

Government From Local To Federal by Krista Krultz

Can you imagine living in an autocratic country? This would mean that everyone living there would be ruled by one person. The citizens would have no say in any decisions that were made that would directly affect where and how they live. What about living in an anarchy? There would be no government or any kind of social control there, for that matter. People living there would make decisions on their own. Nobody would be able to tell anybody what to do. Maybe you have heard of a matriarchy? It is a community or society that is ruled by women who usually also own and control property. Kleptocracy? I have not even heard of this, but it is a government that allows the ruling class to have great wealth and power and basically just ignores the rest of the citizens. These are just a few ways large masses of people are governed. I find it reassuring that I do not live under any of these types of governmental controls. Most of them sound chaotic, but what exactly does the United States of America have as their government?

Officially, the United States has what is known as a federal republic form of government. This basically means that we, as citizens, elect officials to run the government according to laws that were created to keep the central government from becoming too powerful. The powers of the government are shared between the central government and the individual states. The entire United States of America is considered the federal government and then each state has their government as well as the counties and townships within the states. Typically, the federal level deals with issues that are of national concern like the monetary policy, security, defense, make/enforce laws, and regulate trade within other countries and states. The state governments deal with issues that only specifically affect their state. Some of these include: issuing licenses (hunting, marriage, etc.), regulate businesses, conduct elections, provide for public health and

safety, and exercise powers that are not given to the national government nor are prohibited from the state governments.

Lastly, the town governments also have different roles. At this level, they basically set up the overall direction of their local area. They create financial, land use decisions, and many other plans. They are also in charge of setting up multiple services for their community like recreational areas, emergency services, road maintenance and even ensuring public health. Since the federal government can only enforce issues that are defined in the constitution and it is difficult to add to or change the constitution, local governments can be more effective and efficient. They have more control and power in a way, to change and develop decisions that affect day to day living. It takes months and even years for the federal government to enact laws that would result in changes for the United States versus weeks or months for the local government to make a change to the local area. For example, if the owners of four wheelers are requesting to establish a route which would allow them to drive on certain township roads, the matter would be placed on the agenda for the local government to discuss and the issue would be decided shortly. This is an issue the federal government cannot decide. The federal government would not debate whether four wheelers should be allowed to operate on Hickory Road in York township in Wisconsin. This is an issue for the local township government to decide.

To this day the United States of America is still considered a federal republic although some may wish to argue against this statement. In fact it is the world's oldest surviving federation. The U.S has been a federal republic since 1781 when the Articles of Confederation were created. The Constitution was adopted in 1788 after the Articles of Confederation were found to provide inadequate federal powers. The constitution clearly established the rules that the government was to follow and also divided the government into three different branches that being the

executive, legislative, and judicial. Each branch of government is responsible for specific functions while also having some authority over the two other branches of the government. This is what is meant when the term checks and balances is used. The federal republic form of government is designed to prevent too much power being given to any one group of people. I believe this is why it works and why it still exists to this day. Our forefathers were not sure if people had the time, wisdom or ability to make decisions that would need to be made.

Relatively few changes, which are known as amendments, have been made to the U.S. Constitution. It has basically been the rule book for decisions made and followed for over two hundred years. In contrast to the U.S. Constitution, are the constitutions adopted by each individual state. These tend to be very detailed and specific. One reason for this is that it is much easier to amend a state constitution. It only takes a majority of the voters in a statewide election to make a change. States are also free to exercise any power not prohibited to them.

The Pledge of Allegiance begins as "I pledge allegiance to the flag and to the United States of America and **to the republic for which it stands.....**" People probably often recite The Pledge of Allegiance without really thinking about what they are saying. The Pledge is telling people that the United States has a republic form of government. People elect people to represent them and to make decisions. That accurately describes what a federal republic form of government is and what it does. I am glad that this is the type of government that I am a citizen of.

Sources Used

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