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OPINION: SEMINOLE MAYOR LESLIE WATERS – ‘HOME RULE MATTERS’

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By LESLIE WATERS, Guest Writer TB Reporter

TB Reporter does not take editorial positions; however, we welcome debate and publish opinions from others. Today, Seminole Mayor Leslie Waters defends the concept of “home rule.” Many municipal government leaders and activists across the state have criticized the Florida Legislature of trying to erode and preempt local government power during its recently concluded session.

PINELLAS COUNTY – “It was my honor to be elected to the Florida Legislature from 1998 to 2006. Currently, I serve proudly as the mayor of the city of Seminole.

“The 2017 Florida Legislature blatantly conducted a ‘war on cities.’ The home rule provision in the Florida Constitution was ignored, stomped-on, mocked, and decimated. It was shocking and egregious!

“Home rule is the right of local self-government, including the powers to regulate for the protection of the public health, safety and welfare; to license; and to tax.

“Who wants Main Street to turn into regulation and ordinance free-zones, or have right-of-ways cluttered with private company priorities without city oversight?

“Who better to provide signage and building code guidelines on city streets and avenues? Who better to work with the shop owners along the boulevards? Cities or state government? Of course, local governments know best, we are ‘closest to the people.’ Not state legislators.

“My friend Speaker Richard Corcoran [R-Land O’ Lakes] views this assault as ‘Constitutional Hierarchy.’

“How about ‘Constitutional Home Rule?’

“For over 13 years, I have worked as an international consultant throughout the world, including former USSR Communist regimes. Countries such as Mongolia, Moldova, Georgia, etc., where, with time, the Soviet form of ‘Central Government’ collapsed, and for decades have been evolving into strong democracies. These new democracies are intentionally distancing themselves from ‘institutional hierarchy’ or ‘central government.’

“City government structure, city elections, city priorities, city ordinances, city reserves, city charters, city building codes, city budgeting, city regulations are governed by elected local officials.

“The citizens of my city expect nothing less!”

Waters served in the Florida House of Representatives from 1998-2006, including a stint as speaker pro tem. She served on the Seminole City Council from 2009 until she became interim mayor in 2012, then mayor in 2013. She owns Leslie Waters Government Consulting. She was one of 70 officials from across Florida to be named a “Home Rule Hero” for 2017 by the Florida League of Cities.

For information about Seminole, go to myseminole.com.

Interested in submitting a guest opinion or letter to the editor? Contact us at info@tbreporter.com.

