

December 15, 2016

Honorable Donald J. Trump
President-elect of the United States
Trump/Pence Transition Office
1717 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Honorable Mike Pence
Vice President-elect of the United States
Trump/Pence Transition Office
1717 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President-elect Trump and Vice President-elect Pence:

State and local government officials are proud of their unique role in governing and serving the citizens of this great nation. They recognize that the positions they occupy impose upon them enormous responsibility and confer upon them tremendous opportunity. Moreover, the faithful discharge of their obligations is central to the success of the Great American Experiment.

It was, after all, the people who came to form a more perfect union by creating a national government of limited and defined powers. The grant of specific responsibilities for irreducibly common interests – such as national defense and interstate commerce – was brilliantly designed to make the whole stronger than the sum of its parts.

The genius of American democracy is predicated on the separation of powers among branches of government (*viz.* the legislative, executive and judiciary) and the division of power between the federal and state governments (federalism). The federalism principle is memorialized in the Tenth Amendment, which states in its entirety, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

Under the American version of federalism, the powers of the federal government are narrow, enumerated and defined. The powers of the states, on the other hand, are vast and indefinite. States are responsible for executing all powers of governance not specifically bestowed to the federal government by the U.S. Constitution. In many cases, states delegate a portion of their authority to counties and other local governments. Though local governments are diverse in structure, all are on the front lines of delivering vital services to residents.

The reservation of power to the states and people respects the differences between regions and peoples. It recognizes a right to self-determination at a local level. It rejects the notion that one size fits all, and it provides for a rich tapestry of local cultures, economies, and environments.

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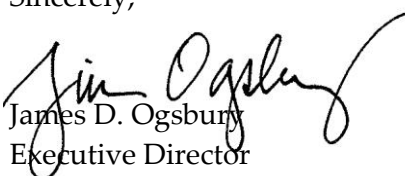
Because of the Constitutional recognition of state sovereignty within our federalist system, state and local governments have been appropriately regarded as laboratories of democracy, regularly engaging in a kind of cooperative competition in the marketplace of ideas. Indeed, state and local governments demonstrate great ingenuity in promoting innovative initiatives for improvement of their economies, environments, and quality of life.

State and local government officials are excited to work in true partnership with the federal government. By operating as authentic collaborators in the development and execution of policy, the states, local governments and federal government can demonstrably improve their service to the public. By working cooperatively with states and local governments, the Administration can create a legacy of renewed federalism, resulting in a nation that is stronger, more resilient and more united. Such an outcome will redound to the credit of the Administration and inure to the benefit of the American people.

Our organizations pledge that we will act as conduits to provide notice of relevant federal action to our respective members so that they may provide this Administration with input regarding such action.

It is in a spirit of bipartisan cooperation, optimism and good will that we offer the following federalism principles for the Administration's consideration and action.

Sincerely,


James D. Ogsbury
Executive Director
Western Governors' Association


Douglas S. Chin
Attorney General of Hawai'i
Chair, Conference of Western Attorneys General


Representative Jeff Thompson
Idaho House of Representatives
Chair, The Council of State Governments West


Commissioner Doug Breidenthal
President
Western Interstate Region of NACo


Matt Morrison
Executive Director
Pacific NorthWest Economic Region