

American federalism essay sample

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This dissertation is to identify information regarding American Federalism, where we will define what is Federalism? The purpose of this paper will provide instance of how Federalism has evolved from its origins to the American political system in place today. It will explore factors that have allowed the concept of federalism to shape American political behavior. Finally, it will illustrate how the relationship between the states and the U. S. federal government influences the creation of American policies overall.

History of Federalism

The Founders were very mindful of the risks of a dictatorial government. They built a system in which the powers of each branch would be used to check the powers of the other two branches. Originally, Article IV defined the relationship between the federal government and the states in a system of federalism, which divides the power of government between national and state governments. This federal system was meant to correct the confusion of the country during the Articles of Confederation. The general intention of the Farmers seems clear - Federalism was a device to protect personal liberty.

The Founders attempted to balance order with liberty, they identified several reasons for creating a federalist government which included avoid tyranny, allow more participation in politics and to use the states as test center for new ideas and programs. In their checks and balance federalism was to prevent a person from taking control of the federal governments even though they may/could take control of the state level. The Civil War settled one part of the argument over national supremacy versus states' rights. The war's outcome made it clear that the national government was supreme, its

sovereignty derived directly from the people, and the states could not lawfully separate from the union (Wilson, Dilulio and Bose, 2014). What is Federalism?

According to (Wilson, Dilulio and Bose, 2014) Federalism is a political system in which ultimate authority is shared between a central government and state or regional governments. Federalism refers to a political system in which local territorial, regional, provincial, state, or municipal units of government, whose existence is specifically protected as well as a national government, make final decisions on some governmental activities. Each level of government has its own area of powers. No level acting alone can change the basic division of powers the constitution makes between them.

Each level operates through its own agencies and acts directly on the people through its own officials and laws. Federalism allows local and state governments to make laws about certain things and the national government to make laws about other things. Let's say that the national government has made a law saying that everyone has the right to vote at age 18 and it is no different in any state. Conversely, the states have the power to determine the speed limit in their state and the national government has no say on what the speed limit should be in any of the states (Wilson, Dilulio and Bose, 2014). How Federalism Has Evolved

At different points in time Federalism has evolved over the course of American history, the balance and boundaries between the national and state government have changed substantially. In the twentieth century, the role of the national government expanded dramatically, and it continues to

expand in the twenty-first century. Under the New Federalism during the time frame of 1969 to present, political leaders and scholars of the New Federalism school have argued that the national government has grown too powerful and that power should be given back to the states. The national government remains extremely important, state governments have regained some power. Richard Nixon began supporting New Federalism during his presidency (1969–1974), and every president since Nixon has continued to support the return of some powers to state and local governments.

Although political leaders disagree on the details, most support the general principle of giving power to the states. For instance, the 1996 welfare reforms gave states the ability to spend federal dollars as they saw fit. Supporters claim that local and state governments can be more effective because they understand the circumstances of the issue in their state. They argue that a one-size-fits-all program imposed by Washington cannot function as effectively. Another instance Americans often want a single seat of power for some tasks. Competing local and state governments can cause more problems than they solve, especially during emergencies. Remember the terrible hurricanes of 2005 that led residents of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama to demand a better, more unified national response. I lived in Tennessee where we took on a lot of the residents from Mississippi and Alabama and also seen first-hand the slow response from state and federal level.

We felt the devastation from the hurricanes (SparkNotes Editors, 2010). The Supreme Court has played a New Federalist role by siding with state governments and one of the most well-known case is the United States v. <https://assignbuster.com/american-federalism-essay-sample/>

Lopez 1995, in which the Court ruled that Congress had overstepped its authority in creating gun-free school zones. More controversially, in 2000, the Court struck down parts of the Violence against Women Act 1994, for much the same reason as in the *United States v. Morrison*. In other cases, the court has ruled that state governments cannot be sued for violating rights established by federal law. Overall, the Supreme Court in the 1990s reduced the power of the federal government in important ways, particularly in relation to the commerce clause (SparkNotes Editors, 2010). What Factors Shape Political Behaviors

In the political culture no Americans think alike, you have conservative that tends to vote republican, some are liberal that tend to vote democratic, some have negative attitudes toward public officials than others. Bottom line these attitudes determine how Americans participate, whom they vote for and what political parties they support. There are many factors including family, gender, religion, race and ethnicity, and region that contribute to American political attitudes and behavior. Let's take a look at family, the Bush family shows that politics runs in the family, George Bush Sr. was a Congressman, then President of the United States, George W. Bush was the Governor of Texas before being elected President in 2000, and Jeb Bush is the Governor of Florida (ushistory.org). Gender-women have voted strongly in recent elections for Democratic.

It is believed that women think the Democrats more so than Republicans strongly support women's issues, on issues such as equal work, equal pay, and equal legal rights. Polls indicate that many issues about which women feel most strongly, such as education and health care, are more favorably

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addressed by the Democratic Party (ushistory. org). Region-it appears that people on both sides of the coast tend to be more Democrat and the mid-west tends to vote Republicans. The Republicans are voting strongly in the southern states giving the Democrats a competitive run for the presidential elections. When everything is said and done Americans are influenced by a wide range of factors when they cast their secret votes on Election Day (ushistory. org). Relationship between States and the U. S. Federal Government

States' rights have endured a debatable topic for more than 200 years. Americans are divided about which laws should be federal, and which should be reserved to the states. The federal-state relationship has shifted more and more toward national supremacy. But some observers today believe that over the past twenty years, the balance of power is beginning to tilt back toward the states. According to the ushistory. org Presidents Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush tried to slow down the growth of the national government under the banner of “ New Federalism.” The Reagan administration's budget and policies drastically altered the relationship between the federal government and the states.

For the first time in many years federal aid to states declined, and Reagan pushed to consolidate qualified grants into block grants, which had few strings and much broader categories, such as education or highways. Richard Nixon also contributed significantly to the expansion of government and bureaucracy during his tenure in office (1969–1974). President Nixon instituted wage and price controls in 1971 and 1973, showing that he was no believer in limited government or economic freedom. He also braced the <https://assignbuster.com/american-federalism-essay-sample/>

Clean Air Act and formed the Environmental Protection Agency as well as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. With the creation of EPA and OSHA under his watch, Nixon ranks as one of the greatest expanders of bureaucracy in American history (ushistory. org). Summary

This paper has identified information regarding American Federalism, where we have defined what is Federalism? The purpose of this paper was to provide instance of how Federalism has evolved from its origins to the American political system in place today. It explored factors that have allowed the concept of federalism to shape American political behavior. Finally, it illustrated how the relationship between the states and the U. S. federal government influences the creation of American policies overall. Above all we explored how the Constitution divides power between the state and federal governments.

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