

# Change the Debate and Take Back Liberty Locally

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Most Americans tend to think of private property simply as a home – the place where the family resides, stores their belongings, and finds shelter and safety from the elements. It's where you live. It's yours because you pay the mortgage and the taxes. Most people don't give property ownership much more thought than that.

There was a time when property ownership was considered to be much more. Property, and the ability to own and control it, was life itself.

John Adams said, "The moment the idea is admitted into society that property is not as sacred as the law of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence."

The great economist John Locke, whose writings and ideas had a major influence on the nation's founders, believed that "life and liberty are secure only so long as the right of property is secure."

Locke warned that human civilization would be reduced to the level of a pack of wolves and cease to exist because lack of control over your own actions caused fear and insecurity. Private property ownership, Locke argued, brought stability and wealth to individuals, leading to a prosperous society of man. That's because legal ownership of property is the key to productive development.

Private property ownership is the reason the United States

became the wealthiest nation on earth almost overnight. Free individuals, using their own land to create commerce and build personal wealth through the equity of their property, are the root of American success. Sixty percent of early American businesses were financed through the equity of property ownership. And sixty percent of American jobs were created through those successful businesses. That's how a free-market economy is built. Private property ownership is the source of personal individual wealth for the average American.

John Locke advocated that if property rights did not exist, then the incentive for an industrious person to develop and improve property would be destroyed; that the industrious person would be deprived of the fruits of his labor; that marauding bands would confiscate, by force, the goods produced by others; and that mankind would be compelled to remain on a bare-subsistence level of hand-to-mouth survival because the accumulation of anything of value would invite attack.

One must only look to the example of the former Soviet Union to see clearly what happens to society when an outlaw government exercises brute force to take control of private property. Under that tyrannical government, each of Locke's predictions came true. Throughout its history, the Soviet government excused its every action under the banner of equality for all. There were no property rights, no freedom of enterprise, and no protections for individual actions. Instead, the Soviet government enforced redistribution of wealth schemes, confiscating homes from the rich and middle class. Shelves were bare, freedom of choice was non-existent, and personal misery ruled the day.

The same basic redistribution schemes of the Soviets were later used by Zimbabwe's former dictator, Robert Mugabe, to destroy that agriculturally rich African nation. Mugabe confiscated farmland owned by white farmers and gave it to friends of his corrupt government – most of whom had never even seen a farm. The result was economic disaster, widespread

poverty, and hunger in a land that had once fed the continent. The nation of South Africa is now following in the murderous footsteps of Robert Mugabe as it attacks white farmers, taking their property and again putting it in the hands of those who know nothing about running a farm.

Clearly, John Locke's warnings have been vindicated. Private property ownership is much more than a house. It is the root of a prosperous, healthy, human society based on the individual's freedom to live a life of his own, gaining from the fruits of his own labor. Take that option away, and people will always react the same way. They stop producing.

## THE LOST DEFINITION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

In the 1990s, an all-out assault on property rights was well underway, led by a radical environmental movement, resulting in massive federal land grabs in the name of conservation. As one can imagine, courts across the nation were flooded with cases of people attempting to defend their property rights from government takings.

In the state of Washington, one of the major targets for such programs, the state Supreme Court realized it didn't have an adequate definition of property rights to use in considering such cases. That's when State Supreme Court Justice Richard B. Sanders wrote a "Fifth Amendment Treatise", which included the following definition of property rights:

"Property in a thing consists not merely in its ownership and possession, but in the unrestricted right of use, enjoyment, and disposal. Anything which destroys any of the elements of property, to that extent, destroys the property itself. The substantial value of property lies in its use. If the right of use be denied, the value of the property is annihilated, and ownership is rendered a barren right."

"Use" of the land is the key. Using the land in a productive way that is beneficial to the owner is what gives the land

value. According to Justice Sanders, paying the taxes and mortgage while some undefined government entity can rule and regulate how the property is used, is a “barren right” that annihilates its value.

When you purchase property, how much of the land do you own? What is the depth of the soil? Do you own the water on the land? Do you own the air above it? As property rights expert Dr. Timothy Ball wrote, “All these questions speak to political issues that transcend private, regional, and national boundaries. Nationally and internationally, lack of this knowledge is being exploited by those who seek control...”

## HOW TO FIGHT BACK?

For several decades, the radical Left has been dedicated in its efforts to organize at every level of government while advocates of limited government failed to do the required “dirty work” of local organization and activism to protect our freedoms. We gave the Left a pretty clear playing field to organize and seize control, and now we are suffering under the result.

For the dedicated Left, no position is too small. No appointed board is ignored. When was the last time local Conservative activists cared about positions like City Attorney? Yet these are the very officials who enforced the COVID-19 lockdown policies. Local government is now infested with Planners, NGOs, and federal agencies dictating policies. And the only reason they have power and influence now is because the Left fought to elect representatives who then gave it to them.

Today, too many elected officials, even the honest ones, fail to understand the roots and goals of the “Sustainable” policies they are enforcing. In their ignorance they respond to critics, saying, “well, that’s just the way it’s done.” As they surrender their elective powers to appointed boards, do they even think of asking themselves, “Who do they actually

represent – the voters or the NGOs and appointed boards?”

The threat of man-made climate change is the center of the Deep State's hold on power. That's the unrelenting fear tactic that claims the earth will become uninhabitable in ten years unless massive government power controls every human action. Power for the state!

Yet there is ample scientific proof that such claims about man's effect on the environment are basically non-existent. However, many leaders of the freedom movement wrongly assume that all we need to do to counter the misinformation from the climate alarmists is to simply write a scholarly paper disproving it and set the record straight. It doesn't work because few will understand it, fewer still will ever attempt to read it. In short, we badly overestimate the knowledge, intelligence and attention span of the average citizen and government official whom we are trying to convince. Emotions tend to decide debates rather than facts.

The first step in fighting back is to stop depending on one person, one icon, one president to lead us forward. We must take responsibility ourselves to ensure that the government does not move forward unattended. We need to be directly involved at every level, especially on the local level.

Change the debate to attack anti-freedom policies and expose non-governmental (NGO) carpetbaggers hiding in the shadows dictating policy. You can change the debate by making private property protection the key to your local fight. Sustainable policy cannot be enforced if private property is protected. Challenge local elected officials to stand with you in protection of private property. If they refuse – expose them. Force elected officials to be personally responsible for their actions.

Picture how different our nation would be if we dug in to elect a majority of governors across the nation who understood

and operated under the Tenth Amendment, which acknowledges the States' power to stand against Federal overreach. What if you had a county commission that refused to participate in non-elected regional government? How would your life change if your city council was made up of individuals who guided your community under the three pillars of freedom, including protection of private property, encouragement and support for local businesses, and the lifting of rules and regulations that stifled personal choices in your individual life? How do we make all of that a reality?

Set a goal to turn your local community into a Freedom Pod. Simply focus on making these goals a reality in your community and if successful, as prosperity spreads, the idea will certainly spread to a neighboring community and then to the next. The challenge is to create a successful blueprint and a cadre of dedicated elected representatives that will begin to move from the local to the state level of government.

That will set the stage for effecting a federal government as conceived by our forefathers. The result will be the growth of Freedom Pods across the nation. Here is the end game for the forces of freedom. No matter who is president, we must take control of our cities, counties, state legislatures, and governors. Only then can we stand up to the potential tyranny from Washington, DC. To live your life as YOU choose, start right there in your community – build that Freedom Pod. Act Local and Stop Global!

How do you do that? The American Policy Center (APC) is now working with organizations nationwide to train and motivate local residents to take action in their own communities to push back and restore American freedom. APC has created a Local Activists Handbook and a Tool Kit with all the details you need to start organizing, training, and improving communications between activists and organizations, to share tactics, ideas, and successes. Learn more at [www.americanpolicy.org](http://www.americanpolicy.org).

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