

## Zoning by “Outsiders”

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“In recent years, there’s been a push to move zoning decisions further from the local level,” writes Matt Ray for Mises Wire — engaging in no small understatement.

“In 2019, Oregon passed House Bill 2001, making it the first statewide law to abolish single-family zoning in many areas. By expanding the state government’s jurisdiction to include zoning decisions previously handled by local agencies, the law entails an alarming centralization of state power.”

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This trend is *old*, going back at least to the Progressive Era.

But the trend continues — “progresses” — and Oregon’s centralizing law has been “quickly followed by the introduction of similar bills in Virginia, Washington, Minnesota, and North Carolina,” Matt Ray explains. “Now President



Biden is attempting to increase federal influence over local zoning.”

The problem should be obvious. Government land-use regulation by “zoning” is an awesome expression of *rights-abridging* power, usually becoming nothing more than what *most* regulations are: special-interest protection schemes, *helping the in-crowd at the expense of “outsiders”* (you and me, actually).

Most savvy people understand this in specific instances, but not generally, so when they see zoning they don’t like, they might leap to the notion that bad local regulations should be replaced by good state or federal regulators.

Trouble is, we have less ability to ensure that regulators in distant political centers aren’t captured by special interests or malign ideologues.

The only way out is a general rule-of-law approach, limiting *all* zoning powers. Barring that? Well, no matter how bad your city’s zoning, I wouldn’t trade it for zoning decisions from Washington.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.