

Model Letter to the Editor

Responding to Southern Secession

Dear Editor,

The United States of America is facing a political and economic crisis. Since the creation of the Constitution, the question of whether our nation is a unified government with separate states or a loose alliance of independent states voluntarily connected has plagued us. Issues of tariffs and how to handle the institution of slavery have both been flashpoints. The southern states have consistently argued that our nation is a confederation, or voluntary organization, of sovereign states who can follow or ignore federal laws as they please. The northern states have argued that the United States is a nation, which cannot be divided. With the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency in 1860, southern states have left the Union. The question is whether or not they have the right to do so.

The strongest argument for the southern states' right to secede is the 10th amendment of the U.S. Constitution claiming all powers not explicitly listed in the U.S. Constitution are reserved for the states. The southern states also argue that the Constitution was ratified by states voluntarily; therefore, they could leave voluntarily. They claim this means the states have the ultimate authority and can govern themselves on most issues. Slavery is the most recent issue to raise the tension between the states and the federal government. The southern states argue that the majority of citizens within their boundaries want slavery. They also argue their entire economic and societal structure is based on this system and the northern states should have no right to dismantle it.

The strongest argument for the northern position of a Union headed by a strong national government also resides in history. The Declaration of Independence was the birth of a nation when the 13 colonies united to leave the British Empire. President Washington used federal troops to enforce a federal tax against farmers in Pennsylvania. The Union argument is that the government was ratified by the majority of people in each state in specially called Constitutional Conventions, not state legislatures, indicating the people themselves chose a strong national government after the Articles of Confederation were shown to be inadequate for running a country. The U.S. Constitution provides the federal government the power to force individuals and states to pay taxes. All these arguments indicate the only way for the United States to survive is as a nation, not separate states.

We conclude the southern states do not have a right to secede from the Union. The United States of America was a nation when the colonies banded together to fight for their independence. They were also a nation when they joined in 1787 to re-write a Constitution after the Articles of Confederation failed. We will not be able to withstand invasion if we are separate states loosely tied on a voluntary basis. Numerous Presidents have asserted the power of the Federal government to overpower states and this is the latest installment in that historical trend. For that reason, the southern states must be forced to rejoin the Union.

Sincerely,

Joe/Jane Smith