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Tax Revolt Needed at Federal Level

THE taxpayer revolt in California that will slash property taxes and restore to voters the power to impose substitute taxes is being hailed hopefully as the beginning of a national trend.

Four other states have recently put restrictions on government spending and The Wall Street Journal says 17 more are waiting in line. Constitutional amendments to bar deficit spending, similar to Oklahoma's, have been approved by 23 state legislatures.

The interpretation is that Americans have had about enough spending of public funds on wasteful projects, unnecessary programs, and social reforms intended to redistribute the nation's wealth.

This very well might be the case, and it is encouraging to see more people taking an interest in government, even if only to see where their tax money is going and why.

It has gotten so bad that Congress is considering elimination of the limit on the national debt, so that members may avoid the embarrass-

ment of raising it every other year.

But there are implicit dangers in voting out state and local taxes. These hazards may be averted only if voters carry the tax revolt to the national scene and block total federal takeover.

Beneficiaries of the repealed property taxes in California immediately appealed to the governor for replacement of discontinued local funds with state money. But a legislative leader says he doubts the state can come up with as much money as the governor has proposed in replacement funds.

"Since the property tax is the main local tax, accounting for 81.2 per cent of local taxes in 1976, the implication is clear," writes Richard P. Nathan of Brookings Institution. "Increased dependence of local governments for sustenance from on high is the likely expectation. This is already happening."

The same idea is expressed in an article in U.S. News & World Report, which lists "100 Ways Washington Bankrolls the States," funnelling

some \$85 billion in federal aid to states and cities.

"The long arm of Washington is extending its reach across the nation and threatening to seize what is left of states' control over their own affairs," the article begins. State and local governments receive one-fourth of their total revenue from Washington.

The trend is accelerating in Oklahoma as elsewhere. One legislator has proposed full state funding of public schools, a move which would transfer increased authority from local school boards to state officials. Power goes where the money comes from.

The next move, if state funds should run short, would be to appeal to Washington, where a campaign for a separate federal department of education already is going on.

Unless taxpayers follow through to throw a real scare into congressmen to halt unnecessary spending on the federal level, the tax revolt could play right into the hands of the centralizers and nationalizers.