



*“Hello, is this the White House? May I speak to the President? I want to see if he can change the book bag rule at my school.”*

1. List the objects or the people you see in the cartoon.
2. Identify the caption or the title.
3. Which words or phrases in the caption appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so?
4. Describe any emotions portrayed in the cartoon.
5. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.
6. Explain the message of the cartoon.
7. In what way does the cartoon point out a misunderstanding about government in the United States?
8. Use your understanding of the American system of government to construct an appropriate response to the caller.

## **Federalism**

**What is federalism?** Federalism is a system of government in which power is distributed or diffused between a central government and smaller political units. In the United States, there are three basic levels of government: federal, state and local. Each level has its own functions and powers as well as powers that are shared with other levels.

**How is federalism employed in the United States?** The federal government's powers are listed in the Constitution. The powers are listed for each branch of government. The federal government can print money, regulate trade between states, regulate international trade, make treaties, conduct foreign policy, declare war, provide an army and navy, and establish post offices.

Some of the state government's powers are to issue driving licenses, regulate trade within the state, conduct elections, ratify amendments to the Constitution, provide for public schools, and establish local governments.

In New York State, there are various governments at the local level, including county and municipal (city) governments. These local governments have a variety of powers. Overseeing hospitals and libraries, weed control, fire protection, water supply, sewage, refuse collection and disposal, building construction rules and lighting of streets are some of the powers.

All governments share some powers. Collecting taxes, fees and fines are among those shared powers. Other shared powers include: building roads, establishing courts, chartering banks, making laws and taking private property for public purposes (eminent domain).

**Why do we have different levels of government?** The two major reasons for having several levels of government are scale and power. Each level of government deals with issues that are appropriate to its size or scale. For example, the federal level deals with national security and the declaration of war – issues that affect all of the people in the nation. The local levels deal with the upkeep and repair of streets – an issue that is only important to the people who live in that area. Another reason for adopting a federal system is that it is designed to distribute or break-up power and authority. This structural feature of government is designed to protect the people against the whims of one all-powerful ruler.

# Powers of Government

Each level of government has unique powers. Some of these powers are listed at the bottom of this sheet. Decide which power or role belongs to either the federal, state or local government. Place the power under the correct government title.

Federal (National) Government Powers	State Government Powers	Local Government Powers

## Shared Powers

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- Building roads
- Conduct elections
- Print money
- Ratify amendments to the Constitution
- Regulate trade between states
- Establish building codes
- Create fire protection
- Declare war
- Eminent Domain
- Make laws
- Establish local governments
- Establish post offices
- Issue driver's licenses
- Maintain sewers
- Set up hospitals

## To Whom Would You Turn?

**Directions:** Read the following scenarios and decide whom you would need to contact to help solve each problem. First, determine if the problem falls under federal, state or local jurisdiction. Then, choose one or more of the choices listed under each of the three levels of government that might apply.

### **Federal:**

Internal Revenue Service  
Post Office  
Social Security Administration

### **State:**

Division of Motor Vehicles  
Environmental Protection Agency (DNRC)  
New York State Police

### **Local:**

Commissioner of Voter Registration  
Department of Human Services  
Police Department  
Tax Assessor  
Board of Education

1. You have just moved into a new house and you need to get your mail forwarded to your new address
2. Your sister has just reached the driving age and wants to apply for her license
3. You have just obtained your first job and you need a social security number
4. Your parents want to add a room onto your house, but want to be sure your taxes won't increase too much
5. A friend of yours has been having some family problems and wants some help
6. Everyday night the band next door practices and it is very hard to concentrate and do your homework
7. The mother of the kid next door just received a ticket because he son was riding his bike without a helmet
8. Your brand new skateboard is stolen
9. Your brother just turned eighteen and wants to register to vote
10. Your mother wants to know if she can deduct the cost of donations to charity from her income tax
11. Your parents and friends do not agree with your district's new high school diploma system

## Ticket Out the Door

With the existence of federal and state governments, why is a local government necessary? Explain your answer with at least 2 examples.