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Divergent Forms of Governing Between the National, State and Local Governments

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Divergent Forms of Governing Between the National, State and Local Governments

With a government that fully embraces the federalism system of governance, the United States has seen its government power divided between one central government and territorial administrations. This division of power between local governments and the national state could be termed as a divergent but co-existing government system. Thus, these governance systems predominantly converge on how an enormous measure of sovereignty is possessed by both national government and regional governments, counting state and local administrations. On the flipside, state and local governments differ from the national government on various grounds, as this paper aims to demonstrate. While sharing similar fundamental principles with the federal government, states have equally reformed themselves based on the general approach to governance, constitutional design, power distribution to people, and the degree of party activity significance, making them more connected with their citizens.

An Overview of the Divergent Forms of Governing Between the National, State and Local Governments

Although the comparative method has been traditionally used to elucidate the way the world operates using differences and similarities, the same systematic approach could help gain coherent understanding of numerous responsibilities, activities, and levels of state and local governments (Smit & Greenblatt, 2019, p.5). From this approach, states form a comparable unit of assessment while local governments accompanying city councils and county boards of commissioners, which run below the state level, are another. Thus, the governments at the local or state level share similarities that assign meaning to compare their differences. For instance, based on government forms, all the fifty states in the United States share many similarities. Besides, they virtually have almost the same structures of government. Consequently, they both

exhibit a fundamental power division among the three branches, also known as government arms: the executive, judiciary, and legislature. Lastly, both are obligated to function, operate, and run under the United States Constitution as the sole umbrella set of rules.

Consequently, a significant variation exists below the state level. Here, the local governments are divided into different types and levels, counting the municipalities, counties, and townships. Nonetheless, they all converge to the central point that they share a basic set of responsibilities. Both are obligated to operate under their respective state's rules as articulated by the state. Therefore, although all the similarities at state and local level governments make meaningful comparison possible, ironically, as this paper shall demonstrate, the differences make the latter comparison meaningful and not the similarities (Smit & Greenblatt, 2019, p. 4). This is because states make wildly divergent decisions or choices regardless of sharing the same political structures and adherence to the same set of rules.

The General Difference in Approach to Governing Between the States and National Government as it Pertains to their Respective Citizenry

When contemporary citizens within a federated government system might be asked to outline the number of government institutions or entities that exercise jurisdiction over their current place of residence, their responses are likely to be different based on their region. In that case, these individuals might be either obligated to observe the country's law, state, county, province, city, or town (Suriansyah et al., 2019, p. 133). Furthermore, depending on a given citizen's country of residence, there are those governed by three or multiple government levels. In contrast, we could equally have those that are governed by a solitary national government.

The state and national levels of government represent the two significant levels of governance in the United States (Theodore et al., 2019, p. 47). From this system, federalism

draws its meaning because one level of government exercises jurisdiction over the same region. Although the United States citizens might deem federalism, which divides their government into various levels, as a conventional thing, the number of federated republics around the globe is just fifteen. The current states in the United States evolved from separate colonies that exhibited different populations as well as diverse needs (Suriansyah et al., 2019, p. 139). This evolution led to the emergence of the federalist system of governance in the United States. In a nutshell, the individuals who framed the United States Constitution intended that the state governments, not the national government, would be the central government unit for citizens daily.

Although the United States may have occasions when the Framers' vision applies today, the dream does not hold water always (Theodore et al., 2019, p. 68). And where the former is applicable, such states were vested with the responsibility to issue licenses of marriage as well as set the underwriting terms of a divorce. Also, the state governments could register cars besides issues driver's licenses (Suriansyah et al., 2019, p. 142). Lastly, these state governments determined the speed limits applicable to their statewide territory and car's inspection requirements. Nonetheless, suppose the Framers had to evaluate the general difference in approach to governing between the states and national government as it pertains to their respective citizenry today; they will be surprised to find out the degree to which the federal government and state governments are entwined. Due to the change that occurred in citizens' needs, the two government levels have seen a balance of power vary between them over time.

How This Difference is Seen in the Design of State Constitutions

As indicated before, the Framers of the United States Constitution intended that the state governments, and not the national government, would be the central unit of government for citizens daily, so did it suffice for the states to have constitutions many years before the writing

of the United States Constitution. States have written about one hundred and fifty constitutions since the Declaration of Independence (Theodore et al., 2019, p. 124). Similarly, more states are writing novel constitutions periodically. By contrast, state constitutions are longer than the national one. Also, they are more explicit. Thus, in some states, these constitutions are heavily amended but easily tossed out. Since they pertain to their respective citizenry issues, state constitutions govern their respective state's structure, financing, and role. Besides, they determine the local levels of government.

Concerning the state officials, the fifty states distinctively have their own selection of public officials, with none of the two states which could be compared to establish any similarity. Nevertheless, they collectively have courts, governors as well as legislatures. While each state has its own court system, a considerable number have Supreme Court. Since most cases fall under the state's jurisdiction rather than the national jurisdiction, the final voice in massive cases in the United States is that of state judges (Theodore et al. 2019, p. 179). The two types of courts in most states are the trial and appeals courts. The former handles murder, divorce settlements, and traffic-related fines, while the latter hears all appealed cases from subordinate courts.

How Citizens Engage With the Government at Each Level

The National Government

Although one may find it hard to pinpoint how citizens engage with the government at the national level, it is so apparent that throughout the United States history, citizens have been on the Frontline to shape and define the country to its present state (Schroedel et al., 2020, p. 1890). Similarly, through their joint contribution, the United States' legacy of being a land of freedom and opportunity was preserved. Since independence to date, more than two centuries down the line, the United States citizens have played a crucial role in being part of the country's

democracy. Thus, the people's powers at the national level of government are evident through their voice in how the United States is governed. Through these powers, the people earn Citizenship to the United States, which avails numerous benefits and significant responsibilities (Schroedel et al., 2020, p. 1898). Therefore, citizens engage with the national government through their commitment to the country as well as the form of government to ensure that the United States remains a free and prosperous nation.

There are various ways through which people engage with the national level of government. These include supporting and defending the federal Constitution, participating in the national democratic processes such as general elections, respecting and obeying the rules and laws provided in the Constitution (Larschan, 2020, p. 4). Moreover, citizens could show their engagement with the national government by serving on a jury when summoned, defending the United States if there is a need, and honestly paying for income as well as other taxes to the national government.

The State and Local Government

Although the various ways citizens engage with the state and local governments may appear to be similar, as mentioned earlier, every state has its public officials, and all of them converge on the factors of judiciary, governors, and legislatures, but they are explicitly different. Likewise, citizens' engagement ways may be similar at both local and state levels of government, but they inherently perform them at different governance layers between these two contrasting forms. For instance, at the local level, citizens engage with the government based on the four local government levels: counties, special districts, townships, and municipalities. Conversely, the levels at which citizens may exercise their powers significantly varies from state

to state based on political cultures. According to Elazar's classification, political cultures are moralistic, individualistic, and traditionalistic cultures.

How citizens engage with state governments and local governments in Moralistic cultures

In Moralistic cultures across various states in the United States, the state government is obligated to act to promote the public interest and policy innovation. This latter expectation is what characterizes the primary role of government (Smit & Greenblatt, 2019, p.12).

Correspondingly, the attitude of public representatives in moralistic cultures is that politicians can implement change. While serving the public is an honor and worthwhile. Lastly, citizens' roles through which they engage with the government include active participation in political activities as well as voting. Also, individuals engage through seeking a political office.

How citizens engage with state governments and local governments in Individualistic cultures

In individualistic cultures across affiliated states in the United States, the government's chief role is to expect it to be utilitarian. In other words, it should serve the people by acting as a service provider. Subsequently, the attitude of the representatives is businesslike. Here, they deem politics a profession, and distinct politicians are inclined toward personal power (Smit & Greenblatt, 2019, p.12). Notably, states identified with individualistic cultures exhibit high levels of corruption. Nonetheless, citizens engage the government by leaving the politics to the experts, and the state is there to advance the economic as well as individual self-interest of citizens.

How citizens engage with state governments and local governments in traditionalistic cultures

Lastly, the traditionalistic cultures depict the state government's role as existing to help preserve the status quo. Politicians who are the public representatives hold the attitude that they

can effect change, but politics explicitly remain the elites' province. Citizens' government engagement is limited, as ordinary citizens are not expected to be politically involved (Smith & Greenblatt, 2019, p.12).

The Extent to Which Party Activity is Important to State and Local Engagement

The significance of party activity in the United States at the state and local level engagement has not just been to run campaigns organize government decision making. However, through citizens' engagement at these levels, party activity plays a critical role in connecting ordinary citizens to each other (Garni & Weyher, 2018. P.260). Ultimately, they help the connected citizens to persuade their neighbors of a vision of a common good. For instance, under the Special Districts type of local government, a government unit entrusted with unique functions is instituted. Here, party activity could help convince the public and the general civic that specific tasks weighing down city governments are essential. With collective backing, everyone stood a chance to benefit. This is applicable in the case of developing a local school district, among other projects.

In summation, national, state and local governments share basic similarities such as government structure counting government branches: legislation, judiciary, and executive but are inherently divergent. This is because they make choices differently at each level. From the comparative method used to evaluate national, state, and local governments, this paper established that although the trio shares similar fundamental principles with the federal government, states have reformed themselves based on the general approach to governance, constitutional design, power distribution to people, and the extent of party activity significance, making them more connected with their citizens. Since they pertain to their respective citizenry issues, state constitutions govern their respective state's structure, financing, and role. On the

other hand, party activity plays a crucial role in state and local engagement since, through them, citizens are engaged at all levels, connecting ordinary citizens. Eventually, helping the connected citizens to persuade their neighbors of a vision of a common good.

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