

Time to Decentralize the Federal Government?



It took me a while to realize how brilliant it was of the late Senator Byrd to move the FBI fingerprinting division from Washington to WV. Not only did it help WV's employment picture a bit, but it also solved a huge turnover problem that division had in DC. The employee turnover rate dropped significantly once that division moved to WV.

Considering the risk factors we are now aware of since 9/11, I propose that the federal government move many of its Departments out of DC and spread them throughout the country. The benefits of such a Federal Decentralization Program are multiple:

- 1—harder to target these facilities if they are spread around
- 2—"spread the wealth" of the Federal budget—especially to economically distressed and so-called "Rust-Belt" areas
- 3—in many/most parts of the US, it would reduce the cost of living for DC employees

- 4—reduce the housing and urbanization pressures on DC and its environs
- 5—make Federal workers more connected to the people
- 6—remove the words “hinterlands” from the Federal vocabulary,
- 7—reduce salary costs and operating expenses of many departments,
- 8—use closed-down military bases, and
- 9—make the people feel more connected to the federal government.

With the availability of the Internet, teleconferencing and overnight mail services, most of these departments no longer need a large DC presence—certainly no more than some liaison offices. The DC are as one of the highest per capita incomes—it’s time to spread the wealth!

This issue should get the support of practically every Congressman and Senator, because it would be a major opportunity to bring home the bacon.

And after overcoming the shock of moving, most employees would probably love their new locales. I remember then American Electric Power moved the corporate headquarters out of New York City to Columbus Ohio, there was a lot of skepticism. AEP handled the move well, even offering drivers training to employees. They also offered to move anyone back to NYC who was unhappy after a year or two (*sans* job, of course). If memory serves me, I think only one or two people moved back—the rest loved it here and wouldn’t want to go back.

Can we get a movement toward such a **Federal Decentralization Program** started?