

FEDERALISTS AND ANTI-FEDERALISTS

Federalism: What Is It?

Federalism is a system of government that divides power between a central government and smaller units of government, such as state or local governments. The term federal government refers to the central government that unites all the smaller governments. The United States has a federal system: There is a central United States government, but at the same time each state has its own independent government. Some powers belong to the federal government, some powers belong to state governments, and some powers belong to both.

Who Needs a Central Government?

As the United States was being born, the Founders experimented with several types of government. The first one was organized under an agreement called the Articles of Confederation. It created a central government that had very little power. Most of the power was given to the state governments. This gave the states a lot of independence, but it also created problems. So the Founders tried again, and this time they wrote the Constitution. Signed by representatives from every state, the Constitution created a stronger central government that shared power with the states. But when the Constitution was sent to the states for approval, some of the founders fought against it. People split into two groups that argued bitterly about certain parts of the proposed Constitution.

Anti-Federalists: Down with Central Government!

Anti-federalists wanted a small central government. They believed local governments best understood what citizens needed and would best protect citizens' freedom. Anti-Federalists opposed parts of the Constitution they thought limited the power of the states. They feared that a strong central government would overpower state governments, and eventually state governments would lose their independence and influence. They also didn't like that the original Constitution did not guarantee citizens any specific rights. They feared that a central government would become so powerful it would be just like having a king.



Federalists: Yay for Central Government!

Federalists wanted a strong central government. They believed that a strong central government was necessary if the states were going to band together to form a nation. A strong central government could represent the nation to other countries. It could also control individual states that would not cooperate with the rest. Federalists also believed that a strong central government could best protect individual citizens' rights and freedoms. Federalists were not afraid of the central government created by the Constitution because it had three branches—the executive, legislative, and judicial—that could limit each other's power. That way, the central government could not become too powerful.



A Compromise

In the end, the Federalists and Anti-Federalists found a compromise and the Constitution was accepted. Federalists agreed to add ten amendments, or changes, to the end of the Constitution. These amendments guaranteed a list of rights to citizens and are known as the Bill of Rights. The Anti-Federalists were pleased with this addition because the Bill of Rights limited the central government's power.



Who Would Say That? Read each statement. If it sounds like something a Federalist would have said to support the Constitution, write F in the box. If it sounds like something an Anti-Federalist would have said to complain about the Constitution, write A on the line.

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| <u> A </u> 1. The Constitution gives the federal government enough power to overpower the states. | <u> A </u> 7. The President created by the Constitution is really just a king. |
| <u> F </u> 2. It will not be possible for the federal government to overpower the states, because the states are a necessary part of the federal government. | <u> F </u> 8. A strong President is necessary to protect the country against foreign attack and make sure laws are carried out properly. |
| <u> A </u> 3. The Constitution contains no Bill of Rights to protect individual liberties like freedom of speech, trial by jury, and the right against searches and seizures. | <u> A </u> 9. The Constitution creates a Supreme Court that is too powerful because the judges don't answer to anyone. |
| <u> A </u> 4. The Constitution says federal laws are "the supreme law of the land," so the federal government could just take complete control. | <u> A </u> 10. The Supreme Court is the weakest branch of government because it doesn't control the military and can't pass laws. |
| <u> F </u> 5. Nothing in the Constitution says the federal government has power to limit peoples' freedoms in the first place. | <u> F </u> 11. The Constitution forbids creating titles of nobility like "Duke" or "King," so the government will always belong to the people. |
| <u> F </u> 6. The Constitution gives the federal government just a few powers that are very well defined. | <u> F </u> 12. The Constitution is a Bill of Rights because it guarantees citizens a role in government. |