

Comparative federalism: the united states of america vs canada essay

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The federalism system of governments in the United States and Canada are basically the same in that both are governments that have a constitution and divide power between central and regional governments. However, beyond this very basic description, they vary greatly.

The initial difference is obvious in that the U. S. is a republic, and the Canadian system is a monarchy.

This means that we have an elected president to lead our democracy, and in Canada, they have a Queen or other inherent figurehead. As with any democracy, many nuances and subtleties differentiate and make parallel the two. In a democracy government officials get elected, as they are in both of the countries that I will attempt to compare and contrast. They each have various levels of government that separate levels of power. The officials elected are responsible to the citizens that have elected them in that they must dutifully represent the wishes of the people in the conducts of their business. In both countries, the levels and tiers of government resemble each other, even in that they both have cabinets to oversee large sections of government, such as financial, health, defense, and environmental concerns. Both systems allow for liberal autonomy in their provinces or states. The officials can filibuster, though in the U.

S. time is not limited as it is in Canada. However, most of the direct likenesses end there. There are many differences in the two types of governments, but some are more striking to me than others are. For instance, in Canada, political election campaigns are limited in their length to

no more than 35 days, the funding for the campaigns is extremely limited, and most of it comes from the tax coffers in that country.

Most of their leaders have no personal fortunes, nor do they spend what they may have in electoral campaigns (McKenty). They also differ in that America has been an independent country, governed by laws and a constitution of our own creation, since the 18th century, yet Canada only completed and finally passed their own constitution in 1981. Two of the more bizarre differences are that Canada has an ideal mandate known as “ the collective responsibility of the Cabinet”, a principle that means that if an official does not agree with a policy that has been recommended and/or passed, he or she must change their view and defend that policy or immediately resign. The last notable difference is in that if a law has been passed and it doesn't seem to be working out as it was originally intended; it may be swept off the books within one year (Forsey Section 5, pp. 2-3). One reform that the U.

S. could make that may make its citizens feel more united than polarized, would be to change the limits on terms for our elected officials. In Canada, when a new majority party gets elected, most all of the opposing former party leaders are vanquished from their positions as well. It seems that in America, we would have less contention between the Red and Blue houses if this were the case here, eliminating lame duck sessions that can last for years at a time.

The general overall feeling of any citizen living in a democratic nation is that it is the best way for a country to secure the liberties desired by its citizens.

We now see daily uprisings in third world nations by its citizens to obtain a democratic society and government. Though many may complain about a certain aspect of their government, few would gladly give it up for any other form. In Canada, this is true, as in America, but in Canada most of the torment doesn't seem to stem from whether their federalist system works, but should they be more of a republic than the monarchy that they currently are? The fear is that Canadians would lose their unanimity if they were to replace their Queen with a president. Because the way their constitution is written, about half of Canadians feel that it would be practically impossible for the ten provinces to agree on an elected president.

, while the other half literally feels that the Queen is simply a symbolic figurehead that in no way has any real power of ruling Canada(Elkins). In America, we have the same problem in a different way. As fifty states, we are able to unite and elect a president, but we don't always agree on the separation of powers provided in our constitution. For example, are gay marriage rights for all a state or federal decision? Should each state be allowed to police its own borders and write its own immigration policies or should the federal government determine what is best for all states, even if most states do not have the illegal alien problem that border states do? The bottom line for all federalist governments is that no matter which form of democracy they choose, their citizens are proud of and stand behind their choice in government.

They are, in their general form, envied by citizens that do not live in one and their popularity and success makes them an ideal model for new and forming governments across the world.