



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on May 11, 2010

Lawmakers Launch 10th Amendment Task Force

As the Tenth Amendment movement to restore constitutional principles in government gathers momentum, a group of Republican Representatives in Congress announced the formation of a new task force to defend state sovereignty from increasingly overbearing federal encroachment.

“The Task Force will develop and promote proposals that aim to disperse power, decision-making, and money from Washington back to states, local governments, and individuals,” the Task Force, part of the conservative Republican Study Committee, noted in a [statement](#) released late last week. “More than ever, Americans are expressing frustration at having important facets of their lives controlled by a government that is out of reach and out of touch.”



The effort was launched by 10 GOP members of the House of Representatives “in response to the public outcry over the concentration of power and the one-size-fits-all solutions from Washington.” According to the [press release](#), the Task Force will focus on monitoring threats to Tenth Amendment principles, making federalism a core focus of the Republican Party, and educating Congress and the public.

“When federalism is out of balance, people get hurt,” explained Task Force founder Rob Bishop of Utah at a [press conference](#) last week. “We want to empower state and local governments.” In a [statement](#) posted on his congressional website, he added: “This is not yesterday’s states’ rights argument. It’s much bigger than that. This is about better governance and breaking up big, inefficient, unresponsive government — returning power back to the people of this country.”

All of the other co-founders also offered similar statements about the Task Force in a [press release](#). The key themes and ideas expressed by the lawmakers include the federal government’s absorption of too much power in violation of the Constitution and the intent of the Founders, the fact that issues are best addressed at the state, local, and individual levels, and the desire to shrink the scope of government back to its enumerated powers becoming an increasingly serious force in politics.

The co-founders for whom data is available generally rank much higher than the House of Representatives’ average 31 out of 100 on *The New American’s* [Freedom Index](#), which rates members of Congress according to their votes on key constitutional issues. The highest score among them was a 79 by Representative Scott Garrett of New Jersey, with the lowest rating — 64 — coming from Michael Conaway of Texas. The average score was about 71.5.

The 10 representatives who founded the Task Force are Rob Bishop (UT-01), Marsha Blackburn (TN-07), Jason Chaffetz (UT-03), Michael Conaway (TX-11), John Culberson (TX-07), Scott Garrett



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(NJ-05), Doug Lamborn (CO-05), Cynthia Lummis (WY-At large), Randy Neugebauer (TX-19), and Tom McClintock (CA-04). But the conspicuous lack of Democratic Representatives has some veteran Tenth Amendment champions very concerned.

“My concern with the Task Force is that it’s made up only of Republicans, so it gives the impression that those who support the Tenth Amendment are only people on the right,” said Michael Boldin, founder of the non-partisan [Tenth Amendment Center](#), which works to educate the public and nullify unconstitutional federal laws at the state level. “My question is; what will they do to bring people from the left over to advancing the Constitution?” Some of the issues that could attract liberal support that Boldin mentioned include privacy, national IDs, and the war on drugs.

“If the Task Force refuses to do anything beyond using the Tenth Amendment as a mouth piece to promote conservative ideas, they’re far more damaging to the future of the Constitution in this country than they’ll ever be help,” he told *The New American* in a telephone interview. “It’s important to get the federal government out of everything that’s not in the Constitution, and if these guys are simply talking about healthcare or gun laws, then that’s not helping educate the public on the Constitution itself.”

One Task Force co-founder, however, did address the party issue in his [statement](#). “Supporting the 10th Amendment is not a partisan issue. It is about respecting the boundaries placed on the federal government by the U.S. Constitution,” said Rep. Mike Conaway. “It is my hope that through the Tenth Amendment Task Force, members on both sides of the aisle will be better educated on our founders’ vision for America.”

A spokesperson for the Task Force and founder Rob Bishop also explained that the group will even be recruiting lawmakers from both parties for membership. “Our door is absolutely open,” Melissa Subbotin told *The New American* in a telephone interview. But anybody who wishes to become a member must agree to the fundamental principles set forth by the group, she added.

“This is not a Republican or Democrat ideology, and both sides have something to gain under a federalist revival,” Subbotin explained. “Blue states have a reason to support federalism as much as Red states do. It’s disappointing that people have been trying to pit Republicans against Democrats and Democrats against Republicans.”

While acknowledging that the principles of federalism had become associated with the conservative movement over the years, in the beginning, she said, the ideals were something virtually everybody supported, “That’s one of the biggest problems with partisanship — we’ve gotten away from the common goals that unite us.” The Task Force’s [“Facebook” group](#) had more than 1,500 members at the time of this writing, but it is unclear so far how many “liberals” are backing the effort. All 24 members of the Task Force so far are members of the GOP.

As a new organization, the Task Force has not yet outlined its legislative priorities, Subbotin explained when questioned about the type of issues the group would be working on. But “the members are looking to apply the Tenth Amendment to all aspects of legislation moving forward,” she explained.

The [Tenth Amendment](#) specifically limits the federal government’s authority to the powers enumerated in [Article I, Section 8](#) of the Constitution. “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,” it reads. The [movement](#) to restore the principles outlined in the amendment has grown spectacularly in recent months as [states move to nullify](#) everything from [healthcare mandates](#) and [federal gun laws](#) to the [national identification cards](#) created by the “[Real ID](#)” act. And with the federal



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government growing larger and more intrusive every day, it is likely the resurgence is only going to intensify.



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