



Constitutional Principles and
Structures: SS.7.CG.3.4
Federalism
READING #2

Name: _____

Date: _____



SS.7.CG.3.4 Benchmark Clarification 2: Students will analyze how federalism limits government power.

The U.S. Constitution was written because of concerns about the weaknesses of the **Articles of Confederation**. The two major weaknesses were:

1. The national government had very little power. There was a national Congress, but it did not have the power to tax the people to raise money or to raise a national army or navy.
2. Because there was no strong national government, the states could act like independent nations. This meant the states could have independent relationships with other countries (such as making treaties or trade agreements). They also argued with other states (such as the use of rivers or lakes bordering more than one state).

The Articles of Confederation did not encourage national unity (togetherness) or a sense of nationhood among the states.

The U.S. Constitution was written because the Founding Fathers wanted to solve these problems. The founders had a big goal. They needed to limit state power (because the states had independent power under the Articles of Confederation) while at the same time creating a national government with limited power. They created a system of **federalism**, where the national government had its own powers, shared some powers with the states, and gave the states some of their own powers.

For example, only the national government has the power to raise and support armies (an **enumerated/delegated** power). Still, it is up to the states to decide whether or not citizens must be registered to vote before election day (a **reserved power**). Both the state and national governments have the power to tax (a **concurrent power**).

The most important thing to remember about federalism is that it is supposed to limit the national government's power through sharing power with the states.

Articles of Confederation - the first constitution of the United States

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

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