

WASHINGTON REPORT

Congressman Edwin D. Eshleman

14th District—Pennsylvania



Revenue sharing, also called for returning power to the tax sharing, is a plan for giving state and local governments a fixed percentage of Federal money for use as they see fit. Because the Federal Government is the chief tax collecting body in the United States, and because most state and local governments are starved for money to perform essential functions, the idea is to use Federal wealth to carry out programs created and executed at the state and local levels.

While I certainly support the basic aim of the tax-sharing approach, I am also convinced that a more comprehensive plan should be developed to assure that federalism really is advanced. Up to now, the proposal that tax sharing is a major way

monies from Washington into state and local treasuries. The implication is that with this extra money states and localities will become more powerful partners in governmental decision-making. However, the tax-sharing approach makes no specific provision for assuring that the implication will become reality.

A more comprehensive approach should include the proper assurances that a strong, new federal system for modern America can be evolved with a program that would provide for the determination of national goals and priorities at the state and local levels of government. In general, it should be a plan for giving Federal money to state and local governments whose stated needs most closely

relate to the total national interest.

Such a program could utilize tax sharing as a catalyst. Tax-shared funds could be used as an incentive to get local people involved in national choices.

Priorities determined at state and local levels would be passed along to Washington as requests for tax-shared funds. The requests which most closely matched a specific list of national priorities to be set each year by Congress would receive the bulk of the Federal money allotted in the program. Congress, when determining national goals, would have to pay a great deal of attention to the paramount interests determined by local areas. For want of a bet-

ter term, this approach might be called goal-sharing.

My proposal has not been offered yet in legislative form because there are far too many details to be worked out. However, it is an example of the kind of plan which might be considered for really revitalizing the federal system. Tax sharing would result in a partial redistribution of wealth—a worthy goal and one which I will support if a broader-based effort is not offered. Goal sharing, on the other hand, would redistribute the power of deciding directions for the Nation. If that kind of approach were taken, if the Federal Government began to share its power to determine the national destiny, federalism could be reborn.

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