



Constitutional Principles and  
Structures: SS.7.CG.3.4  
**Federalism**  
**READING #1**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**SS.7.CG.3.4 Benchmark Clarification 1:** Students will describe the system of federalism as established by the U.S. Constitution.

**Federalism** is a system of government where power is shared between the central (national) government and the states. Under the Articles of Confederation, a **confederal system** of government existed – which meant there was a weak central government. The Articles of Confederation caused many problems for the new nation because the central government had so little power, so a new constitution was written.

The United States Constitution is based on the idea of federalism – in other words, the idea that power is shared between the national, state, and local governments. Federalism helped to fix many of the problems caused by the Articles of Confederation by creating a balance between central (national) and state powers.

According to the Constitution, powers are set aside specifically for the national government (**enumerated** powers, also known as **delegated** powers), for state governments only (**reserved** powers), or for both (**concurrent** powers). When writing the U.S. Constitution, the Founding Fathers were concerned about giving too much power to the national government, so they decided to list the specific powers of Congress. These powers are called **enumerated** or **delegated powers**. When the **necessary and proper clause** was added to the Constitution, it was so broad that it allowed Congress to have many powers that were not listed but were “necessary and proper” for Congress to use its enumerated/delegated powers.

The **Tenth Amendment** to the Constitution was added as the last Amendment in the **Bill of Rights**. The Tenth Amendment says: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited to it by the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

The Tenth Amendment does not list any specific powers. Instead, it broadly says that all powers not given to the national government are reserved for the states and the people. This leaves the meaning of **reserved powers** open to interpretation in the states.

It is important to remember that even though the Tenth Amendment reserves powers for the states, no state is allowed to make laws or take actions that violate the Constitution. In the Constitution, this is called the **Supremacy Clause**. This means that the Constitution is the “Supreme Law of the Land.”

**Bill of Rights** - the first ten amendments of the U.S. Constitution

**concurrent powers** - powers shared by the national, state, and/or local government

**confederal system** - a system of government where power is located with the independent states and there is little power in the central government

**enumerated or delegated powers** - the powers specifically named and assigned to the federal government or prohibited to be exercised by the states under the U.S. Constitution

**federalism** - a system of government in which power is divided and shared between national, state, and local government

**necessary and proper clause** - the power of Congress to make laws that they need to carry out their enumerated powers

**reserved powers** - powers that are not granted to the federal government that belong to (are reserved to) the states and the people; see Tenth Amendment

**Supremacy clause** - the clause that states that the U.S. Constitution is the supreme law of the land, and that national laws are supreme over state laws, found in Article VI (six)

**Tenth Amendment** - the final amendment in the Bill of Rights, it 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."