

# **Section 10**

**Rebellion is Simmering in State Capitals**  
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# Rebellion is simmering in state capitals

By Robert Walters

**T**ENSION between the federal and state governments is neither a new phenomenon nor an issue that can compete with the major-league pennant races in terms of popular appeal.

But the subject demands public attention because relations between the nation's governors and state legislators and their counterparts in Washington have reached a level of hostility unprecedented in recent decades.

"It's gotten to the ridiculous point. The national government is just barreling out of control," Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander, a Republican, lamented at the mid-September's annual meeting of the Southern Governors' Association.

Less than six weeks earlier, at the annual meeting of the National Governors' Association in Denver, Georgia Gov. George D. Busbee, a Democrat, warned that "the federal umbilical cord is beginning to strangle us."

And one month before that meeting, leaders of the National Conference of State Leg-

islatures concluded their annual convention in New York by decrying "a growing and disturbing trend in the federal government to run roughshod over the states."

The issue of allocating power and responsibility between the states and the national government dates back to the founding of the republic, inspiring much of the public debate that preceded the drafting of the Constitution.

One product of that debate was the 10th Amendment, which states that all powers not specifically delegated to the federal government by the Constitution "are reserved to the states ... or to the people."

But Arizona Gov. Bruce E. Babbitt, a Democrat, complained at the Denver meeting that the 10th Amendment has become "a hollow shell" because "the federal system is in complete disarray."

At the same conference, Indiana Gov. Otis R. Bowen, a Republican, called for "a new response from the states, a response that is more aggressive, more independent, more skeptical of federal power."

#### Among the states' specific complaints:

— The federal government increasingly is bypassing state governments by distributing financial assistance directly to cities, counties and other local government units.

— In other cases, federal aid is funneled directly to the various states' welfare, education, highway and other departments, thus depriving governors and state legisla-

tors of their right to exercise effective control over state budgets.

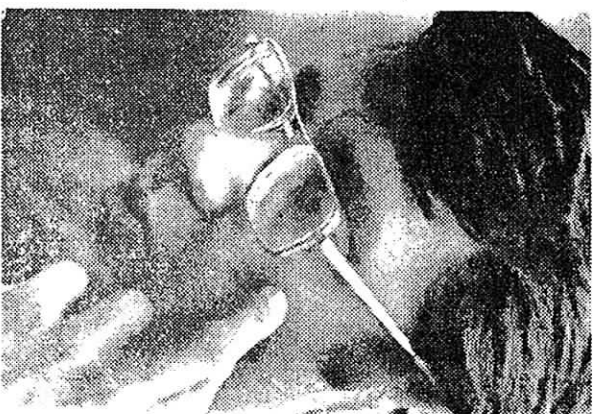
— Abolition of state participation in the general revenue-sharing program has eliminated most of the unrestricted federal-state grants, while the federal government persists in perpetuating hundreds of inflexible categorical grant programs whose rules, regulations and red tape make them an administrative nightmare.

NCSL officials estimate that as much as 20 percent to 30 percent of most states' annual expenditures are in the form of funds transmitted from Washington directly to individual state departments and agencies without ever being subjected to the scrutiny of the budgeting and appropriations processes supposedly administered by the governors and legislators.

Similarly, the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations recently reported that the federal government increasingly is channeling billions of dollars worth of direct grants to local municipalities, bypassing the states that created those jurisdictions.

"These federal policies ... could escalate into a new kind of civil war — a war against the states," warn Florida House Speaker Pro Tem Richard S. Hodes and New Hampshire House Speaker George B. Roberts Jr., the NCSL's incoming and outgoing presidents.

While some of the recent rhetoric suffers from hyperbole, too many responsible gov-



Bruce E. Babbitt

ernors and state legislators are truly distressed by the disturbing trend toward the accumulation of power and money in Washington.

If prompt redress is not forthcoming, there could indeed be a major rebellion developing in the state capitals.