

Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty: Federalism bill gets hearing in Madison

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February 15, 2018 - Milwaukee, WI - Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL) President and General Counsel Rick Esenberg testified in Madison today regarding [AB 879](#), a first-in-the-nation bill to require transparency on the cost of so-called "free" federal funds. The legislation would require the non-partisan state Legislative Fiscal Bureau and the Legislative Council Staff to prepare a report following the biennial budget act that details coercive conditions attached to federal funds.

According to Esenberg:

"Most residents of Wisconsin do not understand the extent to which their state budget has been hijacked by Washington D.C. When politicians lament the lack of money for the university or other state priorities, they don't mention how lawmakers' hands have been tied by chasing "free" federal money. A good first step towards restoring the proper balance between the states and the federal government is to know what policies are being made in Washington and being imposed on us through the extension of an offer we can't refuse."

The full testimony can be found [here](#).

WILL's Center for Competitive Federalism (CCF), established in 2016, aims to

educate and advocate a version of federalism that our Founders would recognize. States, instead of serving as junior partners of the federal government, are meant to have sovereignty. Under a model of “competitive federalism,” states can truly be the “laboratories of democracy,” allowing for innovation, experimentation, and the proper prioritization of state spending.

[In a previous CCF report](#), Esenberg has advocated that the state do more to understand how the federal government is coercing the state to make decisions.

Esenberg continues:

“Unfortunately, competitive federalism has been subverted through the growth and expansion of the federal government. Today, we operate under a faux federalism. The adoption of “cooperative federalism” allows the federal government to shape state policy through conditional grants and the threat of federal regulatory schemes that can be avoided only by the adoption of compatible state restrictions. The result has been ballooning state spending and a loss of state control over budget priorities.”