

Hat Hate

January 31, 2019

One of the things many people no longer understand about these United States is its — *their* — peculiar genius: decentralism.

The extreme of this is that contentious notion of state nullification of federal law, which most “smart” people deride (contra Jefferson and Madison) as itself made null and void by the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution.

And yet even nullification skeptics often support some form of nullification, like fighting marijuana prohibition or ObamaCare at the state level. State initiatives, especially,

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have driven much of this resistance to centralist, top-down regulation.

But a state initiative in Washington State, I-1639, passed last year, has devolved the nullification idea to where it gets even trickier. The gun



control measure passed last year 60-40, but residents of rural counties are none too pleased. As reported in *The Guardian*, many of the sheriffs in the 27 counties that voted against the measure are not enforcing the law, which they see as unconstitutional.

“The refusal of law enforcement officers to enforce the new restrictions plays into a longer history of so-called ‘constitutional’ sheriffs resisting the gradual tightening of gun laws,” says *The Guardian*, which goes on to mention “the doctrine of ‘county supremacy,’ long nursed on the constitutionalist far right, which holds that county sheriffs are the highest constitutional authority in the country.”

Whatever its legal merits, this form of resistance to state law enjoys a deep American tradition.

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This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.