



# THE BIGGER THE GOVERNMENT...

## DENNIS PRAGER

The bigger the government, the smaller the citizen. This is one of the most important realizations about society you will ever have. In fact, this understanding is the primary reason for America's unique success as both a free and affluent society.

Everything gets smaller as the government gets bigger. Liberty gets smaller, individuality gets smaller, goodness gets smaller, and human character gets smaller. This is not a political point on behalf of a political party. It is simply an observable fact. And it's just common sense.

Now, no one denies that government can and must do certain things. There's plenty for government to do. It's the government that must protect us from foreign attacks. That's why we have armed forces. It's the government that must protect us from criminals within our country. That's why we have police. Likewise fire departments and courts are obviously necessary government institutions. And, yes, when all else fails -- private and religious-based charities, families, friends -- then, too, the government must be there to provide a safety net of last resort. But it must always be "of last resort." When government is the first resort -- the first place citizens look when they have a problem -- bad things happen.

As government grows almost everything else begins to disappear.

The first thing that goes when government gets bigger than it needs to be is goodness. Yes, goodness. As the state gets bigger, people simply do less good for their fellow citizens. After all, why help others when the government will do it for you?

This is the reason that, as noted by the international non-profit organization, Charities Aid Foundation, and shown in study after study, Americans give more charity and volunteer more time to help others than do Europeans, not to mention just about everybody else in the world.

From the beginning, Americans understood that government must be small and therefore individuals must devote time and money to helping others, as well as non-governmental institutions of goodness, they have to be large and plentiful.

Europeans, on the other hand, with their philosophy of big government, came to rely on the state to help their fellow citizens -- and even their own family members.

The second thing that diminishes as the government grows is the character of many of its citizens. Just as taking care of others is a sign of a moral character, so is taking care of oneself. Relying on others to take care of you when you are capable of taking care of yourself is just plain selfish and the very definition of irresponsible.

And it gets worse. The more people come to rely on the state to take care of them, the more they begin to develop a sense of entitlement. A sense of entitlement is the belief that you do not owe others, but that others – in this case the state and your fellow citizens whose money supports the state – owe you.

A sense of entitlement creates two other bad character traits: ingratitude and resentment. The more people expect to be given, the less grateful they will be for what they are given. And they get resentful when any of those entitlements are taken away.

The third thing that bigger government diminishes is liberty. This should be obvious. The more government, the more rules. The more rules, the less liberty. In much of Europe, for example, governments tell store owners how many hours they can keep their own stores open. That's right. In France and Germany, for example, you can't keep your own store open past a certain hour, and you can't open your store before a certain hour.

And in the United States, the Federal Register was 2,620 pages long in 1936. By 2012 it contained 78,961 pages of rules and regulations.

There are, however, some things big government always does increase – corruption, fraud, and theft. How could it not? Unless you think people are angels, and that political power attracts angels, you know that a lot of people with almost unlimited power and with access to almost unlimited sums of money will abuse those powers.

So for all these reasons, small government was the vision of the people who founded the United States of America.

It is the major reason America has given more people more freedom and more opportunity to live a better life than has any other country has.

I'm Dennis Prager.