



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on April 22, 2011

Texas Gov. Perry Preaches State Sovereignty, Seeks Federal Aid

Perry [urged](#) Texans of all faiths and traditions "to offer prayers for the healing of our land, the rebuilding of our communities and the restoration of our normal and robust way of life. Texans have been strengthened, assured and lifted up through prayer; it seems right and fitting that the people of Texas should join together in prayer to humbly seek an end to this devastating drought and these dangerous wildfires."

The fires — raging almost unabated in some parts of the state — have claimed several lives and hundreds of homes and buildings, as well as crops and livestock. Over one million acres have been damaged in the conflagration. Though this year's blazes seem particularly virulent and tenacious, Texas is no stranger to what were once called "prairie fires." This season, the state has already recorded more than 8,000 fires and there are about 1,940 firefighters from 36 states battling the blazes. All but two of the state's 254 counties are presently affected.

And there's nothing odd about asking the Almighty for help. Indeed, that is the first line of defense and the obvious response for any Christian. But there are those who question Perry's other response to the problem.

The Governor has [appealed](#) to President Obama for a Major Disaster Declaration for the state. His [request](#) of the federal government would make the state eligible for response and recovery assistance from Washington including aviation assets; wildland structural and wildland/urban interface firefighting resources; equipment and crews; and emergency protective measures to protect lives and property, etc. The request estimates that the total cost of the firefighting efforts, before cost sharing, will be about \$70 million.

But this is the same Governor who issued a [2009 press release](#) asserting his commitment to Texas' move for sovereignty under the Tenth Amendment, and who in a recent [speech](#) declared,

The system our founding fathers devised through the 10th Amendment ensures states have the flexibility to meet challenges in whichever fashion works best for them. Over the years, the American system has worked exceptionally well, with each state working as its own laboratory and individual engine of innovation and discovery to find innovative solutions to its challenges,





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motivating other states to remain competitive by coming up with their own versions.

Actually, the 10th Amendment says something quite different. It was instituted not to give the states flexibility, but to limit the federal government and protect the individual states from federal interference and overreach. In fact, it was designed for states to practice interposition *between* the central government and the residents of a state for their protection.

The Lone Star State's history includes more than one example of Texans who rejected federal aid. In one notable case after a severe drought in the 1880s, [President Grover Cleveland](#) rightly refused to send federal aid to Texas farmers, observing,

The friendliness and charity of our countrymen can always be relied upon to relieve their fellow citizens in misfortune. This has been repeatedly and quite lately demonstrated. Federal aid in such cases encourages the expectation of paternal care on the part of the government and weakens the sturdiness of our national character, while it prevents the indulgence among our people of that kindly sentiment and conduct which strengthens the bonds of a common brotherhood.

In fact, people in the state responded warmly and generously to aid their fellow Texans who were victims of that drought — as they should in this modern disaster — with the help of God and prayer. As President Cleveland noted, to do otherwise deprives people of their God-given privilege and responsibility to help others.

The infamous 1950s Seven-Year Drought in West Texas set the stage for another display of the independence some have come to associate with Texas, and inspired a favorite regional novel by the late Elmer Kelton. *The Time It Never Rained* tells the story of fictional rancher Charlie Flagg, who stubbornly refused to accept federal government aid to save his ranch during the long drought when his neighbors, one by one, caved in and went on the dole. Charlie Flagg is a hero to many Texans.

While Perry has called for a renewed emphasis on the Tenth Amendment, and has insisted on a limited federal government that honors state sovereignty — yet he petitions for that same government's financial aid in times of crisis.

Texans — and all true Americans — know: You're either sovereign or you're not.

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