

## Reading Passage (231 words ): Advantages of Federalism

When states form a league, alliance, or union such that each state maintains separate sovereignty to some degree regarding purely local matters, but otherwise centralizes government for national purposes, they establish a "federal government".

Many Americans feel loyal ties to their home states, and federalism maintains that connection by giving power to the states. Running a country the size of the United States, with such a diverse population, is more practical to do if power is given to local officials. Likewise, state and local officials are closer to the problems of their areas, so it makes sense for them to choose policies to solve those problems. Thus, federalism foster state loyalty and is practical.

In addition, federalism creates laboratories of democracy. State governments can experiment with policies, and other states (and the federal government) can learn from their successes and failures. For example, California has frequently led the nation in environmental regulations: Many measures adopted by California are subsequently adopted by other states. And during the 1990s, Wisconsin governor Tommy Thompson experimented with welfare policy, and those experiments influenced federal welfare reform.

Finally, federalism ensures the separation of powers and prevents tyranny. Even if one person or group took control of all three branches of the federal government, federalism ensures that state governments would still function independently. Federalism, therefore, fulfills the framers' vision of a governmental structure that ensures liberty.

Writing Prompt: Summarize the lecture explaining how it casts doubt on the information in the reading passage.

## Lecture (533 words): Disadvantages of Federalism

There is no perfect government in the world today, and governments which practice federalism such as the United States also have problems due to this decentralized form of government.

Federalism, which divides the state and federal powers, can sometimes create conflicting loyalties from the citizens of its government. On the one hand, citizens manifest their loyalty to the United States, for example, by supporting national laws such as immigration. But in some cases, the Federal government for whatever reason stops enforcing laws it once passed. Since states also have powers to create their own laws, they can create laws which are different from the national laws. Thus, citizens now have conflicting loyalties between the state and federal laws. To be sure, the United States Supreme Court has determined that, when a state law is in conflict with a federal law, the federal law supersedes the state law. Nevertheless, there are conflicting loyalties that may exist in this type of government.

Another potential problem with federalism is that, even though it creates laboratories of democracies among its states by allowing them to experiment with their own policies, there is no single policy on issues; instead, it has fifty-one policies from each of its fifty-one states, which often leads to confusion. For example, most people in the US opposed gay marriage in the past, but recently more and more people are accepting same-sex marriage unions. This increased support is reflected in several states now having legalized gay marriage. But the confusing aspect of this is some states declare gay marriage legal, whereas other states continue to not recognize same-sex marriage unions. Furthermore, to make things even more confusing, the federal government has not taken a stand on this issue and continues to leave the issue of gay marriage to the states. Therefore, there is no single policy on gay marriage, and each state is left to make up its own mind regarding the issue.

Lastly, even though federalism separates the powers between the federal government and the states, thereby possibly preventing tyranny, it may lead to a lack of accountability. The overlap of the boundaries among national and state governments makes it tricky to assign blame for failed policies. For example, the fact that there are 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States right now has states blaming the federal government and the federal government blaming the states for failed immigration policies. For example, many states claim that the federal government has not enforced its borders for a while now, and, consequently, many undocumented immigrants have flooded into the United States in search of jobs and a better life. In a nutshell, some states claim that the United States government has failed to do its job of keeping the borders closed to illegal immigration. In contrast, the federal government blames states for this influx of illegal immigration. Immigration-friendly states like California and Nevada, officials claim, have passed laws encouraging immigrants to cross the border in order to take advantage of free education and healthcare. And round and round the states and federal government go with no clear accountability or solutions to fix the immigration problems confronting us today.