

# BACON'S REBELLION

The Op-Ed Page for Virginia's New Economy

A PROJECT OF THE THOMAS JEFFERSON INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

[Home](#)

[The Grapevine](#)

[About](#)

[Wonks](#)

[Archives](#)

[Blog](#)

[The Thomas Jefferson Institute](#)

[Subscribe](#)

## Should Virginia Pass a Sovereignty Resolution?

By [Michael Cecire](#) • Jun 2nd, 2009 • Category: [Feature](#), [Politics](#)

In the face of this current economic crisis, the most popular antidote bandied about by the White House and its allies have been to restore the philosophies of political centralization and the [command economy](#). Despite little actual evidence that deregulation caused the crisis itself or that tougher regulation has tempered the effects of the recession (see: Union, European), the Obama administration has aggressively and speedily deployed massive Federal resources to combat the twin calamities of shattered private industry and red ink-stained state and municipal budgets. With the troubling role being played by political interest groups, unions and bankrupt bureaucracies, George Will has decried what he describes as an [emerging dependency economy](#), where the Federal (and in this case, Democratic) government has the commanding heights over the budgets and continued survival of much of the country's industry and state/local government.

The Federal government's Operation Barbarossa into those provinces that have been historically and some say constitutionally, left to the states has elicited a strong reaction from some quarters. Aside from the frustrated clamor that has been sweeping the nation in the form of the "Tea Parties," lawmakers from across the country have put forward "sovereignty resolutions" to reaffirm their states' right to relative autonomy laid out by the Constitution's Tenth Amendment. Should Virginia follow course? Virginia, an increasingly wealthy state by any measure, would have much to gain from renewed autonomy. Indeed, as Virginia has one of the nation's leading business climates, increased Federal regulatory activity may serve to diminish Virginia's comparative advantage while direct industrial subsidies to heavily unionized states like Michigan and Ohio push Virginia's attractiveness into further obsolescence. So, should Virginia pursue a sovereignty resolution?

The short answer is, in fact, moot. In late February, Central Virginia House Delegate Chris Peace (R) introduced just [such a resolution](#). To date, according to the [Tenth Amendment Center](#), there have been 36 sovereignty resolutions introduced in state legislatures throughout the country, four of which have passed and another eight passed in the respective lower houses (and are awaiting further action).

The Virginia bill never made it to a floor vote and languished in the Committee on Rules. Given the realities in the Virginia General Assembly and Governor Kaine's close ties to President Obama, it was never likely that the resolution would have been passed and signed, much less passed with the weight necessary to overcome a veto, as [was the case in Oklahoma](#). But with Bob McDonnell's formal nomination and surprisingly high favorability ratings compared to his Democratic opponents - as [reported by the Daily Kos](#), no less - federalists (in the modern sense) may have a more sympathetic ear in the Governor's mansion soon.

But does any of this really matter? The truth of the matter is that these sovereignty resolutions, aside from the strong statement they broadcast, are mechanically impotent. While the message just might lend pause to cavalier state delegations to Congress, and perhaps a slight blink to the rapidly centralizing White House, there's very little (if anything) about any of the resolutions that actively enforce Constitutionally guaranteed sovereignty.

To be sure, there have been other ideas explored to formally compel the Federal government to pull back to what many see as its truer Constitutional role. The most prominent of these has been Georgetown law professor Randy Barnett's [Federalism Amendment](#). Based on an [April commentary](#) in the Wall Street Journal, Barnett's proposed Amendment (now subdivided into ten constituent articles) seeks to address the apparent weakness of the Tenth Amendment to enforce the role of federalism in everyday governance while tapping the latent dissatisfaction evidenced by the Tea Party movement.

A read of the proposed Amendment is interesting, to be sure, but the initiative is nothing if not a tall order. The distance between the symbolism of sovereignty resolutions, which have not even passed in a quarter of the states where it has been introduced (and not even introduced in every state legislature) and the substantive heft of the Federalism Amendment project is steep. And although a decent interim solution is found in the Representative John Shadegg's (R-AZ) proposed Federal [Enumerated Powers Act](#), the adamantium blue majorities in the House and Senate renders its passage about as likely as Khalik Sheikh Mohammed shacking up with Regina Spektor.

I'm not sure what the answer is, but what does need to happen is a spirited debated within Virginia about how best to proceed without endangering the Federal largesse upon which Northern Virginia has historically depended. Bob McDonnell, a Northern Virginian, would be wise to start laying down the rudiments of a 'federalism policy' in the event that he is elected, as his victory would almost certainly rely in no small part on the same sentiments that fuel the Tea Party movement.

Ironically, one possible opening may be through the left coalition's social liberalism; by giving ground (inevitable in today's political environment), federalism proponents may be able to trade their support (or non-opposition) for clauses that specifically empower the states. This avenue just might create the critical mass necessary to provide cover for a more robust and Constitutionally-aligned federalism agenda

### BROWSE ARCHIVE

Select Month

### BROWSE CATEGORIES

Select Category

### MORE FROM THIS CATEGORY

- [Defeating EFCA is the Highest Priority for Small Businesses](#)
- [Should Virginia Pass a Sovereignty Resolution?](#)
- [Virginia's Oil and Gas Needs Can be Met Right off our Shores](#)
- [A New Approach to Criminal Justice Reform](#)
- [Turning Tea Party Passion Into Action](#)
- [Which Way does Virginia's Wind Blow?](#)
- [Card Check: Bad Idea at the Wrong Time](#)
- [Time to Speak Up For American Oil](#)
- [This is Not a Purge](#)
- [Budget Cuts and Financial Crisis](#)
- [Archive for 'Feature' »](#)

### MORE FROM THIS CATEGORY

- [Should Virginia Pass a Sovereignty Resolution?](#)
- [This is Not a Purge](#)
- [Virginia Republicans Perform Two Political Abortions in Two Years](#)
- [The State Central Committee Votes for Itself](#)
- [What the Democrats' Stimulus and Shenanigans Mean to Virginia](#)
- [Fix Virginia First - What to do after an economic bubble bursts](#)
- [Presentism in Virginia Politics](#)
- [The Ultimate Tax Cut that can Help President Obama get America's Economy Moving Again](#)
- [Change We Can Believe In](#)
- [Virginia Republicans' Challenge in 2009](#)
- [Archive for 'Politics' »](#)

Search

RSS

 [Subscribe to our feed](#)

### ADS & SPONSORS



Virginia Free: Protecting Virginia's Business Environment

critical mass necessary to provide cover for a more robust and constitutionally aligned federalism agenda in the future. Yet, alas, the fact that defenders of the federalism precedent need resort to such a strategy speaks volumes of the troubling state of our country's skewed political arrangements.



**Michael Cecire** is an economic development practitioner living in the Philadelphia area and working with a New Jersey public investment agency. A former Peace Corps Volunteer, Cecire earned his Bachelor of Science in Anthropology from Virginia Commonwealth University and is currently pursuing graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He has published articles with the London Telegraph, MichaelTotten.com, and TCS Daily.

[Email this author](#) | All posts by [Michael Cecire](#)

---

#### LEAVE A REPLY

**Name (required)**

**Mail (will not be published) (required)**

**Website**

Submit Comment