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Regional planning brings regional governance

By Henry Lamb

So what's wrong with regional governance?

Nothing- unless you value the republican form of government and individual freedom - and detest autocracy in all its forms. Regional governance

evolved as a way to get around the obstacles presented by multiple local governments, all of which may have a stake in the region, but often disagree on what the region needs.

Regional governments, and their initiatives, are driven by government, not by the people.

Government, by its very nature, seeks to increase its power and overcome any obstacle in its path. Local governments, like individual neighbors, often disagree on how best to resolve a common problem. Consequently, governments, especially the executive branch, tend to look for ways to get around the obstacle of disagreement.

One successful method is Regional Governance, which diminishes the power of local governments by conferring increasing levels of authority on the executive branch, which implements its authority through appointed bureaucrats. In very short order, it is the unelected bureaucrats who wield the power; elected officials become little more than a rubber stamp whose approval provides "official" respectability to the bureaucracy.

A classic example of just how this works is available in a report titled: "Regional Governance Districts" produced by the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR). The purpose of the report includes, "...to assist the state in responding to globalization...." The report makes this clarification: "Governance is distinct from government—while government is the traditional

organization of public authority used to provide necessary services, governance is the provision of those services. While the word has been used to refer to service provision by traditional government, it has come to be used to refer more specifically to service provision through a nontraditional approach, such as by a contractor or through a public/private partnership."

Virtually every state now has some form of this new regional approach to governance, which is simply further evidence of how extensively the "administrative" form of global governance has influenced domestic policy.

The Chattanooga Area Regional Council of Governments, which consists of at least at least six alphabet agencies of appointed bureaucrats, has applied for a \$2.5 million grant from the federal government's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program. Before the application is considered, each participating government must sign a Memorandum of Agreement to "develop a shared vision," and to "develop livable communities," and other specific steps, all of which are defined by and must be approved, by the federal government.

The Mayor of the city of Chattanooga has signed this MOA, thereby committing the entire city to conform to the requirements of the federal government in the expenditure of the federal money. The citizens of Chattanooga have no idea that this grant application has been submitted, or what funding of the grant will mean to their individual freedom. They have had no opportunity to express their consent or opposition to this program, and it is unclear whether their elected representatives were even given the opportunity to vote on the application. Sixteen counties and all the municipalities they contain will be

constrained by this grant application, and more importantly, by the 40-year regional plan it produces.

This process creates an administrative form of government which does not require the consent of the governed. Each step in the expansion of this process further extinguishes the republican form of government.

The federal government promotes this transformation of local government into regional administrative units which complies with the recommendations set forth in Chapter 8.5 of Agenda 21, which says: (e) Adopt integrated approaches to sustainable development at the regional level, including transboundary areas, subject to the requirements of particular circumstances and needs; The federal government has been using grants to shape regional governance for years.

The Chattanooga Area Regional Council of Governments has already received more than \$4

million in federal grants in just the last couple of years, and is only one of several regions supported by the federal government. **Citizens in the Chattanooga area, and across the nation, should realize that once these regional administrative units are in place, there will be no way to return to the republican form of government that allows citizens to expect their city councilman or county commissioner to consider their wishes. The consent of the governed will no longer be a factor in public policy. Virtually all human activity will be subject to the approval of a professional bureaucracy that first creates a plan it thinks is a utopian community, and then requires every person to live where the plan dictates; to travel in a vehicle approved by the plan, to a job allowed by the plan – whether you like it or not.**

Freedom cannot exist in an administrative form of governance.

