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## RICHARD NIXON

XXXVII President of the United States: 1969-1974

### 355 - Statement About the General Revenue Sharing Bill

October 20, 1972

IN MY State of the Union Address nearly 2 years ago, I outlined a program which I described as "a new American revolution--a peaceful revolution in which power [is] turned back to the people...a revolution as profound, as far-reaching, as exciting as that first revolution almost 200 years ago."

The signing today of the State and Local Fiscal Assistance Act of 1972--the legislation known as general revenue sharing--means that this new American revolution is truly underway. And it is appropriate that we launch this new American revolution in the same place where the first American Revolution was launched by our Founding Fathers 196 years ago--Independence Square in Philadelphia. It is appropriate that we meet in this historic place to help enunciate a new declaration of independence for our State and local governments.

Just outside the Oval Office of the President at the White House hangs a picture of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It is an unfinished picture. The artist has sketched in some of the figures only lightly and left many spaces blank.

I have always believed there was an important moral in that picture. For the American Revolution is also an unfinished enterprise. Each generation must do its part to carry on the work which began in Philadelphia.

As we sign this historic document today, we are carrying on the work which started here in Independence Square--where independence was declared, where the Constitution was written, and where the Bill of Rights was formally added to the Constitution.

Even as we return today to the place where our Nation was founded, we are also returning to the principles of the Founding Fathers.

They came here in the 18th century to establish the federal system. We return here in the 20th century to renew the federal system.

They came here to create a balance between the various levels of government. We come here to restore that balance.

They came here "to form a more perfect Union." We come here to make it more perfect still.

After many years in which power has been flowing away from those levels of government which are closest to the people, power will now begin to flow back to the people again--a development which can have an enormous impact on their daily existence.

--In many States and localities, it will mean lower property taxes or lower sales taxes or lower income taxes than would otherwise have been the case. Revenue sharing can provide desperately needed tax relief for millions of Americans.

--In other places, revenue sharing will mean better schools or better hospitals.

--In some communities, this money will be used to put more policemen on the beat or to start new drug control programs.

--In still other instances, it will be devoted to job training or to recreational facilities or to public transportation.

But the most important point is this: In each case it will be local officials responding to local conditions and local constituencies who will decide what should happen, and not some distant bureaucrat in Washington, D.C.

The American people are fed up with government that doesn't deliver. Revenue sharing can help State and local government deliver again, closing the gap between promise and performance.

Revenue sharing will give these hard-pressed governments the dollars they need so badly. But just as importantly, it will give them the freedom they need to use those dollars as effectively as possible.

Under this program, instead of spending so much time trying to please distant bureaucrats in Washington--so the money will keep coming in--State and local officials can concentrate on pleasing the people--so the money can do more good.

This is why I am determined to keep red tape out of this program. States and cities will not have to worry about filing complicated plans, filling out endless forms, meeting lots of administrative regulations, or submitting to all sorts of bureaucratic controls. When we say no strings, we mean no strings. This program will mean both a new source of revenue for State and local governments and a new sense of responsibility.

As State and local governments are revitalized, I believe that our people will begin to feel once again that they are in control, that they can shape events rather than being shaped by events, that they can make things happen rather than always having things happen to them.

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Thomas Jefferson believed in local government because he believed every person needed to feel that he is a participant in the affairs of government. By revitalizing grass roots government, revenue sharing can make it possible for more people to be participants in events that make a difference.

Under revenue sharing, more decisions will be made at the scene of the action--and this means that more people can have a piece of the action. By multiplying the centers of effective power in our country we will be multiplying the opportunities for involvement and influence by individual citizens.

The enactment of general revenue sharing would have been impossible without the strong support of hundreds of State and local officials--from both political parties--and I extend to them my profound thanks. The Vice President has also played a leading role in the battle for revenue sharing--and I salute him for all that he has done. And, of course, the Members and leaders of the Congress have my deep appreciation--and that of all Americans--for the constructive way in which they pursued their deliberations on this matter and for the favorable action which they have taken.

We expect great things from this program--and we are going to be watching for them. I am asking the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations to monitor and evaluate the results of revenue sharing so that we can all know its full impact as we follow up on this initiative. And follow up we shall. For the enactment of general revenue sharing represents only the first part of our comprehensive design to reform the institutions of government so they can respond to the needs of the people.

It is my earnest hope that the next Congress will move on to enact other crucial parts of this design--including our six special revenue sharing programs, our proposals for streamlining the Federal Government, and our recommendations for welfare reform.

On the last day of the Constitutional Convention at Independence Hall in 1787, Dr. Benjamin Franklin looked at the President's chair--which still can be seen in the Assembly Room--and observed that he had wondered throughout the long, hot summer whether the sun which was painted on that chair was rising or setting. "But now at length," he concluded, "I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun."

Many people have suggested in recent years that America's sun was setting, that our glory was behind us. One reason was the government was not responding well to people's needs. But today as we come back to Independence Hall we do so with confidence that we are giving our government back to the people again. And like Franklin, we can be confident, as we approach our 200th anniversary, that the sun is rising for America.

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*Note: The statement was released at Philadelphia, Pa.*

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**Citation:** John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3636>.

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