

Preserving our Constitutional Freedom

- **Column: Randy Bright**

January 22nd, 2009

I've been reading a very interesting and educational book entitled, *The 5000 Year Leap*. I think everyone should read it. This would not be a popular book for anyone in favor of big government, because it reveals just how much our Founding Fathers realized that for a country to be successful, it must be free, and free of big government.

The American Constitution was, as the book says on its cover, "A Miracle That Changed the World," and it has helped me realize just how important it is to go back to the Constitution in the decision-making process we go through in something as basic as city planning.

The Constitution made possible the 5000-year leap because it unleashed the creativity in the citizens of this country that brought us, within 200 years, from essentially the same lifestyle that people lived 5000 years before, to the modern lifestyle that we now enjoy.

When the Constitution was written, it gave Americans a freedom that had never existed in history. Never before could individuals enjoy the kinds of freedoms that the Constitution guaranteed, and this was at a time when "enlightened" Europeans were embracing socialism, in particular in France, where the bloody and failed French Revolution was taking place.

The Constitution works because the rights we enjoy are given by God, not our government, and the framers worked diligently to design it so that there would be a balance between two extremes. The first extreme was tyranny, whereby the government would dictate every facet of life through laws and edicts. The second extreme was anarchy, whereby there were no laws or rules whatsoever.

The framers knew that there was a place for limited government, but that if the government was tyrannical, it would destroy the spirit of its citizens, making them no better than any other country.

For years, cities in America have been looking for the magic bullet that will bring them business and prosperity, and the overwhelming trend is to do just as Tulsa has done and is doing; building convention centers, going green, and planning their cities to meet the newest version of New Urbanism.

The assumption, of course, is that a city needs these things because that's what people want, and that if a city provides what people want, it will attract business and jobs, especially for young people. The question is, what are people really looking for? Do they want to move to the city

that has the most “stuff” for them to do, or will they go where the jobs and the lowest costs of living are?

Oklahoma, in contrast to the rest of the country, is doing much better economically than the rest of the country. According to House Speaker Chris Benge, the primary reason is Oklahoma’s conservative values.

But Tulsa has been slowly departing from its conservative values, adopting the more liberal or “progressive” values of big government and big government spending, and if it is to keep its lead, it needs to begin doing things differently.

The primary goal should be that the people of Tulsa will enjoy the rights guaranteed by the Constitution, and that the decisions that are made by city government should be tested by the Constitution, so that we can remain free.

So, before Tulsa adopts a form-based code or other similar policies, our leaders should carefully consider the impact upon individual Constitutional rights. They should be asking, does this policy, this code, or this law bring our citizens closer to or further from their rights and freedoms? Will it inspire creativity or will it discourage individual initiative? Do our actions take something of value from one person in order to give to another person?

For as many years as I have lived in Tulsa, city leaders and mayors have been looking for ways to make this city more attractive and to provide more social services. The result of that has led to high taxes and distrust of local government.

What people really want from their government is, in one word, to be free. What government thinks people want is for things they want to be free. How much character can we expect from citizens who come to expect things to be free because they believe they are paying for it with high taxes?

For a city to be truly successful, it seems evident to me that its leaders need to form policies that pass Constitutional muster, encourage families to be functional, promote morality and self-reliance, promote capitalism and discourage socialism.

The fact is, the Constitution never guaranteed anyone happiness or even the basic necessities of life, only the freedom to pursue those things, and for America to remain great, that is as it should be.

©2009 Randy W. Bright

Randy W. Bright, AIA, NCARB, is an architect who specializes in church and church-related projects. You may contact him at 918-664-7957, rwbrightchurcharch@sbcglobal.net or www.churcharchitect.net.