

A federal republic form of government: What is it? Why does it work? Do we still have one? Why are town governments critical to its success?

A federal republic is defined as “a government in which citizens elect officials to run the government according to laws that restrict the power of the central government and give regional units the ability to self-govern”. In using the United States as an example, the central government (federal government) typically handles security and defense, while matters of infrastructure such as road upkeep and education are handled at the regional or “state and local” level.

A federal republic works because the responsibilities are defined at each level. People with firsthand experiences and knowledge of the workings at each level of government receive a voice in deciding rules and regulations that affect their area of responsibility directly. It allows each smaller unit to make rules that work best for their area, while still being treated as one nation in dealing with larger issues such as interactions with foreign countries. This past year I was able to vote on the federal level for the President of the United States. I chose my candidate based on his views of foreign policy, security and his views on providing sustainable healthcare. Most recently in spring elections, I again had the opportunity to vote for local government officials who I know make decisions on the upkeep of the roads I use and keep my area safe by controlling permits for building, burning and fireworks.

The United States clearly has a “federal republic” style of government because we elect officials to represent us in the law-making body and we elect a “leader” at the federal, state, county, city, and town level. The process at the federal and state levels however is no longer what our initial forefathers intended. In the infancy of our country, a candidate would simply speak their intentions, concerns and views in an honest manner to be elected. Now, however, a campaigning style of addressing what is also wrong with your opponent is necessary for a candidate to stand out to the voting body. There is also a great need for monetary assistance from donors along with campaign teams and staff. Additionally, our society has made fame and handling publicity, a large part of being a politician. Thus, the “average Joe” who desires to participate in politics to make changes may not have a chance at getting elected on a state or federal level.

Town governments are a critical layer in a federal republic government because they take care of the local needs of the towns people. They operate very similar to the larger layers of government by having a budget, collecting taxes and reporting back to the people they serve on how the money was spent. As with all levels of government, expense control is important. Town governments negotiate pricing with local fire and emergency agencies for providing services for the area. Town governments are also responsible for the upkeep of town roads. This upkeep includes making decisions on road repair and can also involve daily decisions on when to spend money on snow plowing and debris cleanup. Additionally, at times, disputes among neighbors occur which may be handled at the Town Board level. Town governments work to make decisions and provide services that best suit their specific area and citizens.