



PROTECTING OUR NATURAL RIGHTS FROM THE COVID-19 GOVERNMENT STAMPEDE

In response to Covid-19, state and local governments have limited Americans' speech, assembly, economic activity, and ability to pursue happiness, among other restrictions. These social and economic regulations violate our natural rights, which are our fundamental rights that derive not from the government but from our nature as humans. They supersede any government laws or rules. Natural rights predate the creation of government.

The U.S. Founders created a system of government that recognizes and protects natural rights. Thomas Jefferson wrote that the colonists claimed "their rights as derived from the laws of nature, and not as the gift of their Chief Magistrate." And Alexander Hamilton wrote, "The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the divinity itself; and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power."

America's commitment to safeguarding natural rights is perhaps best articulated in the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Dr. Matthew Spalding, Vice President of Washington Operations and Dean of the Van Andel Graduate School of Government for Hillsdale College in Washington, D.C. and Board Member at the Steamboat Institute, writes at length about natural rights in his book *We Still Hold These Truths: Rediscovering Our Principles, Reclaiming Our Future (2014)*. Dr. Spalding explains the theory of natural rights and he offers the historical justification for them. He explains:

"Rights are not the creation or indulgence of government. While additional positive or civil rights (more correctly termed civil liberties) are enshrined in the Constitution – like the rights of free speech and freedom of the press recognized in the Bill of Rights – and Congress can legislatively create "civil" rights, natural rights preexist the institution of government, precisely because they arise out of the natural equality that is the essence of human liberty..."

Congress (or more likely today, the courts) can't just make up rights as it sees fit. Nor can these rights be taken away – they are "unalienable" and can't be given over (alienated) to someone else. In the end, it is this sense of rights that ultimately limits government..."

Rights are those things that are self-evident from an understanding of man and his place in the nature of things. Foremost among these are the right to one's own life and the right to pursue the purposes or ends of man's nature – that is, the pursuit of happiness.

In their response to the Covid-19 pandemic, governments have attempted to usurp the primacy of natural rights by making diktats that violate them. It's up to ordinary Americans to remind government officials of their rightful role in defending – not infringing upon – natural rights.