

**Speech Senator Curt Bramble – FORUM of World Regional and Sub-national
Legislative Assemblies – Milano – 23/11/2015**

Good Afternoon, I am Senator Curt Bramble and I serve as the President Pro Tempore of the Senate for the State of Utah in the United States. I also have the pleasure to serve as President of the National Conference of State Legislatures, also known as NCSL.

I am grateful to President Raffaele Cattaneo, President of CALRE and the Lombardia Regional Council, for the invitation to participate in the Forum of World Regional and Sub-national Legislative Assemblies and for being such gracious hosts. I also appreciate the opportunity to join with so many of my colleagues from across the globe to briefly address you this afternoon about NCSL and our role in ensuring the sovereignty of our 50 states and representation in the American federal system.

NCSL is still rather a young organization having just celebrated our 40th Anniversary. Since 1975, NCSL has worked in support of the belief that legislative service is one of democracy's worthiest pursuits. Representing the citizens of a district and the people of a state is the very essence of free government.

NCSL is a source for research, publications, consulting services, meetings and seminars. It is the national conduit for lawmakers to communicate and network with one another and share ideas.

NCSL prides itself on being an effective and respected voice for the states in the nation's capital, representing their interests before Congress, the administration and the federal courts.

NCSL is committed to the success of all legislators and staff. Our mission is to:

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of state legislatures.
- Promote policy innovation and communication among state legislatures.
- Ensure state legislatures a strong, cohesive voice in the federal system.

NCSL represents more than 7,300 state legislators and over 33,000 legislative staff. As lawmakers, we play a vital role in developing NCSL's States' Agenda and use this to shape NCSL's advocacy work in Washington, D.C. The States' Agenda is the driving force of NCSL's efforts to support state sovereignty and state flexibility and fight unwarranted federal preemption of state laws and unfunded federal mandates.

The strength of NCSL is our bipartisanship and our commitment to serving both Republican and Democratic legislators. Since NCSL does not advocate for any specific policy positions in the individual states, our resources and analyses are based on fact, not politics.

NCSL is the only legislative organization that advocates solely for states' interests in Washington, D.C. with participation from lawmakers from both sides of the aisle.

NCSL is vigilant in leading the effort to forestall the federal government's attempts to shift program costs from Washington to the states. Currently, all but

one of the 50 states have balanced budget requirements, and unlike our federal government, states cannot run up trillions of dollars in debt. As the federal government in Washington seeks to reduce its federal budget deficit, NCSL leads the fight to ensure that Washington does not pass the costs of deficit reduction onto the states.

NCSL frequently arranges for state legislators to testify before Congress on a variety of issues, and schedules regular meetings with lawmakers and members of Congress and the administration to voice states' concerns about federal legislation and regulations.

As I mentioned, sovereignty, and protecting the sovereignty of the states is something we as state legislators and NCSL are very concerned.

Unlike many regional governments that may have been established by their central or federal governments, in the United States, state delegates representing the original thirteen sovereign states drafted our nation's constitution in 1787 and established our federal government. Those delegates while recognizing the need for a unified national government also ensured the sovereign authority of states to govern within their borders.

A few years later, state sovereignty was once again reaffirmed in what we refer to as "the Bill of Rights" or the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The 10th Amendment to the Constitution declares, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are preserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

This powerful amendment has served during our country's history to be a bulwark against federal intrusion in the affairs of state governments. If we

cannot win in Congress, states can and will challenge federal laws and regulations in the federal courts and ultimately in the United States Supreme Court seeking to overturn laws that we believe violate the 10th Amendment.

While state sovereignty is proscribed in the U.S. Constitution, this has not meant that the Congress or the federal administration has not tried to limit the power of the states or place mandates on the states. Through our nation's 239 year history, ensuring a balance between states and the federal government has been an ongoing battle.

The latest threat to state sovereignty and representation in the political system is the growth of the global economy and the power of the Internet. Thirty or even twenty years ago, states were able to regulate most activities within their state borders. Today, in the United States, some interstate and global companies complain that our state borders are becoming barriers to competition, they ignore our state regulations and taxes because they claim they do not have physical presence in our states.

The Internet allows people to buy products around the world and use services that may have been previously regulated and taxed by state and local governments. Representatives of the global marketplace are lobbying Congress to eliminate the ability of states to regulate or require the payment of taxes to states, rather arguing that they should only be required to comply with federal laws and maybe federal taxes.

NCSL is the first line of defense against such intrusion. While we recognize that it can be difficult to understand and comply with fifty state laws and regulations, those laws and regulations are in place to protect our constituents.

Besides fighting preemption of these laws and regulations in Congress, NCSL has been successful in bringing the states together to review existing state laws, to develop options for states to consider in making state laws and regulations more uniform so as to maintain state sovereignty and taxing authority and thwart federal preemption.

This Forum will allow us as representatives of sub-national governments to discuss our similar concerns and how we can work together to ensure our voice and representation in protecting the general welfare of our citizens.

In conclusion, on behalf of the NCSL delegation attending this Forum, we are honored to have the opportunity to learn from you and to exchange experiences and best practices. Connecting with counterparts of distinct nations and backgrounds is exceedingly valuable to elected officials, staff, and legislatures of sub-national governments globally.

These connections provide diverse perspectives and solutions to common issues. In this ever-changing environment and more globalized, connected world, these experiences are becoming increasingly valuable and it is very fortunate that NCSL has continued to be included in these important exchanges.

Thank you for your time and for this amazing opportunity. I look forward to our discussions and successful conclusion of our efforts.