



“Second Amendment Sanctuary” Movement Explodes

It’s unlikely that Joe Thoele, a member of the board of Effingham County, Illinois, had any idea that his unhappiness over Springfield’s anti-gun measures would spark a national resistance movement. A year ago [all he wanted to do](#) was send a message to the anti-gun politicians in his state’s capitol: “I would just like to send a statement to Springfield that I don’t want them to be infringing on our Second Amendment rights as legal gun owners.”



Thoele persuaded six of the seven other members of the board to pass a resolution declaring his county (population 34,000) a “sanctuary” county. After all, if political entities such as counties and states could declare themselves sanctuaries for illegal immigrants, why couldn’t they declare themselves sanctuaries for legal gun owners?

Effingham County’s resolution not only targeted a number of anti-gun proposals and laws emanating from Springfield, but also demanded that “the Illinois General Assembly cease further actions restricting the right of the people to keep and bear arms” and that the governor veto any future such bills passed by the state legislature.

When *The New American* covered the initial story, the writer asked: “If Effingham County can declare itself a ‘sanctuary county’, why couldn’t the entire country declare itself a ‘sanctuary country’ where the right to keep and bear arms, protected by the Second Amendment, is not abridged and infringed upon but instead supported and encouraged?”

It looks like it is. Consider: 64 of Illinois’ 102 counties have now declared themselves to be “sanctuary counties” for law-abiding gun owners, while another 26 are entertaining such resolutions. Riding that wave, [Effingham County passed a resolution on Monday](#) banning the state’s FOID (firearm owner’s identification cards) because, according to board member David Campbell, “it’s unconstitutional to require someone to pay a fee for a constitutionally protected right.”

Counties in five other states — Washington, Oregon, Colorado, New Mexico, and New York — have passed similar resolutions. More than half of Washington’s 39 counties have pledged not to enforce the state’s new gun restrictions. In Oregon eight counties have passed Second Amendment Preservation Ordinances confirming the sheriff’s power to determine which of the state’s laws to enforce, or not to enforce.

In Colorado resistance continues to build, with the focus on its new “red flag” law, which directly poses a threat to gun ownership by its citizens. One sheriff, Weld County Sheriff Steve Reams, has promised to go to jail if necessary before he’ll impose it onto any of his citizens, saying, “I’ll do that before I’ll violate somebody’s constitutional rights.” Half of Colorado’s 64 counties already officially oppose Denver’s newly minted law which doesn’t become effective until January 2020.

In New Mexico nearly every county sheriff opposed new infringements of the Second Amendment, and 24 of the state’s 33 counties have already passed sanctuary city ordinances.



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In New York 52 out of the state's 62 counties officially oppose the state's SAFE Act (Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement Act of 2013).

Missouri is trying [for the second time](#) to become a "sanctuary state," now that the state has a Republican governor more amenable to such a move than the state's former Democrat governor. Its "Second Amendment Protection Act" would nullify most federal gun-control legislation with language broad enough to include red flag laws and bump stock decrees from the ATF, but also the National Firearms Act of 1934 and the Gun Control Act of 1968. The bill that is pending also removes any immunity an employee or official of the state might otherwise have from being sued for damages by a citizen whose rights were violated by him or her.

Practically speaking the states would be hard-pressed to enforce their laws anyway. Many of them can't even pay all their bills, much less make the required contributions to their state pension and healthcare plans. Their law-enforcement agencies already have their hands full keeping the peace in their big cities (think San Antonio, Los Angeles, Chicago, etc.).

From a constitutional perspective, James Madison foresaw the threat of an overweening federal government to the states, and outlined four measures states could use to rein it in. In *Federalist*, No. 46 he wrote:

Should an unwarrantable measure of the federal government be unpopular in particular States, which would seldom fail to be the case, or even a warrantable measure be so, which may sometimes be the case, the means of opposition to it are powerful and at hand:

the disquietude of the people; their repugnance and, perhaps, refusal to co-operate with the officers of the Union; the frowns of the executive magistracy of the State; [and] the embarrassments created by legislative devices ... would form ... very serious impediments; and where the sentiments of several adjoining States happened to be in unison, would present obstructions which the federal government would hardly be willing to encounter.

Joe Thoele may safely be characterized as suffering from "disquietude" over his state's infringements. He proposed a resolution stating his county's "refusal to cooperate" with Springfield. That resolution has elicited howls of protests from Democrats who know they can do nothing about enforcing its demands on a county that won't cooperate. And with the help of other states (i.e., Washington, Oregon, Colorado, etc.) the momentum to nullify unconstitutional infringements continues to build across the land.

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