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Secession movement spreads well beyond Texas

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Topics: Texas, United States, Texas Cities, Austin, Independences

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BY DAVE MONTGOMERY
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AUSTIN — As head of the Texas Nationalist Movement, Daniel Miller of Nederland believes it's time for the Lone Star State to sever its bond with the United States and return to the days when Texas was an independent republic.

"Independence. In our lifetime," Miller's organization proclaims on its Web site.

When Gov. Rick Perry suggested that some Texans might want to secede from the Union because they are fed up with the federal government, the remarks drew nationwide news coverage and became fodder for late-night comedians.

But to Texas separatists like Miller and Republican gubernatorial candidate Larry Kilgore of Mansfield, secession is no laughing matter. Nor is it exclusive to the nation's second-largest state.

Fanned by angry contempt for Washington, secession movements have sprouted up in perhaps more than a dozen states in recent years. In Vermont, retired economics professor Thomas Naylor leads the Second Vermont Republic, a self-styled citizens network dedicated to extracting the sparsely populated New England state from "the American Empire."

And on the other side of the continent, Northwestern separatists envision a "Republic of Cascadia" carved out of Oregon, Washington and the Canadian province of British Columbia.

While most Americans dismiss the breakaway sentiments, sociologists and political experts say they are part of a larger anti-Washington wave that is rapidly spreading across the country.

Challenging Washington

More commonplace are states' rights movements to directly challenge federal laws, a citizen revolt that one scholar says is unparalleled in modern times. Among the actions in which states are thumbing their nose at Washington:

- Montana and Tennessee have enacted legislation declaring that firearms made and kept within those states are beyond the authority of the federal government. Similar versions of the law, known as the Firearms Freedom Act, have been introduced in at least four other states.
- Arizona lawmakers will let voters decide a proposed state constitutional amendment that would opt the state out of federal healthcare mandates under consideration in Congress. The amendment will be placed on the November 2010 ballot. State Rep. Nancy Barto, R-Phoenix, said five other states considered similar versions of the amendment this year and at least nine others are expected to do so next year.



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■ Nearly two dozen states have approved resolutions refusing to participate in the Real ID Act of 2005, which requires that driver's licenses and state ID cards conform to federal standards. A similar resolution was introduced in the 2009 Texas Legislature but died in committee.

■ A campaign called "Bring the Guard Home" is pushing legislation in 23 states that would empower governors to recall state National Guard units from Iraq on the premise that the federal law authorizing such deployments has expired. "It's gaining momentum, to say the least," said Jim Draeger, program manager for Peace Action Wisconsin. He said the initiative has a respectable chance of passing the Legislature in his state.

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