

THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT
Copyright 2013, Paul Spite
For inclusion in newsletters, all other rights reserved

There are six purposes enumerated in the United States Constitution for the establishment of a system of government. These are to: form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. These six should serve as litmus tests for any new legislation at any level of government, even local. Proposed legislation, even if called ordinances, should serve one of these purposes and not undermine any. If they can not pass this test, they should not be instituted.

There seems to be a prevailing school of thought in government that failure to restrain government implies tacit approval. Using this approach, proposed legislation is advertised with notices of public hearings. If significant numbers of voters do not show up to object, the legislation, no matter how onerous and restrictive, is passed. After all, the public chose not to object. Lack of attendance at public hearings does not equate to approval. It equates to a public whose lives and schedules are too full to permit them to constantly protect themselves against those they elected to represent them.

Instead of seeking public input in the above fashion, quarterly town hall meetings should be conducted for at least two purposes. The citizens of Cookeville should have input into prioritizing the use of their tax dollars. In addition, public input should be obtained on the many regulations passed recently. Bad laws should remain on the books simply due to inertia. Existing regulations should be subject to ongoing review and adjustment.

Moreover, citizens hire government employees to oversee the use of tax dollars collected. When these taxpayers ask their employees to do the work for which they were hired, the citizens should never be treated as second class citizens or irritating interruptions to a peaceful non-productive day. Too many times, members of society, needing and seeking assistance for which tax dollars have been collected, are degraded by those put in charge of distributing such assistance. After more than one complaint regarding such behavior, such employees should immediately be replaced. Governmental employees owe gratitude to the citizens whose taxes support them, not the other way around.