

When Life Gives You Lemons by David Nott

The below was written by David Nott, President of the Reason Report.

Lemonade stands are as American as apple pie and Charlie Brown – but that didn't stop the local police from recently closing down my kids' lemonade stand. My son told me he feared that he was going to be put in jail.

At City Hall, a bureaucrat told my children (who are 10, 8 and 4), that they needed a business permit from the city but that the city would not issue them one!

It's a sad fact that children across the country have had their lemonade stands shut down. A girl in Florida fought back by reopening her stand – but instead of charging her customers, she accepted tips. Like any skilled entrepreneur, she adapted to adversity. City officials across the country routinely use permits, architectural boards, zoning, and eminent domain as tools for controlling your choices, your business and even your children. To fight these encroachments, Reason has its own set of tools. We use journalism and public policy research to shape the frameworks and actions of policymakers and opinion leaders working with elected officials at all levels to implement policy that increases liberty.

From your town's City Hall to D.C., the tendency of government is to expand its powers at the expense of your liberty. One of the most chilling books I've read in a long time is [Takeover: The Return of the Imperial Presidency](#) by Charlie Savage. It is a must read. Takeover describes the enormous expansion of executive power over the last 50 years, especially during the Bush Administration.

The Founding Fathers faced this dilemma by designing the Constitution to secure our rights. Unfortunately, no document by itself can protect us from those who seek power. Every generation must defend freedom; otherwise they betray themselves and their generations to come.

In my family's case, we examined our local municipal code and discovered that children can apply for a special business permit as long as they do not make too much money and do not operate during school hours. Armed with this information, we tromped back to City Hall. The city manager intervened, giving the green light to reopen. He said he didn't want to live in a city where kids have to apply for permits for lemonade stands, but he *really* didn't want my kids coming to a city council meeting to apply for one. The kids are back in business. As young entrepreneurs, they are learning that demand for lemonade isn't so high in winter. More importantly, as citizens, they've learned that they have to stand up for their freedom.

David Nott is President of the Reason Foundation in Los Angeles, which is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) research and education institution. Please visit them at www.reason.org. or email David at david.nott@reason.org.

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