

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

President's Message | Glenn Heran | December 2013

"The mission of the Taxpayers Association is to secure those principles that allow liberty to flourish. Chief among these is limited government. The way to accomplish this mission is to limit government to the efficient delivery of essential government services. This will reduce the tax burden of all citizens."

In our continuing discussion of limited government, I believe that Commissioner Bob Solari's recent letter to the editor of the Vero Beach Press Journal below is instructive.

Dear Editor:

In the political arena, a positive development in the past few years has been a renewed focus and local discussion on Limited Government. This began during the Great Recession and has continued as people have planned for the possible sale of Vero Beach's electric utility to FPL.

The most organized groups supporting limited government locally have been the Taxpayers' Association of Indian River County (of which I am a member) and the Indian River Tea Party.

The opposition to limited government has been led by a less cohesive group of progressives who must believe, based on their rhetoric, that limited government is anathema to a well-ordered dynamic society.

To help further this welcome discussion, I would like to give some of my thoughts on limited government.

There is no single answer as to "What is limited government?" Many in the Tea Party focus on "Constitutionally limited government", saying that the Federal Government should limit itself to doing those tasks clearly spelled out in the U. S. Constitution, and leave the rest to be done by the States and local governments.

As a local elected official I continually ask, "What does limited government mean on the local level?" During the Great Recession, Commissioner Wesley Davis described the essence of limited government in the phrase "needs not wants". That is, government should be limited to essential services. But what are the "essential services?"

A good place to start would be those items, which provide for good order that the private sector does not perform well. Law enforcement, roads, emergency services, parks and recreation and libraries immediately come to mind. To these, water and sewer could be added and special projects like cleaning the lagoon, which will not be led by the private sector and will only be accomplished if the government takes an active part.

Additionally, planning and zoning, code enforcement and a select few regulatory activities might be considered essential services but that is about it.

I understand that there are some who will say that my list is already too long. Some might argue that parks and recreation is not a need. My response would be that in our community the majority believes that this is as much a need as roads and an essential part of our community. Some say that sewer and water is not an essential service or at least one that the private sector could supply. The private sector might be able to supply it, but it is doubtful that it could do so as cost effectively as it is now done by the County or with the County's responsiveness to community needs.

Conversely, establishing a government committee for each vocal special interest group, which wants to lobby the government is not consistent with limited government. Four years ago Indian River County cut thirteen unnecessary or duplicative committees. None have been missed, but by sun-setting them the taxpayers have now, by my estimation, saved at least two million dollars.

On the other hand I do not see government contributions to private charities as an essential government service. I believe that it is best to reduce the tax burden on our residents, leave those dollars in the taxpayer's pocket and let the individual resident, not the government, decide which private charity is the most worthy recipient of our their money. The generosity of our residents and success of so many great charities in Indian River County gives me confidence that leaving charity to our residents and not to our government is the proper path to take.

A final thought: most taxpayers in Indian River County manage on limited incomes. They have to make hard choices about what they will and won't do with limited funds. Why should not our governments, paid for by these same citizens, share the same limitations and have to make the same hard choices as the taxpayers?

Bob Solari