

“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?”

Who ensures that the neighbor's overgrown lawn does not lower surrounding property values, the music festivals do not wake the sleeping infants, the car is not swallowed by a gaping pothole in the street, and gangs do not endanger citizens? These and countless other functions are the responsibilities of town governments. The founding fathers, when setting up this country, had the freedom to choose any form of government or even create a new form. These great men, having experienced first-hand the short-comings of the known forms of government, bravely set out to create something they hoped would ensure liberty and justice for generations to come. This radical new creation would be of the people, by the people, and for the people; in other words, self-government, something that had not been attempted on a large scale since ancient times. By allowing the mistakes of their predecessors to teach them, the founding fathers set up their government in the form of a federal republic to ensure the majority of the power would remain in the hands of the people through local governments.

A federal republic form of government is made up of tiers. Each tier consists of individuals elected democratically. These individuals, called representatives, speak for their constituency on governmental matters. This is characteristic of all republic forms of government. The first governmental tier is the local government – town or city, and county.(1) It is here where the decisions most likely to affect daily life are made, and also where the individual citizen has the most influence. The next tier is the state government which is responsible only for that which the local governments are unable to regulate themselves. Some responsibilities would include the

maintenance of state roads and highways as well as the negotiation of interstate commerce. The last and highest tier is the federal government. According to the Constitution of the United States of America given by the founding fathers for the perpetuation of this federal republic, only a few specified powers are given to the federal government; all other powers are to be left to the state and local governments. To overstep these enumerated areas of control is an abuse of power and an infringement upon the rights of the citizens. When the federal government oversteps and takes power from the local and state governments, it steals power from the individual citizen who can normally only affect desired changes on those more local levels. By allowing the local governments to solve local issues, like the removal of a dying tree in your neighborhood; the problems are dealt with more efficiently, the tree can be removed before it falls on your house. This, in turn, frees the state and federal governments to resolve issues more appropriate to their abilities. (2)

The form of government in the United States of America today is, in fact, the federal republic form of government described above. Although some abuse of power occurs and can blur the tiers, all the essential elements remain. As a republic, all of our representatives are elected democratically and work to write and pass the legislation desired by their constituents. This is also true for the election of the president. Representatives are democratically elected to the electoral college; they, in turn, elect the president. As a federation, the central government, operating under a single president, serves to unite all of the states. During my time at American Legion Auxiliary Badger Girls State, I actively participated in forming the local and state governments for the “fifty-first” state in the union, the state of Badger. Because Badger's government was modeled directly after the existing government here in Wisconsin, I learned first-hand how critical town and city governments are to the operation of every state in a federal

republic.

Due to the emphasis given to the federal government by mainstream media, many are led to believe that the federal government is significantly more important than state and local governments. But, in regards to daily life, this could not be further from reality. The decisions made by local town governments affect the residents of that town more directly than almost anything done on the federal level. Whether it is deciding to fix the road on the morning commute, encouraging the building of a new factory, or passing a new ordinance, town governments are an integral part of life that most people overlook. Without these town governments keeping order and taking care of local issues, the other tiers of government would quickly become overwhelmed. At Badger Girls State, the first governments set up were those of the cities and counties; only after they were in place was the state government organized. This process helped me to realize that local governments truly are the foundation upon which the rest of our society is built.

A federal republic form of government, like the one here in America, is not simply one big hub of power, but rather, it consists of numerous town and city, county, and state governments unified by the federal government. Without even one of these tiers of government, the entire system would collapse. Dutifully ensuring the safety and prosperity of the town, local governments are the first line of defense against chaos. Whether running for office, providing information to and support for those elected, or simply signing petitions, we all have a role in local government. With the support of its citizens, town governments can often anticipate and solve future problems before they affect daily life. Without town governments operating smoothly, the federal republic in America would cease to exist.

Bibliography

- (1) Hammond. Hardwick. Lubert. Classics of American Political and Constitutional Thought V.1. Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Company, 2007. P. 118
- (2) Skousen. The 5000 Year Leap. The National Center for Constitutional Studies, 2006.
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