its citizens' standard of living and re-secure their rights and liberties in accordance with the original ideas and beliefs of our founding fathers which are no longer being reflected by the federal government."

Of course, not everyone in Texas wants to be part of the secession movement. A group from El Paso, Texas, has submitted a petition that would allow the city to secede from the State. "El Paso is tired of being a second-class city within Texas," the petition declares.

Eager to get in their 2 cents' worth, some residents of Houston have submitted a petition stating that secession-minded Texans "are mentally deficient." This group is asking for "more education in our state to eradicate their disease."

Hmmm, are things about to get nasty in the Lone Star State?

Since anyone can submit a petition for just about anything, some pretty weird things can get posted.



Written by [Wallis W. Wood](#) on December 3, 2012

One petition called on President Barack Obama to “do the Hokey Pokey on national television.” That one got removed before it could garner anywhere near 25,000 signatures.

One that achieved the required minimum asks to “Deport Everyone That Signed A Petition To Withdraw Their State From The United States Of America.” As someone remarked, that sounds sort of like kicking a prisoner out of jail for trying to escape, doesn’t it?

Another petition demands that states be required to pay their portion of the national debt before being allowed to secede. Since neither the States nor individual taxpayers are legally liable for money the Federal government has borrowed, it’s hard to see how this one could be implemented. No matter; the federal government already has plans to extract as much money as possible from any American who wants to surrender his citizenship.

Since many signatures are just a first name and initial, there is no way to confirm their validity — or even that they are residents of the states whose petition they signed.

But please don’t misunderstand me: I’m not going to argue that the secession petitions need more oversight. I don’t believe there is any way to make them more practical or to increase their effectiveness. Nor do I dismiss them as just a mildly amusing distraction.

No, I think this petition movement is actually hurting the cause of liberty. It’s taking time and money away from efforts that could make a difference and channeling them into something that is simply a dangerous waste of both.

Does anyone anywhere really believe that petitions on a White House website will achieve anything positive in the battle for liberty? C’mon, folks. Those of us who believe in limited government — who want to see government spending reduced, not taxes increased — know we’ve got some mighty battles in front of us. Let’s focus our efforts where they have some chance of affecting policy, not fritter them away on meaningless efforts.

Yes, I know that the results of the last elections were somewhat discouraging. But this November wasn’t the most depressing election of my lifetime. That watershed event occurred 48 years ago, when Lyndon Baines Johnson crushed Barry Goldwater by a far bigger margin than when Obama beat Mitt Romney.

The nomination of Goldwater at the Cow Palace in San Francisco was an incredibly symbolic event. Conservatives had wrested control of the Republican Party from the East Coast establishment — the so-called Rockefeller Republicans who had controlled it for decades.

We’d done it by going outside of traditional party channels. Our weapons weren’t ballots, at least at the beginning. No, they were alternative methods of communications: films and filmstrips, meetings in living rooms, and small paperbound books that we distributed by the millions. Remember *A Choice Not An Echo* or *None Dare Call It Treason*? Some of you probably still have copies stuck in a box in a corner of your basement or garage.

Remember, these were the first elections following the assassination of John F. Kennedy. In those emotion-filled days, it’s not surprising that the Democrats won the White House in a landslide, along with big majorities in the House and Senate.

For a conservative, it was disheartening to see what followed: massive new social programs as LBJ tried to build what he called the Great Society, plus huge increases our military presence in Vietnam. The results led to some of the most bitter divisions and nastiest confrontations this country has ever seen.



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But in time, the pendulum started swinging back. Conservative defeats in the 1960s and '70s led to some victories in the '80s and '90s. Granted, all we've been able to do so far is slow the growth of government; we haven't gotten strong enough to reduce the size and power of the Federal behemoth.

But if we abandon the battlefield, we never will. If there were ever a time to stay the course and even redouble our efforts, this is it. Let's pick some battles where we can expect a sizable number of our fellow citizens to be on our side — not ones that will drive them even farther away from us.

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