



## Course Learning Outcomes for Unit II

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

2. Analyze political processes in local government.
  - 2.1 Outline the issues and challenges that affect voter turnout.
  - 2.2 Define *interest group*, and explain its functions, tactics, and power within state politics.
3. Differentiate between powers allocated to the federal government and those allocated to the states.
  - 3.1 Distinguish between delegated, denied, and concurrent powers.
  - 3.2 Identify the variations of federalism.
7. Explain how citizen attitudes influence policies adopted by governments.
  - 7.1. Comment on the use of protest as a legitimate form of political participation.

## Reading Assignment

### Chapter 3:

States, Communities, and American Federalism

### Chapter 4:

Participation in State Politics

## Unit Lesson

### Federalism

In Unit I, you learned about the roles (and the conflict between roles) among the federal, state, and local governments through a presentation of the struggle of immigration issues. In the course textbook, Dye and MacManus (2015) discuss the conflict that occurs as a result of the division of powers between national and subnational governments (p.36). The authors present *federalism* as a family that sometimes gets along great and sometimes goes head-to-head. This struggle was demonstrated in the previous unit as the Supreme Court upheld the federal government's immigration legislation over state law.

Our system of federalism is difficult to implement. Indeed, there have been differing degrees of federal oversight throughout our 240 years. Occasionally, federalism has served to reinforce inequality among citizens through a laissez-faire approach to state sovereignty. For example, the rights given to African Americans by the Reconstruction Amendments were not guaranteed by the federal government for almost 100 years because the federal leadership during this period did not want to tread on states' rights. In instances such as this, federalism actually served to reinforce inequality rather than counter it.

Often, however, federal courts rule in favor of federal authority through interesting constitutional interpretations for government (e.g., the use of the Necessary and Proper Clause or the Commerce Clause). Under Article I, Section 8, Clause 18 of the Constitution, Congress has the power "to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers, and all other powers vested by this Constitution in the government of the United States, or any department or officer thereof" (U.S. Const. art. I, § 8). This clause essentially allows Congress to organize the government and put into effect and enhance any other Congressional powers. The Commerce Clause (Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3 of the U.S. Constitution) gives Congress the power "to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes" (U.S. Const. art. I, § 8). The clause acts as a means of both restricting regulatory authority and as a grant of Congressional authority.

## Voters and Voter Turnout

Take a look at the story of a CSU professor:

When I turned 18, my mother took me to the registrar's office in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to register to vote. A presidential election was to be held that year, and I was determined to participate. On the first Tuesday of November, Election Day rolled around. Since my mother had to work, my grandfather took me to the precinct to partake in my civic duty. My grandfather walked up and cast his vote. Then, it was my turn. Walking into the booth, I turned around and looked at my grandfather because I had no idea what to do. He walked into the booth with me and showed me how it was supposed to work. He then turned his back so that I could cast my vote in private. Not once did he say anything about who I should vote for, and once it was over, he never asked who I did, in fact, cast my vote for. What he and my mother did was show me the importance of taking the time to vote and participate in the process. (J. Gerlach, personal communication, September, 2012)

In order for democracy to work, the citizens must participate. The participation of citizens in government is so important that four of the 27 amendments to the U.S. Constitution include references and additional information and detail on the act of voting. Below, you will find the chronological progression of these amendments:

- After the Civil War, the 15th Amendment was enacted. It stated, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude" (U.S. Const. amend. XV).
- At the end of World War I, the 19th Amendment was passed, and it stated no one can be denied the right to vote because of one's gender (U.S. Const. amend. XIX).
- Then, in 1965, the 24th Amendment to the Constitution was passed. It stated, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other election for President or Vice President, for electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Representative in Congress, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax" (U.S. Const. amend. XXIV).
- Then, around 1970, at the end of the Vietnam War, the 26th Amendment was passed, and it stated that anyone over the age of 18 was able to vote (U.S. Const. amend. XXIV).

Dye and MacManus (2015) discuss that a *rational voter* is someone who decides that the personal benefits of voting outweigh the costs. Is it rational to think that your vote will be the deciding one? Such philosophy corresponds with various campaigns over the years that have sought to increase the number of people registering to vote and, ultimately, voting. Many of those campaigns had slogans such as "Every Vote Matters" or "Rock the Vote." Each campaign had a goal to increase votership by targeting a specific audience. For example, the "Rock the Vote" campaign was an initiative launched in 1990 that combined pop culture, technology, and politics to attract young voters to get involved and make their voices heard. Such campaigns were designed to increase awareness of the importance of voting.

The United States has a storied past when it comes to voting. Many people choose to not participate in the act of voting. It would seem that there are as many reasons for not voting as there are people. Income and education seem to play a big role in who does and does not vote, but there are other factors at play including media attention and the relative impact of issues. Since the Motor Voter Act was passed, it has made it easier to get a citizen registered to vote. The Motor Voter Act, specifically known as the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) (52 U.S.C. § 20501 - 52 U.S.C. § 20511), allows people to register to vote whenever they obtain or renew their driver's license. However, since many states recently enacted the identification law (forcing voters to show legal identification in order to be able to cast their vote), several of the benefits of the Motor Act have been undone.

Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution states that a census takes place every 10 years (U.S. Const. art. I, § 2). All of the people who reside in the United States are counted so that legislative districts throughout the United States can be reapportioned. After the census is complete, the states must also redraw district lines within their state to maximize opportunities for the people of that area (Dye & MacManus, 2015).

Throughout our history, it appears that those who band together for a common cause and form an interest group are more likely to be heard than an individual working alone. An example of this is the American

Association for Retired Persons (AARP), one of the largest interest groups for aging Americans in the United States today. In order to assist the organization in ensuring favorable legislation and policies, AARP employs lobbyists to obtain legislation and policies that ensure their constituents continue to receive entitlements such as Medicare and Social Security.

Voting is an important right and privilege of which many eligible citizens do not take advantage. Other citizens, such as members of the Tea Party movement and the Occupy movement, not only use the vote but also band people together to affect change through protest. More often than not, these protests are legal and peaceful gatherings to voice opinions on the issues. Another form of protest is peaceful civil disobedience (e.g., sit-ins) that can encourage the general public to acknowledge a serious problem. Sometimes, though, participants get out of control, and violence ensues. Civil disobedience can force the public to acknowledge a serious problem and force talks to begin. Violence, on the other hand, is never the answer because more often than not, it turns the same public whom you were trying to prod against you and your organization.

Ultimately, one of the greatest hallmarks of being an American citizen is freedom, and freedom includes the right not to vote and to protest if you so desire. The extent to which you participate or choose not to participate is entirely up to you.

### References

Dye, T. R., & MacManus, S. A. (2015). *Politics in states and communities* (15th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

U.S. Const. amend. XIV

U.S. Const. amend. XIX

U.S. Const. amend. XXIV

U.S. Const. amend, XV

U.S. Const. art. I, § 2

U.S. Const. art. I, § 8

## Suggested Reading

If you would like additional information regarding the textbook readings, consider reviewing the chapter presentations below:

- Click [here](#) to access the Chapter 3 PowerPoint presentation titled “Chapter 3: States, Communities, and American Federalism.” (Click [here](#) to access the PDF version.)
- Click [here](#) to access the Chapter 4 PowerPoint presentation titled “Chapter 4: Participation in State Politics.” (Click [here](#) to access the PDF version.)

## Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Non-Graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.

*In order to access the following resource, click the link below.*

McConnell, M. W. (2012). What would Hamilton do? *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy*, 35(1), 259.  
Retrieved from

<https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=71991757&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

As you read the article, consider the following question: Would Hamilton’s proposal of an ideal federalism, in which the President and Senate serve life terms, improve American politics? Could you defend your answer?