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## Is nation governing at the consent of the governed?

By Tim Dunn  
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Rasmussen Reports recently released a poll that found only 17 percent of likely voters think the federal government has the consent of the governed.

Amazingly, using contemporaneous British records Professor [Paul H. Smith](#) estimated Loyalists in 1776 to constitute a similar 16-20 percent of Americans. In short, the level of support for the federal government today is about the same as the level of support enjoyed by [King George III](#) at the time of the American Revolution.

Further confirmation comes from another Rasmussen poll which found 45 percent of likely U.S. voters agree with the following statement: The gap between Americans who want to govern themselves and politicians who want to rule over them is now as big as the gap between the

American colonies and England during the 18th century.

Why do so many Americans today feel the same way Americans did at the founding, that they are being taxed without being represented, that only a small but powerful minority of loyalists support the central government?

It could be the sense that incumbents are really not accountable to voters. Another Rasmussen poll found that 53 percent of likely U.S. voters think most members of Congress get re-elected because election rules are rigged to benefit incumbents. Only 17 percent believe most congressmen get re-elected because of the good job they do representing their constituents.

Who can argue with this when in a "high turnover" 2010 election Congressional approval was (presumably the same) 17 percent — yet 86 percent of incumbents were re-elected?

Or it could be the use of government coercion against the citizens they are supposed to serve.

King George sent occupying soldiers as an intimidation tactic. Similarly, entrenched politicians and their patronage partners are now in full attack mode, attempting to intimidate citizens trying to peacefully engage in getting the "consent of the governed." Citizens who dare question them are deemed economic terrorists, and systematically blamed for every conceivable ill, recently even alleging they control Standard and Poors' rating decisions.

But I think an even more devastating contribution to the loss of trust in the federal government is the sense that we increasingly are subject to distant "rulers" whom we did not choose.

Witness the recent EPA ruling that would shut down up to 13 percent of Texas' electrical generation capacity. Almost all of Texas is on the same grid, so if a plant near San Antonio shuts down, it affects everyone. Huge electrical cost increases and potential brownouts during hot summer days, and the elimination of over 10,000 direct jobs, and for what?

The federal EPA concludes that sulfur dioxide emissions from Texas plants might affect attainment of fine particulate matter standards in St. Louis. Yet that city now attains the new standard — as does Texas. Further, the [EPAs](#) own modeling shows that Texas emissions do not trigger effects in Missouri or any other state.

So Texans must arbitrarily suffer. But electrical rates in suburban Virginia or Metro DC, where




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these EPA folks presumably live, will be just fine.

Who elected these people? Whom are they accountable to? Certainly not us.

An unresponsive Congress has delegated its constitutional powers to a group of unelected rulers, such as the EPA, who might as well be the [English Parliament](#).

Fortunately, our Founders gave us the solution. The federal government was formed primarily to act as a unifying force, preventing states from engaging in trade wars and other disputes. And the states were expected to keep the federal government from accumulating the sort of monopolistic powers it currently wields.

The solution is for governmental decisions to be made by elected representatives at the most local level possible.

Congress as a whole will not curb the unaccountability of the modern-day aristocratic bureaucracies.

The Texas legislature recently took an important step to restore responsive government when it joined three other states in passing the Health Care Compact. The HCC, when passed by Congress, will allow states to set health care priorities and make regulations that fit their particular citizens. Let the competition begin.

We need our local congressmen to take a heroic stand against entrenched interests to disburse federal power and pursue passage of this and similar compacts.

But it is also vital that elected state and local officials across the nation lead the effort to bring essential political pressure on incumbent congressmen (and the president) to disburse federal power back to us; which we can in turn delegate to elected representatives; representatives we chose, that live where we live.

It's our turn to restore representative government. This time we can use the ballot box, particularly in primaries, to restore the consent of the governed.

Tim Dunn is vice chairman of the board of directors of the Austin-based [Texas Public Policy Foundation](#).



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