

The concept of a Private Membership Association (PMA) and the claims of sovereign citizens often intersect because both involve the idea of operating outside typical governmental oversight and asserting certain rights to self-governance. However, there are key distinctions and points of overlap that are important to understand:

Points of Overlap

1. ****Desire for Autonomy****:

- ****Sovereign Citizens****: Individuals in the sovereign citizen movement claim they are not subject to federal, state, or local laws, believing they can declare personal sovereignty and reject governmental authority. They often use pseudo-legal arguments to assert their independence.

- ****PMAs****: PMAs are formed based on the principle of private association and contract law, seeking to operate with a high degree of autonomy from public regulatory systems. They assert the right to self-governance within the bounds of their membership agreements.

2. ****Use of Private Contracts****:

- ****Sovereign Citizens****: They frequently misuse legal concepts and create their own documents and contracts, attempting to create a legal shield from governmental laws and taxes.

- ****PMAs****: PMAs rely on legally recognized private contracts among members to establish the terms of membership and operation. These contracts are intended to protect the privacy and rights of members within the association.

Key Differences

1. ****Legal Foundation****:

- ****Sovereign Citizens****: Their claims are based on fringe legal theories and interpretations that are not recognized by courts. They often face legal repercussions for attempting to circumvent laws.

- **PMA**: While PMAs seek to reduce government interference, they operate within the legal framework of contract law and constitutional rights. They do not inherently reject governmental authority but seek to limit their exposure to certain regulations through lawful means.

2. **Compliance with Law**:

- **Sovereign Citizens**: Often refuse to comply with laws, including paying taxes, obtaining licenses, or adhering to regulations, leading to frequent legal conflicts.

- **PMA**: Aim to comply with applicable laws while maximizing their autonomy. They focus on privacy and member rights but must still adhere to criminal laws and public safety regulations.

3. **Operational Scope**:

- **Sovereign Citizens**: Typically individuals or small groups who claim total independence from all government authority.

- **PMA**: Structured organizations with specific purposes, such as providing healthcare, education, or social services to their members. Their activities are private but organized within a recognized legal structure.

Misuse of PMA Concept

1. **Sovereign Citizen Exploitation**:

- Some individuals in the sovereign citizen movement may attempt to use the PMA model as a vehicle to further their agenda of avoiding government oversight. They might establish PMAs in a way that they believe shields them from legal responsibilities, though this often leads to legal challenges.

2. **Legal Risks**:

- If a PMA is used explicitly to evade laws or engage in illegal activities, it will likely face scrutiny and potential shutdown by authorities. The legitimate use of PMAs is grounded in law and respect for legal boundaries, unlike the often illegal actions taken by sovereign citizens.

Conclusion

While there are superficial similarities in the desire for autonomy between PMAs and sovereign citizens, they are fundamentally different in their legal foundations and compliance with law. PMAs operate within recognized legal frameworks to offer privacy and autonomy to their members, while sovereign citizens reject governmental authority based on unrecognized legal theories. It's crucial for PMAs to maintain their legitimacy by adhering to applicable laws and not being co-opted for unlawful purposes.