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FEDERALISM BRIEFING

MERIDIAN INTERNATIONAL CENTER

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***Soft Targets***

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*Federalism advocates first seek to know what is even before stating what should be. What is becomes the foundation for what stakeholders perceive as the issues, dynamics and prospects of public policy. What is must be established to eventually arrive at what might or can be.*

*So we begin by conducting a policy literature search to determine what existing federal, state and local policies now pertain to those policy issues of most interest to us. This is essential because those policies represent a perspective of what current policies are, who generated and promoted those policies, who is affected by them and what must be done to revise, reform, replace or otherwise improve policy. Those policies also direct, empower or otherwise authorize agencies to act to address the issues. In addition to the social, socioeconomic, racial and other sociological dynamics associated with public policies, the morale and performance of federal sector employees is a function of effective leadership, access to employee development resources and the authentic right to labor representation.*

*So what kinds of public policy outputs do we examine?*

*Statutes: enacted by legislatures, Congress, state legislatures. Examples are the American Rescue Program of 2021, the Affordable Health Care Act of 2010 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*

*Ordinances: Usually enacted by counties, cities (municipalities) or special districts.*

*Executive Orders: usually issued by Presidents and Governors and, in some states, mayors and county executives.*

*Court Decisions or Rulings: Usually issued by federal courts (Supreme, Circuit or Federal District Courts), state courts, local courts, regulatory commissions such as public utility commissions or federal regulatory agencies.*

*Administrative Rules and Regulations: issued by administrative agencies at the federal level and indicated and archived in The Federal Register or state registers.*

*Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars.*

*Strategic Plans, including plans produced by each administrative agency at the federal level and Comprehensive Plans controlling land use and zoning enacted by county and municipal governments*

*So, one reality for any public policy is federalism: the distribution of legal and political authority and power among levels of government. In the United States, the levels include the federal (national) level, state and local levels of government.*

*Virtually all nations of the world have some units of local government---states, republics, provinces, regions, cities, counties, villages below the national level. Decentralization of policy-making is required almost everywhere. But nations are not truly federal unless both national and sub-national governments exercise separate and autonomous authority, both elect their own officials, and both tax their own citizens for the provision of public services. Moreover, federalism requires the powers of the national and sub-national governments to be guaranteed by a constitution that cannot be changed without the consent of both national and sub-national populations. Thomas R. Dye, Understanding Public Policy, 15th edition (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice-Hall, 2016), p. 273.*

*Each level of government has a vital relevance for elections in the United States. The federal (national) government is responsible for enforcing the rights of all citizens, including women, racial and ethnic minorities. Although each and all of the fifty states have their own state election laws and systems, local registrars of voters also have a legal and formal role in scope and scale in certifying political parties, eligible voters and campaign behavior. The 13th, 14th, 15th and 19th amendments to the U.S. constitution are particularly relevant as they were originally developed and often used in court to protect racial and other minorities and even state rights in many areas of the law, including elections. However, states and localities have the lead role in federalism in establishing and enforcing election law in U.S.*

*States are responsible for protecting citizenship rights within states, including the right to vote, join political parties and hold public or elected office. Local governments set standards for elections and register voters through city and county Registrars of Voters.*

*All actions of government must ultimately conform to the requirements of the United States Constitution as interpreted by the federal courts and the U.S. Supreme Court.* *These constitutional requirements and interpretations are consistent with the democratic values of the U.S. political system.* *The processes of federalism are designed to make a major contribution to conflict and dispute resolution by providing citizens, federal, state and local government with tools and instruments for preventing, managing and resolving conflict.*

1. KEY VALUES IN U.S. POLITICS (The basis of not only citizenship rights but also the subdivision of legal and political authority to states and localities)

INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY

POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY (REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY)

SEPARATION OF POWERS

FEDERALISM

RULE BY LAW (CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY)

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH THE BUDGET PROCESS AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

VOLUNTEERISM: From helping neighbors to volunteering for military service

1. KEY LEGAL AND ETHICAL SOURCES IN THE U.S. POLITICAL SYSTEM:
* U.S. CONSTITUTION
* STATE CONSTITUTIONS
* LOCAL CHARTERS
* CONGRESSIONAL STATUTES
* STATE LEGISLATIVE STATUTES
* LOCAL ORDINANCES
* PRESIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE ORDERS
* GOBINATORIAL EXECUTIVE ORDERS
* FEDERAL RULES, REGULATIONS
* STATE/LOCAL RULES, REGULATIONS

THE JUDICIARY

In the [United States court system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Courts_of_the_United_States), the [Supreme Court](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_the_United_States) is the final authority on the interpretation of the federal Constitution and all statutes and regulations created pursuant to it, as well as the constitutionality of the various state laws; in the [US federal court system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_federal_courts), federal cases are tried in [trial courts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trial_court), known as the [US district courts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_district_court), followed by [appellate courts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appellate_court) and then the Supreme Court. [State courts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_court_%28United_States%29), which try 98% of [litigation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Litigation)] may have different names and organization; trial courts may be called "courts of common plea", appellate courts "superior courts" or "commonwealth courts".[]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judiciary#cite_note-10) The judicial system, whether state or federal, begins with a court of first instance, is appealed to an appellate court, and then ends at the court of last resort.

The judiciary (also known as the judicial system or court system) is the system of [courts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Court) that interprets and applies both constitutional and statutory [law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law) in the name of the nation. Each state has a system of state courts to apply state constitutional and statutory law. The judiciary also provides a mechanism for the [resolution of disputes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dispute_resolution). Under the doctrine of the [separation of powers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_powers), the judiciary generally does not make law (that is, in a plenary fashion, which is the responsibility of the legislature) or enforce law (which is the responsibility of the executive), but rather interprets law and applies it to the facts of each case. This branch of the state is often tasked with ensuring [equal justice under law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equal_justice_under_law). It usually consists of a court of final appeal (called the "[Supreme court](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_court)" or "[Constitutional court](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_court)"), together with lower courts.

The Federal District Courts and the U.S. Courts of Appeal are decentralized into thirteen districts to make citizen access easier. Only the Supreme Court is located exclusively in Washington, D.C. All federal (national) judges are nominated by the President but must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate. They serve for life.

Key Citizenship Constitutional Provisions:

* The Bill of Rights
* Article I, Section 8: “The Congress shall have the power…..To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.”
* The 10th amendment states: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”
* The 11th amendment states: “The Judicial power of the United States should not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity, commenced or prosecuted against one of the United States by citizens of another state, or by citizens or subjects of any foreign state.”
* The 14th amendment provides, as among its provisions, Section 1, “No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of the law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” Section 5: “The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.”
* Article VI states: “This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof; and all the treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and Judges in every state shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any state to the contrary notwithstanding.”

*The supremacy of federal laws over those of the states is therefore clearly articulated in the federal constitution. This supremacy is expressed in the ideas of preemption, partial preemption* and *standard partial preemption. Preemption disallows states to develop state laws in areas reserved by the constitution for the federal government such as copyrights, bankruptcy, patents, currency and international affairs. Partial preemption allows states to legislate in the same area as the federal government as long as those laws don’t directly conflict with federal law. Standard partial preemption allows states to legislate where federal law exists as long as states are within the federal standard.*

*Among the implied powers of state governments is the power to create and regulate such local governments as municipalities, counties, villages, townships, independent public school districts and special districts.*

[*Although state*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._state) *law regulates most aspects of electoral law, including primaries, the eligibility of voters (beyond the basic constitutional definition), the running of each state's electoral college, and the running of state and local elections. The* [*United States Constitution*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution) *defines (to a basic extent) how federal elections are held, in* [*Article One*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Article_One_of_the_United_States_Constitution) *and* [*Article Two*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Article_Two_of_the_United_States_Constitution) *and various* [*amendments*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_amendments_to_the_United_States_Constitution)*. The federal government has also been involved in attempts to increase* [*voter turnout*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voter_turnout)*, by measures such as the* [*National Voter Registration Act of 1993*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Voter_Registration_Act_of_1993)*.*

*The financing of elections has always been controversial, because private sources of finance make up substantial amounts of campaign contributions, especially in federal elections. Voluntary public funding for candidates willing to accept spending limits was introduced in 1974 for presidential primaries and elections. The* [*Federal Elections Commission*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Elections_Commission)*, created in 1975 by an amendment to the* [*Federal Election Campaign Act*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Election_Campaign_Act) *has the responsibility to disclose campaign finance information, to enforce the provisions of the law such as the limits and prohibitions on contributions, and to oversee the public funding of U.S. presidential elections.*

*Presidential Elections*

*The President and the Vice President are elected together in a Presidential election. The election is indirect, the winner being determined by votes cast by electors of the Electoral College. In modern times, voters in each state select a slate of electors from a list of several slates designated by different parties or candidates, and the electors typically promise in advance to vote for the candidates of their party (whose names usually appear on the ballot rather than those of the individual electors). The winner of the election is the candidate with at least 270 Electoral College votes. It is possible for a candidate to win the* [*electoral vote*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electoral_vote)*, and lose the (nationwide)* [*popular vote*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular_vote) *(receive fewer votes nationwide than the second ranked candidate). This was the case in the year 2000 when Democrat Al Gore received more popular votes than Republican George Bush but lost the electoral vote to Bush. This was also the case in the 2016 elections where Donald J. Trump won the electoral vote by 306 to 232 for Hillary Clinton but Clinton won the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes. Until the* [*Twelfth Amendment to the United States Constitution*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelfth_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution) *of 1804, the runner-up in a Presidential election became the Vice President.*

*In the Presidential Election of 2020, former Vice-President Joseph Biden received 306 Electoral votes to President Donald Trump’s 232 Electoral votes to win the Presidency.*

*Electoral College votes are cast by individual states by a group of electors, each elector casts one electoral college vote. Until the* [*Twenty-third Amendment to the United States Constitution*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty-third_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution) *of 1961 the* [*District of Columbia*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/District_of_Columbia) *citizens did not have representation and/or electors in the electoral college. In modern times, with electors usually committed to vote for a party candidate in advance, electors that vote against the popular vote in their state are called* [*faithless electors*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faithless_electors)*, and occurrences are rare. State law regulates how states cast* *their electoral college votes. In all states except* [*Maine*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maine) *and* [*Nebraska*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebraska)*, the candidate that wins the most votes in the state receives all its electoral college votes (a "winner takes all" system). From 1969 in Maine, and from 1991 in Nebraska, two electoral votes are awarded based on the winner of the statewide election, and the rest (two in Maine, three in Nebraska) go to the highest vote-winner in each of the state's congressional districts. Incumbent Presidents and challengers usually seek to have a "balanced ticket", so that the Presidential candidate and the Vice Presidential candidates have complementary political support and political roles, allowing them to do well among different constituencies. Usually, there is some kind of balance, for example geographical, ideological, or in terms of (especially federal) government experience. The nominated Vice Presidential candidate is called the "running mate". Although incumbent Presidents can be challenged in the primaries, none have lost their party's nomination in recent times (although* [*Gerald Ford*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerald_Ford) *in 1976 came close). The last incumbent President to not seek a second term was* [*Lyndon B. Johnson*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyndon_B._Johnson)*, who stepped down after serving the remainder of* [*John F. Kennedy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_F._Kennedy)*'s term and another full term (he was eligible for another term).*

*The electoral college has long been criticized, for several reasons. It has been criticized for being undemocratic compared to a direct system of election. Another criticism is that it creates inequality between voters in different states during the* [*presidential election*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._presidential_election)*. Usually, only voters in* [*swing states*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swing_states) *determine the outcome of the election and as a result, it is claimed that the vast majority of Americans, who live in non-competitive states, are largely ignored by political campaigns. If the electoral college were abolished and if the whole country were treated as one district for Presidential elections, then the result would* *not depend on crucial swing states. It also creates inequality in that the populations of very small states, which have a minimum of 3 Electoral college votes, are overrepresented compared with voters from larger states. For example, Wyoming has a population of 493,782 and 3 EC votes, 164,594 people per EC vote. California has a population of 33,871,648 and 55 EC votes, 615,848 people per EC vote. Abolishing the college and replacing it with a national direct system would also prevent a candidate from receiving fewer votes nationwide than their opponent, but still winning more electoral votes, which last occurred in the* [*2000 Presidential election*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_2000)*. Also, the electoral college discriminates against candidates who do not have support concentrated in several states. In 1992,* [*Ross Perot*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ross_Perot) *won 18.9% of the national vote, but received no electoral college votes. The electoral college would require a* [*constitutional amendment*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_amendment) *to be abolished, and since three-quarters of state legislatures would be required to ratify an amendment that would effectively redistribute voting power from many small states to numerically fewer large states, it is thought that an amendment would fail.*

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| * [1788](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1788%E2%80%931789)
* [1792](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1792)
* [1796](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1796)
* [1800](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1800)
* [1804](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1804)
* [1808](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1808)
* [1812](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1812)
* [1816](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1816)
* [1820](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1820)
* [1824](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1824)
* [1828](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1828)
* [1832](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1832)
* [1836](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1836)
* [1840](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1840)
* [1844](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1844)
* [1848](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1848)
* [1852](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1852)
* [1856](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1856)
* [1860](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1860)
* [1864](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1864)
* [1868](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1868)
* [1872](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1872)
* [1876](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1876)
* [1880](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1880)
* [1884](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1884)
* [1888](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1888)
* [1892](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1892)
* [1896](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1896)
* [1900](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1900)
* [1904](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1904)
* [1908](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1908)
* [1912](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1912)
* [1916](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1916)
* [1920](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1920)
* [1924](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1924)
* 1928
* [1932](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1932)
* [1936](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1936)
* [1940](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1940)
* [1944](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1944)
* [1948](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1948)
* [1952](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1952)
* [1956](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1956)
* [1960](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1960)
* [1964](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1964)
* [1968](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1968)
* [1972](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1972)
* [1976](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1976)
* [1980](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1980)
* [1984](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1984)
* [1988](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1988)
* [1992](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1992)
* [1996](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_1996)
* [2000](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_2000)
* [2004](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_2004)
* [2008](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_2008)
* *[2012](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_2012)*

[Electoral College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electoral_College_%28United_States%29)* [Electoral vote changes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electoral_vote_changes_between_United_States_presidential_elections)
* [Electoral votes by state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_electoral_votes_by_US_state)
* [Results by Electoral College margin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_presidential_elections_by_Electoral_College_margin)
* [Results by popular vote margin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_presidential_elections_by_popular_vote_margin)
* [Results by state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_presidential_election_results_by_state)
* [Voter turnout](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voter_turnout_in_the_United_States_presidential_elections)
* [Presidential primaries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_primary)
* [Presidential nominating conventions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_nominating_convention)
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| See also[House elections](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template%3AU.S._House_elections)[Senate elections](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template%3AU.S._Senate_elections)[Gubernatorial elections](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template%3AU.S._gubernatorial_elections) |

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1. Key Roles of Citizens:
	* Registering and exercising the vote
	* Maintaining detailed and accurate awareness of policy issues
	* Lawful payment of federal, state and local taxes
	* Interest group formation and activity
	* Pressure group formation and action
	* Development and use of lobbies
	* Service as elected officials
	* Services on boards, commissions, advisory committees and task forces
	* Community and grass roots mobilization, advocacy, coalitions and negotiation
	* The Initiative, Referendum and Recall

Americans elect most of their government officials, including:

#### FEDERAL LEVEL: President, Vice-President

*100 United States Senators*

*435 Members of the House of Representatives*

*(The Senate and the House of Representatives together constitute the United States Congress)*

*STATE LEVEL: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, The state legislature (usually an upper and lower house except for Nebraska with just a state senate);*

*Administrative officials such as State Treasurer, Attorney General or Comptroller (the chief budget officer)*

*Judicial level: only Texas elects all state judges.*

*LOCAL LEVEL: Counties: county executive (sometimes appointed), county council or commission and officers such as sheriff, county clerk;*

*Municipalities: Mayor, city council,*

*Townships and villages: Mayor and city council*

*Independent School districts: School Board*

*Special Districts: The Board of the Special District*

*There are about 514,000 elected officials in the U.S., mostly at the local level.*

***Voter registration***

*Every state except* [*North Dakota*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Dakota) *requires that citizens who wish to vote be registered. Some states allow citizens to register to vote on the same day of the election, see below. Traditionally, voters had to register at state offices to vote, but in the mid-1990s efforts were made by the federal government to make registering easier, in an attempt to increase turnout. The* [*National Voter Registration Act of 1993*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Voter_Registration_Act_of_1993) *(the "Motor Voter" law) required state governments that receive certain types of federal funding to make the voter registration process easier by providing uniform registration services through drivers' license registration centers, disability centers, schools, libraries, and mail-in registration. States with same-day registration are exempt from Motor Voter; namely: Idaho, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.*

*ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES*

*Americans vote for a specific candidate instead of directly selecting a particular political party. The* [*United States Constitution*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution) *has never formally addressed the issue of political parties. The* [*Founding Fathers*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founding_Fathers_of_the_United_States) *such as* [*Alexander Hamilton*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Hamilton) *and* [*James Madison*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Madison) *did not support domestic* [*political factions*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_faction) *at the time the Constitution was written.*

 *In addition, the first* [*President of the United States*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States)*,* [*George Washington*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington)*, was not a member of any political party at the time of his election or throughout his tenure as president. Furthermore, he hoped that political parties would not be formed, fearing conflict and stagnation.*

*Nevertheless, the beginnings of the American* [*two-party system*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two-party_system) *emerged from his immediate circle of advisers.*

*Thus, it is up to the candidate to decide under what party he/she should run, registers to run, pays the fees, and other activities associated with party membership. In the* [*primary elections*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_elections)*, the party organization stays neutral until one candidate has been elected. The platform of the party is written by the winning candidate (in presidential elections; in other elections no platform is involved). Each candidate has his or her own campaign, fund raising organization, etc. The primary elections in the main parties is organized by the states, who also register the party* *affiliation of the voters (this also makes it easier to* [*gerrymander*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerrymander) *the congressional districts). The party is thus little more than a campaign organization for the main elections.*

*However, elections in the United States often do become de facto national races between the political parties. In what is known as "*[*presidential coattails*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coattail_effect)*", candidates in presidential elections usually bring out supporters who then vote for his party's candidates for other offices. On the other hand, midterm elections are sometimes regarded as a referendum on the sitting president's and/or incumbent party's performance.*

*The Effect of the Media on U.S Presidential Elections*

*Posted on* [*November 10, 2011*](http://politicsandmediatoday.wordpress.com/2011/11/10/the-effect-of-the-media-on-u-s-presidential-elections/) *by* [*Brittany Alexander*](http://politicsandmediatoday.wordpress.com/author/baalexander09/)

*“The mass media performs six main functions: entertainment, reporting the news, identifying public issues, socializing new generations, providing political forum, and making profits” (Helium 2011). The media plays a significant role in the development of government. The media gives people the option to choose a political party, form opinions on government parties and government decisions, and manage their own interests. From newspapers to radio to television to the Internet, the media is the leading factor in political communication and fund-raising.
In the article, “The Influence of Media in Presidential Politics,” Vive Griffith focuses on the power the media has gained especially during the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. President Roosevelt was faced with some of the largest problems that the nation has ever dealt with, but he knew how to communicate with the citizens. President Roosevelt kept America up to date with current events using weekly radio. Many politicians then realized the importance of using mass media in order to gain support for themselves and the legislation they were trying to pass (Helium 2011).*

*The news media are an important part of American politics and helps define American culture. The rise of new communications technologies has made the media more influential throughout American society. The news media provide a link between presidential candidates and the public. The influence of the mass media over public opinion is extremely significant yet not overwhelming. Presidential campaigns are dominated by media coverage. Television has changed the character of American politics. According to The Media and American Politics, the average American watches 4.3 hours per day, and most homes have at least two sets. Television provides instant news from around the country and the globe. Candidates spend most of their time creating strategies to get the most impact on television viewers. Types of coverage used by candidates for any office include: advertising, management of news coverage, and campaign debates. The appearance of candidates in presidential debates is as important as the news coverage itself (Helium).*

### MAJOR PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES IN THE 2020 U.S. ELECTIONS:

----COVID RESPONSE AND MANAGEMENT

---Economic Recovery, Relief and Stimulus

---Employment Expansion

----Taxes at all levels of government

----Health Care

----Declining infrastructure

----Federal Spending, including both the national Deficit and the National Debt

-----Social Security and Medicare

-----Defense and National Security, including Homeland security

----Individual liberties, including gun control, Freedom of expression and religious freedom

----Immigration

**GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE U.S. POLITICAL SYSTEM AND FEDERALISM AS A CONTEXT FOR ELECTIONS**

*4. TAXES IN THE FEDERAL SYSTEM*

* *FEDERAL: Income taxes, corporate taxes, Federal excise taxes*
* *STATE: Income taxes, corporate taxes, property* taxes, state excise taxes, state sales taxes, state estate taxes, inheritance taxes, real estate transfer taxes
* LOCAL: Income taxes (rare), property taxes, sales taxes, estate taxes, franchise taxes, payroll taxes, user fees (for immediate use of transit, parks, and other kinds of local services such as fees for tourists)
* Federal grants and revenue-sharing with states and localities enable states and localities to pursue their own public policy purposes.
1. DISTRIBUTION OF GOVERNMENT POWER

FEDERAL POWERS: National defense, foreign and diplomatic relations, interstate commerce, domestic emergency powers

STATES AND LOCALITIES: health, education, welfare, law enforcement, public works, parks and recreation, industry regulation within the state

(See Article I, Section 10 and the 10th amendment in the United States Constitution)

6. THE PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS AND U.S. ELECTIONS:

# AGENDA-SETTING

* POLICY DESIGN/FORMULATION
* POLICY ADOPTION
* POLICY IMPLEMENTATION
* POLICY ASSESSMENT OR
* EVALUATING PUBLIC POLICY

# 9. DATA ON DISTRIBUTION OF GOVERNMENT TYPES IN THE FEDERAL SYSTEM, 2021 ESTIMATES

## TYPE NUMBER

### FEDERAL 1

STATES 50

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

COUNTIES 3,300

MUNICIPALITIES 21,000

TOWNSHIPS, VILLAGES,

HAMLETS 16,629

SCHOOL DISTRICTS 13,726

SPECIAL DISTRICTS 41,200

# TOTAL 94,855

### FEDERAL BUDGET FY18: 7.0-7.2 TRILLION, 2021 estimate: 7.6 TRILLION DOLLARS

STATE/LOCAL BUDGETS (combined): $3.2-3.3 TRILLION

GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT: $ 24.8 TRILLION

Women in Politics:

See www.cawp@rutgers.edu This is the center on women in politics of the Eagleton Institute at Rutgers and includes data on the number and distribution of female office holders in the U.S.

See also the website of the League of Women Voters.

[www.lwv.org/](http://www.lwv.org/)

**Suggested Readings**

Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers.* (New York: Bantam Classics, 2003).

Sandy L. Maisel and Mark D. Brewer, *Parties and Elections in America: The Electoral Process.* Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 6th Edition, 2011.

Thomas Dye, *Understanding Public Policy*, 15th Edition

(Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, Pearson/Prentice-Hall, 2016).

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture Revisted*  (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism* (Oxford University Press, 1994).

Joseph C. Ellers and Lindsay Graham, *American Government and the Case for a Return to Federalism* (1st Books Library, 2000).

Charles R. Wise, “The Supreme Court’s New Constitutional Federalism: Implications for Public Administration, *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 61, No. 3, May/June 2001.

Gottfried Dietz, *The Federalist: A Classic on Federalism and Free Government* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

**Periodicals**

* *The National Political Science Review*
* *The National Civic Review*
* *The Journal of Politics*
* *State and Local Government Review*
* *Public Administration Review*

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