

Restore the Constitutional Right to Property

The right to property is an essential part of a free society, and widespread private property ownership is a chief limitation on government power and growth. Property rights have traditionally been more secure in the United States than in any other country. However, this is being severely eroded with respect to ownership of real property, as the Supreme Court dramatically underscored in its 2005 *Kelo* decision, which deprived homeowners of their right to private property to allow commercial development. Private property has also been undermined by the Endangered Species Act (ESA), wetlands regulation under the Clean Water Act, and other environmental laws and treaties.

- Lawmakers should advance the constitutional principle of private property by re-

forming laws that adversely impact landowners to at least demand that government provide compensation when property values are decreased by regulatory measures.

- Lawmakers should ensure that governments—at all levels—do not have the right to seize private property for the purposes of commercial development. When the Framers of the Constitution established eminent domain, they did not intend it to be used to allow one private party to benefit at the expense of others. Public policies should ensure that use of eminent domain be restricted to cases of legitimate public use.

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