

## It's our government. Let's take it back!

by Edie Rasell

Minister for Economic Justice

A number of President Trump's nominees to key positions in his Administration seem like odd choices. Many of them have in the past condemned the very agencies and missions they are now selected to lead. Betsy DeVos, nominated to head the Department of Education, is a foe of public education. Rick Perry, named to lead the Department of Energy, has called for the elimination of the Department. Scott Pruitt has been nominated to head the Environmental Protection Agency but as Oklahoma's attorney general, he repeatedly sued the EPA to block regulations that, if confirmed, he would be expected to enforce.

These nominations and others suggest the current role of government is to destroy itself. But is this really what we want? Our shrunken federal government and the stunted role it plays in society are directly related to many of our major problems including the growth in inequality, lack of good jobs, and inadequate response to climate change. Without a strong government -- of, by and for the people -- our society is weaker and the common good is thwarted.

We all need the services that good government provides. As individuals we face an inevitable power imbalance when we have a conflict with a large corporation. Think about your experience trying to address a problem involving a cable or phone company, bank, airline, or insurance company. How did that work out for you? Sometimes things turn out well. Too often they don't. What about the many workers, especially in low-wage jobs, who try to get fair deals from their employers? As consumers and workers, much of the (very limited) power we have in these situations derives from the rules and regulations put in place by excellent policymakers acting to further the interests of all the people.

But our regulatory framework is eroded. Moreover, while this country is extremely wealthy, too many of us are barely getting by. Our public policies are diverting too many resources to corporations and the wealthy through wasteful privatization schemes, tax breaks for the rich, corporate tax loopholes, the failure to raise the federal minimum wage or require paid sick days for all workers,

and our huge expenditures for national security made under the influence of the military/industrial/national-security complex.

Yes, we the people have lost control of our government and money is now driving legislation. But the one force that can defeat the power of organized money is the power of organized people!

Friends, don't just mourn or moan, but organize and turn out. This is not the time to shrink government or dismantle it. It's time to reclaim government, to "occupy" government. The good news is this process has already begun with the Black Lives Matter movement, massive women's marches, demonstrations in opposition to the ban on immigrants and refugees, and the huge volume of phone calls urging Congress to oppose the confirmations of unqualified cabinet nominees. Get in the streets and in the face of your elected representatives either by phone, email, in person, or all the above.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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